# Master's degree thesis

**IDR950 Sport Management**

**Engagement with eSports Through Sponsorship –
A Multiple Case Study**

Robin Wessels (161800)

Number of pages including this page: 75

Molde, 14-05-2018

**Molde University College**
Specialized University in Logistics

# Mandatory statement

Each student is responsible for complying with rules and regulations that relate to examinations and to academic work in general. The purpose of the mandatory statement is to make students aware of their responsibility and the consequences of cheating. Failure to complete the statement does not excuse students from their responsibility.

| | Please complete the mandatory statement by placing a mark **in each box** for statements 1-6 below. | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | **I/we hereby declare that my/our paper/assignment is my/our own work, and that I/we have not used other sources or received other help than mentioned in the paper/assignment.** | ☒ |
| 2. | **I/we hereby declare that this paper** <br> 1. Has not been used in any other exam at another department/university/university college <br> 2. Is not referring to the work of others without acknowledgement <br> 3. Is not referring to my/our previous work without acknowledgement <br> 4. Has acknowledged all sources of literature in the text and in the list of references <br> 5. Is not a copy, duplicate or transcript of other work | Mark each box: <br> 1. ☒ <br> 2. ☒ <br> 3. ☒ <br> 4. ☒ <br> 5. ☒ |
| 3. | **I am/we are aware that any breach of the above will be considered as cheating, and may result in annulment of the examination and exclusion from all universities and university colleges in Norway for up to one year, according to the Act relating to Norwegian Universities and University Colleges, section 4-7 and 4-8 and Examination regulations section 14 and 15.** | ☒ |
| 4. | **I am/we are aware that all papers/assignments may be checked for plagiarism by a software assisted plagiarism check** | ☒ |
| 5. | **I am/we are aware that Molde University College will handle all cases of suspected cheating according to prevailing guidelines.** | ☒ |
| 6. | **I/we are aware of the University College's rules and regulation for using sources** | ☒ |

# Publication agreement

**ECTS credits: 30**

**Supervisor: Harald Dolles**

## Agreement on electronic publication of master thesis

Author(s) have copyright to the thesis, including the exclusive right to publish the document (The Copyright Act §2).

All theses fulfilling the requirements will be registered and published in Brage HiM, with the approval of the author(s).

Theses with a confidentiality agreement will not be published.

**I/we hereby give Molde University College the right to, free of charge, make the thesis available for electronic publication:** ☒yes ☐no

**Is there an agreement of confidentiality?** ☐yes ☒no

(A supplementary confidentiality agreement must be filled in)

- If yes: **Can the thesis be online published when the period of confidentiality is expired?** ☐yes ☐no

**Date: 14-05-2018**

## Preface

After a four-year study in the Netherlands where I got my bachelor's degree in 'Sport and Physical Exercise', I decided to move to Norway to get my master's degree. After two years of study at Molde University College, I present my final work and master thesis to obtain the 'Master of Science in Sport Management'.

The last two years seem to have flown by, which makes me realize I'm going to leave the beautiful country of Norway very soon. The topic of this thesis came to my mind when I had several classes where the rise of eSports was mentioned. In addition, I had a lecture from Mrs. Bettina Cornwell, who specialized in sponsorships, which brought sponsorship and eSports together.

This thesis has been developed in close collaboration with my supervisor Harald Dolles, who gave me excellent guidance throughout the whole process. A huge thank you goes out to him for taking time and sharing knowledge with me. I would also like to thank friends, family and classmates who have helped me throughout the process of writing this master's thesis.

Finally, I would also like to express my gratitude to the companies who have participated in this research. I hope that this master thesis will give you new perspectives on eSports sponsorships.

<div align="center">

Robin Wessels

Molde, 2018

</div>

## Summary

The 21st century is known for its digitalization. Computers are becoming smarter and the internet introduced us to many new possibilities. The digitalization has also caused the birth of a new sport, namely eSports. 'A new form of competition where (online) video games are being used as the platform'. The last couple of years eSports has witnessed a huge growth, with the eSports revenue reaching $1.5 billion in 2017. Despite this rapid growth, there has not been much research on eSports in general, let alone on eSport sponsorships. Since sponsorships often form an important part in the sports business model, my interest was triggered. Based on this, the research question is as follows:

*How can companies inside and outside the computer and hardware industry engage with eSports consumers through sponsorship?*

I have conducted a multiple case study, with a sample representing different companies. 5 companies from various industries were asked to fill in a survey in which they were asked to display various factors on their sponsorship within eSports. The companies were asked about their motives and goals, communication activities, the creation of experiences, external factors and if there were any advantages/disadvantages to do sponsorships within eSports for certain industries.

Through this study I have seen that there are different ways in which companies can engage with eSports through sponsorship. But most of the factors that were researched have not shown that eSports sponsorships are that much different from sponsorships within other sectors. There are however some factors that companies outside of the computer & hardware industry find difficult to deal with within eSport sponsorships. The eSport industry is still very young, especially when it comes to sponsoring. Because the market is still young it gives sponsors the ability to really connect their brand to the sport. With a good strategy that is well thought of, I believe that sponsors can get a lot out of their sponsorship within eSports. This study provides an understanding on how eSport sponsorships work and forms a base for further research within this field.

# Table of Contents

**Tables**

**Figures**

# 1.0  Introduction

In this chapter, you will be introduced to this master's thesis. First, there will be some background information about the topic followed by the formulated research questions. At the end of this chapter, I will also outline the further structure of this master's thesis.

## 1.1  Background

eSports or electronic sports is a form of competition using video games as a platform. Mostly, eSports takes the form of organized, multi-player video game competitions between professional players. Formally eSports is defined as: "an area of sport activities in which people develop and train mental or physical abilities in the use of information and communication technology." (Wagner, 2007, p. 182). There has been a long-time debate whether eSports is a sport or whether it fits within the definition of sport (Jenny, Manning, Keiper, & Olrich, 2016). But Wagner (2007) asserts that eSports should be viewed as a form of sports drawing on Tiedemann's (2004) definition of sport.

Chalmet writes that gaming in modern society is still being poorly perceived and not openly recognised as a sport (Chalmet, 2015). By many parents and adults, it is considered as a 'waste of time and potential'. Certain media stations even blamed games for the rise in violent youth behaviour. These oppositional views of computer gaming as something 'bad' and a 'sport' as something good, makes the field of eSports a very interesting phenomenon to study (Thiborg, 2009).

The most important factor in Sports is the passion of several actors. The obsession of players, tournament organisers, investors and mostly the fans makes sports a unique market. This is not different within the world of competitive gaming. There are strong emotions involved with professional gamers, which results in committed fans who either spend money or a part of their time and attention to follow these players (Li, 2016).

While eSports had some investments, the contribution of sponsorship within many actors is essential and is located in the middle of the economic model (Bouaoui, 2016). According to SuperData Research, the worldwide eSports revenue in 2017 was 1.5 billion US dollars (SuperData Research, 2017). According to them this will increase to$1.9 billion US dollars

in 2020 and will further increase to 2.3 billion US dollars in 2022. The global eSports industry will grow 26% by 2020 as it attracts a more mainstream audience. Approximately 50% of the $1.5 billion comes from investments and 35% comes from sponsorships and advertisements. Big video game companies like Blizzard, Activision, Riot Games and Valve continue to support their eSports titles with player franchising agreements and larger prize pools. However, in 2017 also a number of high profile sports organizations seems to have found its ways into the world of eSports. Advertisers and brands like The Kraft Group and Mercedes-Benz are among the most notable with several other sports teams and brands making financial commitments (SuperData Research, 2017). According to Heuvel not many companies seem to have found the way in sponsoring e-sports. Today it is mostly computer and hardware companies that are involved in eSports. "Games bring innovation to tech and consumer business models, as well as the ability to engage with and actively involve the younger generations." (Heuvel, 2016, p. 3).

However, the most striking aspect of eSports for marketeers is not its unprecedented growth and global presence. It comes from the nature of value that consumers seek through their engagement with competitive computer gaming. Being fully emerged at the dawn of the twenty-first century, the market for eSports involves almost no physical products and only a few services (e.g. computer-game subscriptions, TV airing of computer-game events). Instead, what is valued the most by eSports consumers is the experience associated with this form of consumption, co-created within the value network of marketing actors (Seo, 2013).

## 1.2 Research questions

According to Seo there are some companies sponsoring but "the companies outside the computer industry tend to limit their engagement with eSports to corporate sponsorships and in-game advertising." (Seo, 2013, p. 1556). This form of sponsoring however involves little participation in the events and very few companies participate in creating the experience of eSports. eSports consumers mostly feel associated with the experience of eSports, which makes you wonder why some companies that are sponsoring, are not involved in creating those experiences. Therefore, my main research question is:

> *"How can companies inside and outside the computer and hardware industry engage with eSports consumers through sponsorship?"*

Sub research questions are:

1. *What are the current motives/goals for sponsors to be engaged within eSports?*
2. *Which activities are communicated by the sponsors and how do they leverage the sponsorship agreement?*
3. *How are the sponsors engaged with the eSports experience?*
4. *Are there any external factors that could influence the sponsorship result?*
5. *Are there any advantages/disadvantages for certain industries to sponsor within eSports?*

## 1.3  Structure

In the next chapter the industry of eSports is further explored. Things as the eSports history, major actors, types of games and the platform will be discussed in this chapter. In chapter 3 you will find the literature review in which 3 topics are described. Firstly, there will be a part about sponsorship in general, secondly there will be a part on the experience economy and thirdly the model of sponsorship-linked marketing is displayed. In chapter 4 you will find the methodology of this research in which is explained how the research was conducted. Chapter 5 reveals the findings of the survey. In chapter 6 the findings will be discussed in relation to the literature, followed by the conclusion in chapter 7.

## 2.0　eSports industry context

In this chapter I will go more in depth about eSports itself. First, I will briefly discuss the history of eSports; how eSports has grown into what it is right now. After that, there will be a part about the major actors within the industry. Then there will be a piece about the different types of video games that can be played within eSports and, finally, I will have a look at the platform of eSports.

## 2.1　eSports history

The history of eSports is dominated by two key developments. The first development is the increasing popularity of computer games among consumers. In 2012, ESA (Entertainment Software Association) reported that 49% of all US households own at least one game console (Entertainment Software Association, 2012). The second development is the dynamic technological evolution of the internet and digital technologies. Modern digital games hold very good immersive capacities and enable players to play with multiple other individuals, allowing players to compete in a similar way to traditional sports (Seo, 2013).

Online and offline competitions have long been a part of video gaming, but these were largely between amateurs until the late 2000's when participation by professional games and spectatorship in these events saw a large surge in popularity. Many of the games developed today are actively designed towards a professional eSport culture (Tassi, 2012). Today tournaments such as The International, the League of Legends World Championship, the Evolution Championship Series and the Intel Extreme Master provide live broadcasts of the competition, and prize money to competitors.

In the mid-2010's, the most successful titles featured in professional competition were the multiplayer online battle arena (MOBA) games Dota 2 and League of Legends, and the first-person shooter game Counter-Strike: Global Offensive were being played (E-Sports Earnings, 2015). Other games with significant earnings include Smite, StarCraft 2, Call of Duty, Heroes of the Storm, Hearthstone and Overwatch.

In the table below, you will see the biggest eSports with the amount of prize money, number of players and the number of tournaments in 2017. This gives you an idea which video games

are currently the biggest within eSports. I add the type of game extracted from the descriptions in chapter 2.3 (E-Sports Earnings, 2017b).

| | Prizemoney in US Dollar | Number of players | Number of tournaments | Type of game (see table 3) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. **Dota 2** | 38,009,710.28 | 927 | 155 | Action Real Time Strategy |
| 2. **Counter-Strike: Global Offensive** | 19,190,048.28 | 4737 | 881 | First Person Shooter |
| 3. **League of Legends** | 12,016,606.24 | 1597 | 135 | Multiplayer Online Battle Arena |
| 4. **Heroes of the storm** | 4,783,332.54 | 374 | 31 | Multiplayer Online Battle Arena |
| 5. **Call of Duty: Infinite Warfare** | 4,027,526.40 | 298 | 71 | First Person Shooter |

*Table 1: Top games of 2017* (E-Sports Earnings, 2017b)

In 2013, it was estimated that approximately 71,5 million people worldwide watched eSports (War, 2014). The increasing growth and availability of online streaming platforms has become central in the growth and promotion of eSports competitions. Particularly Twitch.tv has played a huge role in this development (Popper, 2013). One of the biggest eSports event organizers, Major League Gaming (MLG), who organize eSports events throughout the United States and Canada, have reported a viewership that is approximately 85% male and 15% female, with a majority of the viewers between the ages of 18 and 34 years old (Gamespot, 2012).

South Korea is one of the front runners when it comes to eSports organizations. They have had licensed pro gamers since the year 2000. Recognition of eSports competitions outside

of South Korea has come somewhat slower. Along with South Korea, most competitions take place in North America, China and Europe. Despite its large video game market, Japan is relatively underdeveloped when it comes to eSports. This is largely attributed to its broad anti-gambling laws (Groen, 2013).

In the below table, the performance of the countries that have performed best in eSports competitions in 2017 is displayed. This gives an idea about which countries are some of the best eSports countries. The table also shows the amount of money that has been earned by players from these countries and the number of professional eSports players they have (E-Sports Earnings, 2017a).

| | Amount in US Dollar | Number of players |
|---|---|---|
| 1. China | 15,773,974.15 | 990 |
| 2. United States | 14,712,508.44 | 2758 |
| 3. Korea, Republic of | 12,011,167.59 | 879 |
| 4. Denmark | 4,990,627.66 | 343 |
| 5. Germany | 4,656,333.59 | 561 |
| 6. Sweden | 4,574,595.81 | 586 |
| 7. Finland | 3,780,835.96 | 293 |
| 8. Russia | 3,520,800.89 | 502 |
| 9. France | 3,517,822.73 | 630 |
| 10. Brazil | 3,250,587.97 | 679 |

*Table 2: Top countries in 2017* (E-Sports Earnings, 2017a)

In 2012, the global games market reached a revenue of 70.57 billion US dollars. In 2017 this has become a revenue of $108.90 billion dollars (Warman, 2017). This means that there has been a rise in the global games market of 56% in 5 years. The rise of eSports and the growth of the global games market is very much related. The growth in the global games market also caused a growth in the eSports market.

## 2.2 Major actors

To understand the eSports landscape better, it is good to have a look at the major actors within the eSports world. In other sports it is the job of governing bodies like FIFA (soccer),

ATP (tennis) and the FIA (motorsport) to regulate their sports and ensure an environment where there is fair play. Some however say that such structure does not exist in eSports and that the sport is in desperate need for a governing body.

Vila (2016) says that right now it's the computer game developers such as Valve (Counter-strike) and Riot (League of Legends) that have the most power over their games. However, at this moment there is no organization that holds the game developer accountable. The game developers are acting as prosecutor, judge and executioner at the same time. There is however an organization in place which claims to be the governing body of eSports. The World eSports Association (WESA) was founded mid 2016 in corporation with ESL (the largest tournament organizer in eSports). The goal was to create a governing body for the entire scene that would professionalize eSports in its entirety. But the organization was plagued and accused for all kinds of things which caused that WESA never became the governing body of eSports. Some people were saying that WESA was not really looking to professionalize the eSports scene, but just to find a way to secure their place in the market. Despite the effort of some organizations (such as WESA) that have tried to establish an eSports governing body, it is still the game developers who are ruling within eSports. This will probably stay for a while since each game is under control of its respective developer. This means that to play these games in front of a big crowd, the game developer needs to license and approve. Even with a good governing body that rules over the teams and players, the game developers will be superior since they are the ones who make the decisions on their own games. Until the game developers such as RIOT and Valve are willing to surrender their complete control over the game, a functioning governing body will be very hard to create (Vila, 2016).

Professional eSports players are often contracted by eSports teams. These teams also play an important role in the eSports world. Unlike other sports where each team is represented in one sport, eSports teams often have players represented in several different video games. The recruiting process of players can be challenging and the team owners often have to engage in competition against other teams. They often have to offer certain benefits to let the players enrol in their team. Because the gaming industry is growing very fast, it is not unusual to drop players out of their team when their skills are dropping. Like other companies, the teams often use online tools to communicate with their fan base and sell their

branded merchandise (Taylor, 2012). With the help of sponsors and the prize money that they obtain by competing in tournaments, the teams are financing themselves.

The last important actor within eSports are the tournament organizers. Although they have to get licensed by the game developers they still are a major actor. The big tournaments within the scene are watched by many people all over the world. Without these tournament organizers, eSports would not be as big as it is right now. By awarding prize money to the competing teams/players, more and more professional players will enter the sport. Last year 'The International' (Dota 2) had a total prize pool of $24,687,919.00 (E-Sports Earnings, 2018). Without the tournaments and the teams, the video-games would not be as big as they are right now and that makes the circle round.

## 2.3  eSports categories

The most common video game genres being played within eSports are real time strategy (RTS), combat, first-person shooter (FPS) and multiplayer online battle arena (MOBA). But since there are many types of video games being played within eSports, it is useful to map out the different types of video games. However, many games however can be considered more than one type. These are video game types which not necessarily means that these are also present in the competitive gaming world of eSports. Hurst (2015) has identified 12 types of games that can be found, which are displayed in the below table. I have added a section to the table of 'video game examples' to indicate which video games fit within this description.

| Type | Brief description | Video game examples |
|---|---|---|
| **Massively Multiplayer Online (MMO)** | These are video games being played over a LAN (Local Area Network) or via the internet. Players use a network and interact with other players in the virtual game room. This type of video game lets you play against people from all over the world. | - World of Warcraft<br>- Guild Wars |
| **Simulations** | These games are about taking control of real-world vehicles, including tanks, ships and aircraft. Within the games you learn how to control these vehicles, some simulation games can also be used to train professionals. | - Ship Simulator<br>- Microsoft Flight Simulator |

| Type | Brief description | Video game examples |
|---|---|---|
| **Adventure** | Adventure games are usually played by a single player and are often set in a fantasy or adventure world. Usually you have to complete puzzles to advance to the next level. | - Zelda<br>- Rayman |
| **Real-time strategy (RTS)** | In these games, you usually need to build up an inventory of items, armies, etc. Similar to a strategy game, RTS games move in real time, and players can play simultaneously without taking turns. I should also mention here the game MOBA. Multiplayer online battle arena (MOBA), also known as action real-time strategy (ARTS), is a sub-genre of strategy video games that originated as a subgenre of real-time strategy, in which a player controls a single character in a team that competes with another team of players. The objective is to destroy the opposing team's main structure with the assistance of periodically spawned computer-controlled units that march forward along set paths. | RTS:<br>- Starcraft<br>- Age of Empires<br><br>MOBA:<br>- League of Legends<br>- Dota 2 |
| **Puzzle** | These games appeal to those who love to solve difficult puzzles. There are often many levels, from beginner to expert. | - Candy Crush<br>- Tetris |
| **Action** | Action games are often fast paced games, which require excellent reflexes. They pursue various objectives by fighting with enemies and use a character of your choice to represent yourself in the game. | - Assassin's Creed<br>- Grand Theft Auto |
| **Stealth shooter** | Stealth shooters are most of the time war or spy-based games, where you use stealth as your main tool to defeat enemies. | - Hitman<br>- Tom Clancy's |
| **Combat** | Combat games are purely based on fighting with opponents up close and personal. To play this game you need good reflexes and the ability to use the controls for all kinds of fighting moves. | - Tekken<br>- Mortal Combat |
| **First person shooter (FPS)** | You are the player, and the game is viewed through your own eyes. You can really get into these games. As the name says you are shooting enemies within this game. | - Call of Duty<br>- Counterstrike |
| **Sports** | Within these games you are playing real life sports such as baseball, basketball, soccer, and many more. As you work up through the various skill levels, your game will involve mimicking real professional athletes and how they move. | - FIFA<br>- NBA2K |

| Type | Brief description | Video game examples |
|---|---|---|
| **Role-playing (RPG)** | If you like fantasy games, you will like role playing games. You often get to play the main character, be the hero or the villain. You have to make decisions to get along with the games story lines. | - Fallout<br>- The Elder Scrolls: Skyrim |
| **Educational** | While many parents and teachers complain about video games, there are some great educational games out there that can help with the learning process. They train in a variety of subjects, using games to make learning fun instead of boring. | - Brain Trainer<br>- Big Brain Academy |

*Table 3: Various video-gaming types*

## 2.4  eSports platform

When looking at the eSports platform, there is a big difference with traditional sports platforms. This difference needs to be considered for marketing purposes, since the broadcasting platform is an important factor. The main broadcasting method for eSports is the internet, which attracts a relatively young public. The main digital channel used by gamers and tournaments is Twitch.tv. This platform makes it possible for professional gamers and tournaments to live-stream their performances online instead of broadcasting it through large television stations.

The platform Twitch.tv was created by two students, Justin Kan and Emmett Shear in 2007. The key feature of the website is the ability for viewers to communicate with the gamer that is broadcasting. Without doing any marketing activities the platform registered 1 million members before July 2008 (Li, 2016). The growth of Twitch.tv went very fast. Between 2012 and 2013, the number of visitors grew by 874%. While this growth stayed consistent there were also some bad consequences. The platform was often seen as a 'copyright violator' and was also sued for infringement of sports broadcasting. A lot of members were able to see illegally uploaded content (Li, 2016). Nowadays, Twitch.tv is providing millions of viewers with content that is easily accessible and cost free. With the growth of the internet (in general) and the spread of personal computers among consumers, it is likely that Twitch.tv will keep growing. Right now, Twitch.tv is mainly used by gamers to stream their performances live, however, it is not just a platform for gamers. All kinds of content can be streamed live on Twitch.tv.

A number of sport programs have tried to broadcast eSports on their television channels. For example, ESPN2 broadcasted the finals of the 'Heroes of the dorm' which had two universities playing for the title. Attracting the attention of a huge television broadcaster as EPSN is impressive. However, games like Heroes of the Storm, Dota2 and League of Legends remain a regular draw for gamers and spectators on the streaming website Twitch.tv (Burroughs & Rama, 2015).

Now that ESPN and other traditional media outlets are taking an interest in the video gaming industry, it may appear as a simple validation of eSports. But Twitch.tv is very consumer-driven when it comes to a platform that provides the entertainment between gamer-spectator relationship. "Traditional media is trying to sow threads into an already well-developed and established tapestry of gameplay and virtuality." (Burroughs & Rama, 2015, p. 2). Twitch.tv has become a community for eSports viewers.

# 3.0   Literature review

In the literature review several concepts will come up to help me answer the research questions. Firstly, there will be a part about sponsorship itself and what does the current academic literature on eSport sponsorships say. Secondly, I will introduce the theory of the experience economy and the 4s Model. Finally, the model of consumer-focused sponsorship-linked marketing will be reviewed.

## 3.1   Sponsorship

### 3.1.1   General sponsorship theory

In order to answer the research questions, I must first understand how sponsorship works and why companies invest in sponsorship. Sponsorship is a marketing communication activity which is part of the rise in indirect forms of marketing (Cornwell, 2008). Many companies move away from 'mass advertising' and move towards integrated communication where the brand becomes part of the programming, sharing and the experience. Brands are trying to become 'embedded' and 'engaged'. When a brands name becomes visible at the heart of the action, the brand comes alive. According to Sahnoun (1989): Sponsorship is a tool that allows an organisation to directly link a brand (or a company) to an attractive event or a specific audience.

Between 1996 and 2014 the global sponsorship spending has been rising from 13.5 billion dollars to 55.5 billion dollars (IEG Sponsorship Briefing, 2013). This increase has partly to do with the rise in properties (the event, activity, organization, person being sponsored) within sponsoring. These properties have grown in two ways: firstly, the number of properties has been going up and secondly, the expenditures on already existing events went up. The growth in sponsorship also has to do with world brands seeking a world communication platform to promote their products and services. "The interaction between sport sponsorship and television gives an international dimension to sponsorship programmes." (Beech & Chadwick, 2007, p. 277). While embeddedness moved marketeers to the world of sponsorship, the potential of sponsorship has kept brands in sponsorship and saw their budgets increase in this area. However, the key challenge in sponsorship remains the measurement on the outcome of the sponsorship. Beech and Chadwick (2007) say that evaluations such as the ROI (Return On Investment), will become more important in the

future. Therefore, marketeers need to be able to measure the impact of the sponsorship programme. The rise of social media in sponsorship is one of the most important trends. Social media interactions can be tracked and provides the measurement which is currently lacking within sponsorships. There is no doubt that social media will become more and more important in sponsorship (Cornwell, 2014).

One of the new emerging sponsorship properties could be eSports. The world of competitive gaming attracts a young audience which could be interesting for brands. Many people consider generation X (born between 1960-1980) and the millennials (born between 1980-2000) a hard to reach target group. Although I can't say that all of the millennials and all of generation X is following and watching eSports, I can say that a part of these groups can be found within eSports.

**Motives & goals of sponsorship**
Obviously, there are many goals of sponsorship to be found in various companies. Typical sponsorship objectives that can be found are (Cornwell, 2014, p. 29):
- Corporate/brand image enhancement
- Direct on-site sales
- Increased awareness levels
- Reaching specific target market
- Develop/build client relationship
- Gain media exposure
- Increase employee morale
- Trade/hospitality objectives
- Product/service demonstration platform

In addition to these basic objectives, managers can set more extensive and comprehensive objectives. This can be, for example, utilizing sponsorship to differentiate your brand from competitors and to build brand equity. It can also be in the form of building employee identification to the firm or elevating the brand perception to key clients (business-to-business). In general, the more sophisticated objectives get, the longer a relationship remains (Cornwell, 2014).

Another important goal which is not explicitly mentioned by Cornwell (2004) is the objective of 'international communication'. Beech and Chadwick (2007) write that big companies are implementing international strategies to benefit from scale economies. The main challenge is to control the message going out to different target markets among different countries.

A motive, however, is something different than a goal. A motive is a reason for 'why' you are doing something and a goal is something you would like to achieve. In this case a motive would be why companies are entering into eSports sponsorship. And a goal would be what they would like to achieve with the eSports sponsorship. They are very similar, but there is a slight difference.

I have no reason to think that sponsorship objectives are different in sponsoring eSports than in other sponsorship properties. I think that reaching a specific target market is especially important within eSports since a lot of young people are following eSports. eSports provides the potential for companies to reach the young target markets. For the companies that are closely related to the industry, such as sellers of gaming peripherals, it could be more about showing and demonstrating their products. When the professional gamers use their gear, it might attract amateur gamers to also buy these products. The professional gamers in this game act as influencers.

**Sponsorship leveraging**

The starting point of any sponsorship is: "an investment, in cash or in kind, in an activity, person or event (sponsee), in return for access to the exploitable commercial potential associated with that activity, person or event by the investor (sponsor)." (Quester & Thompson, 2001, p. 38). When talking about leveraging, there must be e a clear distinction between 'leveraging' and 'activation'. Sponsorship leveraging is the use of marketing communications and activities to develop marketing potential on the association between the sponsor and the sponsee. Activational communications should be viewed as a separate part of leveraging. They are "communications that promote the engagement, involvement or participation of the sponsorship audience with the sponsor." (Weeks, Cornwell, & Drennan, 2008, p. 639). In a study of the Athens Olympics in 2004, seven sponsorship leveraging categories were identified: media advertising, sales promotions, publications, special events,

new products/services, customer hospitality and employee programs (Papadimitriou & Apostolopoulou, 2019).

So why must sponsorships be leveraged? In sponsorship it is believed that a brand must leverage the sponsorship agreement with additional spending or the brand will risk wasting the initial investment (Cornwell, 2014). However more spending does not equal more success. Therefore, there are 3 central reasons to leverage a sponsorship agreement.

The first one is about telling 'the brands story'. Sponsorship properties often know that they need to help the sponsor communicate in order to have a healthy long-term relationship. But each property has a number of sponsors in their roster and often don't know everything about the brand. So, if sponsors or brands want to make sure that their story is told through the sponsorship, it will be up to them to truly leverage the sponsorship. The second reason is to use leveraging as a defensive strategy. Brands that leverage their sponsorship are less likely to be ambushed by competitors. Even when you get ambushed you are more likely to be successful when you are leveraging. The third reason is about message variation and repetition. When you vary in your message and repeat your message enough it supports memory for the brand. Sponsorship agreements often include opportunities to place logos and signage at an event or embed this information in the programming. This presents an opportunity for unique forms of message repetition as the brand or logo is experienced with various athletes, celebrities or attendees during the event. This repetition and variation is beyond what might be achieved with traditional advertising. You must however be careful for excessive signage, which may cause perceptions of commercialization's among the public (Cornwell, 2014).

Some of the most discussed leveraging types are related to social media, technology and hospitality (Cornwell, 2014). The biggest challenge in each of these areas is to learn how leveraging delivers brand value. Social media in combination with sponsorship can be a huge potential but also a big risk. Word of mouth communication is known to be more effective than traditional advertising; electronic word of mouth has the same potential, especially when he or she feels part of an online community (Huang, Hsiao, & Chen, 2012).

Most social media have the potential for individuals to develop a personal brand. Viewing these social media channels as a business tool has an effect in which athletes can now

directly communicate with fans and build themselves brand value. This makes them attractive to sponsors. At the same time social media offers more opportunities for measurement. A risk however in social media arises when existing groups such as fans are involved and have some established rapport within their community. Another possible risk of social media is that social amplifications. Images and attitudes can be just as much negative as they can be positive. Technology based leveraging can be very interesting for large events. Mobile technology (such as apps), offers opportunities to engage with attendees and offers the possibility to keep communicating with attendees after the event has ended. Hospitality leveraging is primarily the hosting of business guests. This can be used as a method of relationship maintenance, or just a way of saying 'thank you' for past business (Cornwell, 2014).

Most people with knowledge about sponsorship will agree that there are wasted opportunities when a contract is not backed with additional spending (Cornwell, 2014). But the amount of this investment can vary a lot. The spending in addition to the contract amount depends on several contextual factors. Firstly, it depends on what is in the contract. The contract is the base in counting how many leveraging is needed, it depends what is in the contract and what is not. Secondly, what is accounted for as leveraging. Sometimes the sponsorship department is integrated in the marketing department. Leveraging can then be accounted for in other budgets then the sponsorship budget. Thirdly, the amount of brand equity of the sponsor and the sponsee play into the amount of leveraging needed. Unknown brands must spend more than well-known brands. Fourthly, the duration of the relationship can be important. A relationship that has been in place for many years might be more efficient to leverage more than others. Lastly, the goals and objectives from the brand will influence the leveraging budget. This has to do with a strategic decision from the manager (Cornwell, 2014).

A final point about sponsorship leveraging is that some of the best outcomes come from close collaborations. All the sponsors that can be found in a properties sponsorship roster can form associations which gives synergistic potential. The biggest message from the sponsorship business over the past decades has been to do leveraging more extensively. It's not the leveraging ratio that matters, but the connectivity and creativity of the link built between the sponsor and the sponsee (Cornwell, 2014).

I think that the principal of leveraging also applies to the eSports business. Especially for those companies that do not have a direct link to the world of eSports. It's easier for consumers to understand the link between a computer manufacturer and eSports than the link between eSports and a fashion brand. The fashion brand might have to do more leveraging than the computer manufacturer to get the optimal result out of it. This however doesn't always have to be the case. Since there are currently a lot of sponsors in eSports that are closely related to it, there might be a lot of competitors as well. In case of many competitors you might have to leverage more to look better than the competition.

### 3.1.2 Academic literature on eSports sponsorships

Previously I have shown what general sponsorship theory contains. There is an increasing stream of literature on eSports in general, however the research on eSports sponsorship is still very limited. Therefore, I would like to summarize each of the five articles that have been written so far. In the table below, you will find which articles I am going to discuss.

| Author & Year | Title | Publisher |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **1. Yuri Seo (2013)** | Electronic Sports: A new marketing landscape of the experience economy. | Journal of Marketing management |
| **2. Samuel Korpimies (2017)** | Sponsorship in eSports | Aalto University |
| **3. Janus Pitkänen** | Value creation through sponsorship in electronic sports. | Lappeenranta University of Technology |
| **4. Xen Chalmet (2015)** | Sponsorship within eSports: examining the sponsorship relationship quality constructs. | University of Gothenburg |
| **5. Chawki Bouaoui (2016)** | eSports sponsorship effectiveness on brand awareness and brand image. | Dublin Business School |

*Table 4: Academic literature overview*

**Article 1: Yuri Seo (2013)**

In his article Seo tries to discover how the experiential value of eSports is emergent.
He moves towards exploring the roles of various stakeholders within the value network of eSports actors. "The findings show that the collaborative efforts of gaming companies, players, online communities, governing bodies, and many other stakeholders play important roles in enriching and sustaining the experiential value of eSports consumption." (Seo, 2013, p. 1542). His conclusion shows me that companies should not focus on games per se, but to move towards designing and managing experiences within the network of multiple

marketing actors. He uses the 4E'smodel and the value network of co-creation to study this topic.

Seo also mentions that companies outside the computer & hardware industry tend to limit their engagement to eSports. By limiting your engagement, the companies outside the computer & hardware industry will not align their brands or products with the eSports experience. Companies can make themselves more attractive to this market when they start participating in enhancing the performance of the eSport experience. According to him the 4E's framework can help to identify alternative ways in which sponsors can get actively engaged with eSports.

This paper can highly contribute to my research since Seo says it is very important for sponsors as well to be involved in creating the eSports experiences. I have to find out if the sponsors within my sample are connected to the eSport experience, and if they are, how are they connected to it? And within which realm of the 4E's model. More information on experiences and the 4E's model can be found in chapter 3.2.

**Article 2: Samuel Korpimies (2017)**

In his bachelor thesis Korpimies tries to found out how sponsorships in eSports are conducted. The study tries to obtain information on three variables. Firstly, what is the acquiring process within eSports? Secondly, how is value created through sponsorships? Thirdly, how is the effectiveness of sponsorship within eSports measured. By interviewing three sponsors data was obtained for this study.

He discovered that the acquisition process of the sponsors within eSports highly varies between companies. This was mostly dependent on the companies' different objectives. It was also found that sponsors are having trouble measuring the success of the sponsorship. Sponsors rely on very few techniques to measure the value created through the sponsorship. Lastly, it was found that it was needed to have open discussions to maintain a good working relation between sponsor and sponsee.

This study has provided me valuable insight on how sponsorships are maintained and how the relationship is maintained between the different parties. The second research question from this study about creating value through sponsorship has not been addressed in this

research. Looking at my own research question, this is what I am going to try to found out within my research. Despite the fact that this thesis shows some resemblance with mine, this research is very descriptive and does not really become explanatory.

**Article 3: Janus Pitkänen (2015)**

The objective of Pitkänen's master thesis was to study value creation through sponsorship within eSports. Firstly, it was tried to find out how actor relationships in eSports sponsorships work. Secondly, how actors engage in sponsorship relationships. Thirdly, what are the main benefits for the actors in eSports sponsorships? Finally, to see what are the different methods that are being used in eSports sponsorships relationships to gain value. Theories of traditional sports sponsorships and the practice of eSports were compared to see how theories are working within the new environment of eSports. The B2B-relationship model of actors was used to clarify different variables used within the sponsorship environment in eSports. The empirical part was conducted through several interviews with managers working within the eSports environment.

The study finds that the actors within eSports work towards mutual benefits. Contracts are done like in any other business and those contracts will be evaluated. It is also found that sponsors are looking for interesting entities to market their products and look for entities that share the sponsor's view and image. Benefits for sponsors that can come from sponsorships are brand and image development, visibility, financial support, business process support and product support. Both the actors receive an improvement on brand image and visibility. According to the researcher there is many ways in which value can be created but the value creation happens within the relations between the actors. When the relationships are good, it is more likely that the outcome of the sponsorship will be better for both actors.

This study has given valuable insight on the overall picture between the different actors and their roles within the sponsorship relationship. This study shows me that the relationship between the sponsor and the sponsee needs to be good in order to create value. This study sketches the role of multiple actors, whereas I am focussing on the sponsors and how they are trying to create value for themselves. My study can contribute to this research by gaining more specific knowledge on one of the actors.

**Article 4: Xen Chalmet (2015)**

The study by Chalmet aims to give insights in how sponsorships relationships within eSport are handled and maintained. This done by identifying what is most valued within eSports sponsorships. This study is looking at the effects of trust and commitments on the levels of satisfaction gained from a consumer perspective. This to give sponsorship managers a better understanding of sponsorships relationships within eSports. This research was done through in-depth interviews with managers and players within eSports.

The data indicated that high levels of trust are very important. High levels of trust had a direct positive influence on the levels of commitment and non-economic satisfaction, whereas commitment has a higher direct impact on economic satisfaction. Chalmet recommends sponsorship managers to adapt their business position towards a trust worthy approach, where the level of trust is provided by the entities within eSports. This paper claims that trust is key to building long - lasting sponsorship relations within eSports.

This study focusses on the eSports entities to make sure there is a good environment for sponsors to sponsor the entities. By taking a consumer perspective it is again showed that a good relationship between sponsor and sponsee will benefit the sponsorship. While this study focusses on what the eSport entities can do to improve, my study is trying to find out what the sponsors themselves are doing to make the sponsorship successful. In the end studies from different perspectives will help to create an overall picture of the eSports sponsorship environment.

**Article 5: Chawki Bouaoui (2016)**

The primary focus of Bouaoui's master thesis is to investigate the impact and the effectiveness eSports sponsorships have on brands. The main research questions focused on one aspect within sponsoring, namely, does eSport sponsorship increase brand awareness and brand image among consumers? This study starts with exploring secondary data on theories about branding. This with a focus on brand awareness and image along its relation with brand equity and familiarity. After this the Bouaoui send out a survey in which consumers where ask to fill in several questions on sponsorships within eSports.

The results showed that at least 87% percent of the respondents could identify one of the brands sponsoring within eSports. When it comes to brand awareness the findings show that

the respondents who previously had consumed the brand were more able to recall the brand as a sponsor. "In terms of brand image, the secondary data suggest that sponsorship contributes to a modification of an image dimension by often generating a positive feeling towards the sponsor and by establishing a transfer of association from the sponsored brand to the event." (Bouaoui, 2016, p. 100).

This study zooms into two outcomes that can exist with sponsorships in general, brand image and brand awareness. The research is very valuable for companies to see that it really improves their awareness and image. However, it was not really identified in this study whether companies are looking for improving awareness and image with their eSports sponsorships. It could be that companies are not really interested in these objectives. Therefore, it would have been better for the author to first indicate what companies are trying to achieve with their sponsorships. It seems a bit strange to already start identifying results while it might not even be one of their objectives. Within my research I am also going to try and find out what the sponsors objectives are, which I now realize is important.

## 3.2 Experience economy

According to Seo (2013) eSports consumers mostly identify themselves with the experience associated to eSports. Therefore, I must further explain on experiences and what they mean for the economic model.

In 1998 Pine & Gillmore first introduced the concept of an 'experience economy' (Pine & Gillmore, 1998). They argue that experiences are different economic offerings, they are different from services as services are from goods. "Experiences have emerged as the next step in what we call the progression of economic value." (Pine & Gillmore, 1998, p. 97). For companies selling to consumers or businesses, the challenge nowadays lies in staging experiences. In addition, an experience is a real construct, just as much as any good, service or commodity. To obtain the full benefit of staging experiences, companies must deliberately design engaging experiences that command a fee.

"An experience occurs when a company intentionally uses services as the stage, and goods as props, to engage individual customers in a way that creates a memorable event. Commodities are fungible, goods tangible, services intangible, and experiences memorable." (Pine & Gillmore, 1998, p. 98). In contrast to prior economic offerings,

experiences are very personal. The experience exists in the mind of an individual who feels engaged in an emotional, intellectual, physical and even spiritual way. Therefore, not a single person has the same experience. Although experiences are very closely related to the entertainment business, the concept of selling experiences goes beyond this industry.

Before a company can start selling experiences it must design an experience that people want to pay for. Design, marketing and delivery are just as important in offering experiences as they are in services and goods (Pine & Gillmore, 1998).

**4Es Model**
One way to separate experiences is to think of two different dimensions. The first dimension is customer participation which can be active and passive. In passive participation customers don't affect the performance. In active participation customers play key roles in the performance that yields the experience. The second dimension is about the connection that includes customers with the performance or event. This connection can either be absorption or immersion. Seeing a film at the theatre with an audience, large screen and stereo sound is more immersive than watching a movie at home.

Knowing these two dimension we can create four realms of an experience (shown in figure 3). The kinds of experiences most people think of as entertainment tend to be those in which customers participate more passively than actively, where connection with the event is more likely to be absorption than of immersion, e.g. watching television or attending a concert. Educational events tend to involve more active participation, but customers are still more outside the event than immersed in the action, e.g. attending a class or taking a ski lesson. Escapist experiences can teach just as well as educational events can, or amuse just as well as entertainment can, but they involve greater customer immersion. These events are events like acting in play, playing in an orchestra or descending into the Grand Canyon. When you minimize the customers active participation within the escapist degree you will get esthetic participation. This can be a tourist who looks at the Grand Canyon from the edge but doesn't make the descent down (Pine & Gillmore, 1998).

Mostly, we find that the richest forms of experiences are those experiences which include aspects from all four realms. This however is an incredibly hard thing to do and might not

always be reachable. The most significant question managers should ask themselves what kind of experience they have to offer. This experience will define their business.
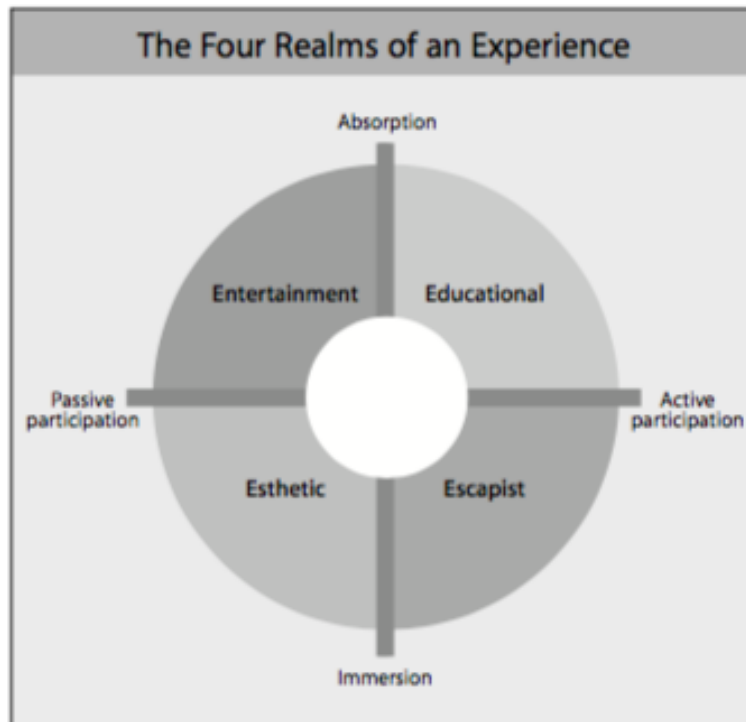


*Figure 1: The four realms of an Experience* (Pine & Gillmore, 1998)

When placing the most important marketing actors within the 4E's model you will get what is shown in figure 2. The figure shows that "the contemporary market for competitive computer gaming embodies the theoretical orientation towards the co-creation within value network in the sense that companies, consumers, and other stakeholders jointly co-create and enhance the experiential value of eSports. Furthermore, the roles of these marketing actors are not discrete. The same actors may play multiple roles across the 4Es, engaging in both co-staging and experiencing of competitive gaming. Subsequently, rather than talking about the hosts and guests of eSports experience, it is more appropriate to view this market as a constellation of multiple eSports actors participating in the co-creation of value, and these actors originate both from the companies and consumers. Within the marketing domain, eSports can therefore be conceptualised as a distinct segment of computer-game consumption, identified by the particular experiences of competitive game play that immerse, educate, entertain, and engage consumers in play, co-created within the value network of marketing actors by a means of the specific forms of the online and offline performances." (Seo, 2013, p. 1555).
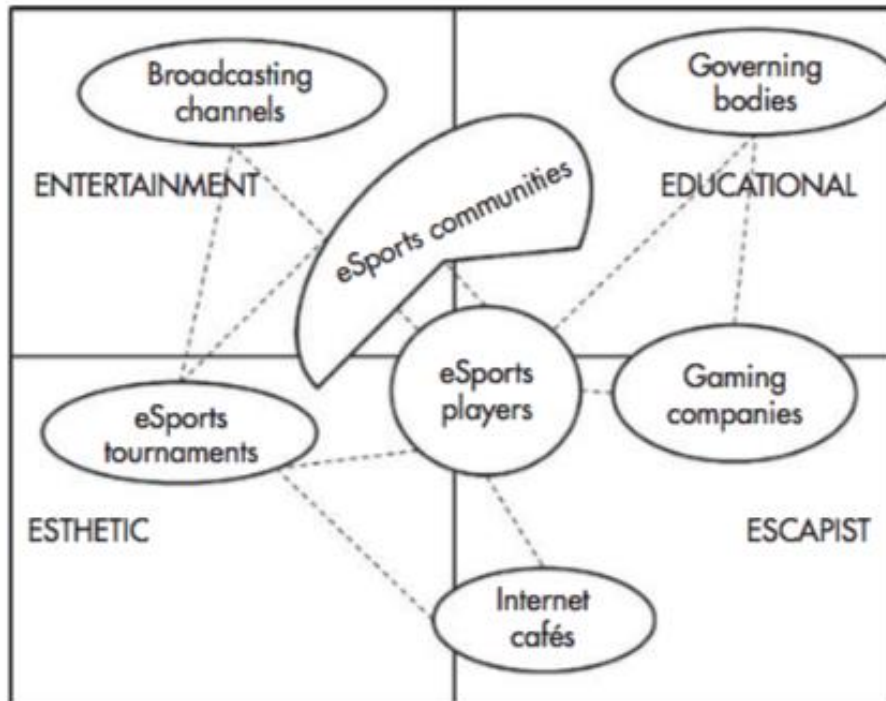
*Figure 2: The experiential value network of eSports consumption* (Seo, 2013, p. 1555)

**Designing memorable experiences**

Pine & Gillmore have also identified five key principles in designing memorable experiences. The first principle in designing a key experience is 'theming the experience'. When you hear the name of any product or service you instantly know what you can expect. The next key principle is 'harmonizing impressions with positive cues'. While the theme will form the foundation, the experience must be filled with unforgettable experiences. Each element must support the theme and cannot be inconsistent with it. A logical thing that follows is to 'eliminate negative cues', which is the third key element. All the elements that contradict, distract and diminish the theme must be removed from the experience. The fourth key principle in designing experiences is 'mix in memorabilia'. Certain goods are often bought to memorize the experience they convey. Consumers buy such memorabilia as a physical reminder of the experience. The fifth and last principle is to try and 'engage all five senses'. The sensory stimulants should enhance the theme of the experience. The more senses are engaged in an experience, the more effective and memorable it can be (Pine & Gillmore, 1998).

## 3.3 Model of consumer-focused sponsorship-linked marketing communication

The model of 'consumer-focused sponsorship-linked marketing communication (figure 3)' was originally published by Cornwell et al. in 2005. "The model depicts a simplified five-element frame for understanding processing: individual and group factors, market factors, and management factors all influence the processing mechanics of sponsorship and subsequently the measured outcomes of the sponsorship." (Cornwell, 2014, p. 43). In order to answer the research questions, this model might be useful in identifying any factors that might influence sponsorships within eSports.
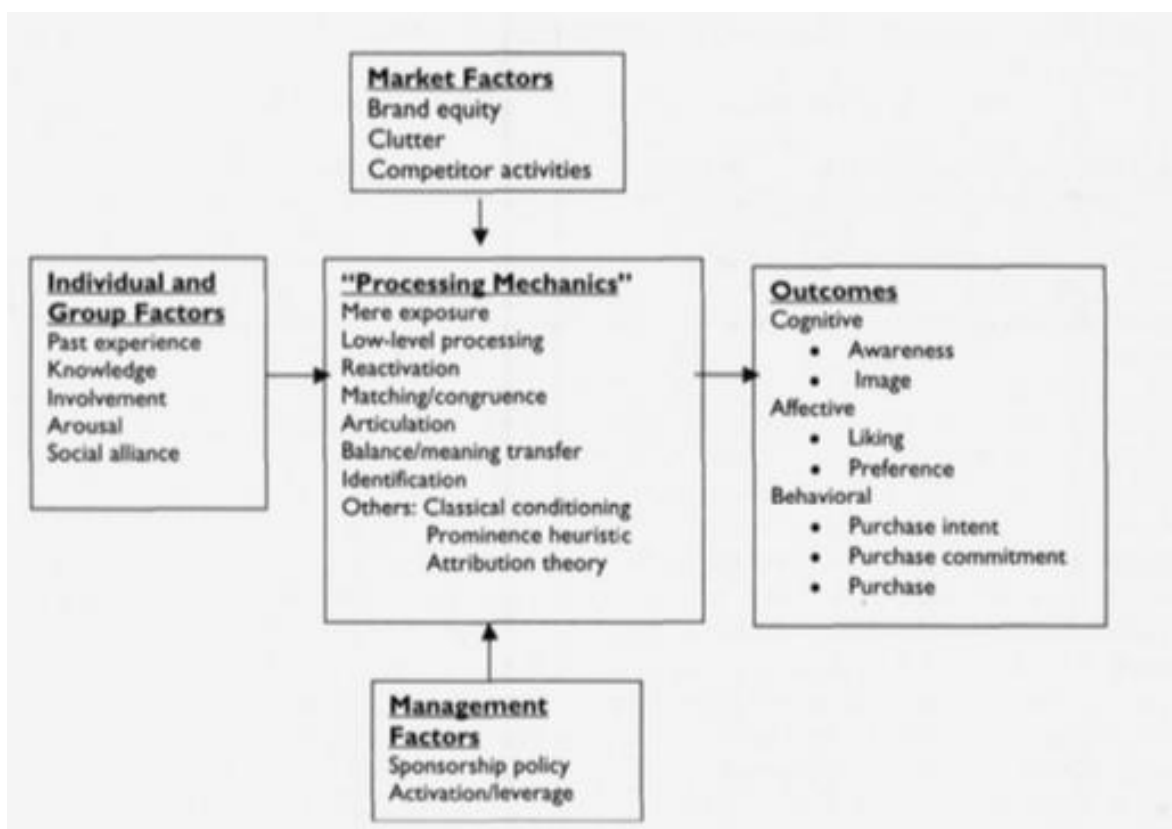


*Figure 3: Model of consumer-focused sponsorship-linked marketing* (Cornwell, Weeks, & Roy, 2005)

To further investigate and clarify, I will now describe each of the boxes displayed in the model. I will also start to discuss the factors within the eSports setting.

**Individual and group factors**

The 'individual and group factors' box contains several factors that can influence the communication. These are factors that are already there before the communication message

is processed. It might be, for example, that people already have experienced your brand or that they already possess a certain knowledge about the brand. The people that already have this information do not need much communication about the brand, just the brand logo might be enough for them. Someone's individual involvement is about someone's interest and motivation in a certain situation or context. Someone can be highly involved with a certain sport, a certain team or a certain player which might influence the success of the sponsorship. Arousal or excitement can encourage the processing of sponsorship information if individuals are paying attention to an event and learn while they are viewing. More is not necessarily better in this case because too much excitement in the event might distract from the sponsorship communication. A last factor but a very important one within this box is social alliances. Social alliances might influence the way a person is responding to sponsorship communications. A person is often part of certain groups which can give certain pressure. This is something that can be found within team sports often. For example, many people in sports for example feel a very strong team allegiance. They will automatically like the sponsors that are supporting their favourite team (Cornwell, 2014)

Like other sports, eSports fans are often fan of certain teams, which might cause these fans to buy the goods/services from the companies sponsoring their favourite team. The brands that are well known within the industry, such as computer brands, often don't have to communicate more than the logo for the event attendees to remember the brand. Companies that are less known, have to do more than just show their logo.

**Market Factors**

The second box in the model is about 'market factors' that can influence the communications within sponsorship. Existing brand equity, communication clutter and activities by competitors are extra important. Well-known companies that have a high equity have some advantages when communicating through sponsorship. A high-equity brand that fits well with a particular event might even be associated as a sponsor of the event while this particular brand is not sponsoring. Often, low-equity brands have to communicate more than just their name and logo, they must also communicate their product categories. When there is a clutter in communication, there is too much sponsorship communications which confuses the attendants of the event. The sponsorship manager must decide if the value of being a sponsor offsets the confusion that might be created by clutter. Activities by competitors can play a key role in sponsorship communication. Communications by a direct

competitor surrounding the event is considered as ambush marketing. This type of communications has the potential to distract attention from the true sponsor. The manager usually cannot control market factors such as the ones mentioned above, but they should be prepared to address issues when they arise (Cornwell, 2014).

Market factors within eSports especially apply when a certain type of brand is sponsoring a lot within the eSport business. For example, a lot of brands represented in sponsorship that produce gaming gear such as computer mousses, keyboards, headphones, etc. This might lead to a big clutter of sponsors, sponsoring within the same business. To differentiate yourself from other brands you might have to do more than just displaying the logo at various locations.

**Management Factors**

The third box is about the 'management factors'. The role of management in sponsorship decisions can be critical for success. The choices a manager makes about their own policies may sometimes influence the policies of the event itself. Often, it is the brand manager is who decides how and at which level will be sponsored. He/she has the most knowledge about products and own experiences in sponsoring. Setting up a sponsorship policy is a management tool that can help align the company's mission and the objectives of its corporate communication such as sponsoring. Leveraging a sponsorship agreement is critical in building brand value from the sponsorship agreement. "The money spent by a sponsor in addition to the contract that establishes the right to associate with a property is called leverage or activation." (Cornwell, 2014, p. 46). It is up to the manager and the budget to build brand value from collateral advertising, promotions and hospitality linked to a property sponsorship. It should also be noted that market and management factors might need to change during the sponsorship contract (Cornwell, 2014).

**Processing mechanics**

After examining the three outside factors that can contribute to communications of sponsorship, it is time to look at the central box of the model 'processing mechanics'. Most of the sponsorships seek to create attitudes and memory for the relationship between the sponsors and sponsee. A total of 9 processing mechanics (mere exposure, low-level processing, reactivation, matching/congruence, articulation, balance/meaning transfer,

identification, classical conditioning, prominence heuristic and attribution theory) will be discussed. These mechanics do not necessary work by itself but may occur in a combination. The 'mere exposure' hypothesis was first introduced in 1968 by Robert Zajonc (Zajonc, 1968). This hypothesis says that repeated exposure to a certain stimulus will develop a sense of liking in a person. In sponsorship, this means repeated exposure to a brand or logo will develop a sense of liking towards the brand (Cornwell, 2014).

Another way that seems to offer an easy path is low-level processing. "This posits that there is a central route to communication processing where we tend to think deeply about messages and arguments and, conversely, a second peripheral route where there is a low-level of processing that conserves effort buy may still influence attitudes and ultimately behaviours." (Cornwell, 2014, p. 47). In these kind of situations, we may not make active choices or we may have our attention on something else. Also, something in the sponsorship context might reactivate memories a person has towards the brand. If the memory about the brand is positive it can build associations from the past and make memory recoveries from the past (Cornwell, 2014).

'Matching or congruence' means the fit between the sponsor and the sponsored property. When they fit well together it is often a lot easier for people to remember the connection. When a brand is not matching very well with the event it is inescapable that some incongruence occurs (Cornwell, 2014).

Sometimes when the fit or the link between the sponsor and the sponsee is not very clear to people, some explanation might be necessary. To make the link understandable a story needs to be told. This is what we call the element of 'articulation'. Sometimes a single sentence can make the difference. So instead of limiting sponsorships to those that have a natural fit, fit can be created through the presentation of the sponsorship (Cornwell, 2014).

So far, I have focused on creating memory of the sponsorship relationship. If you would like to focus on attitude or image, you might consider balance theory or meaning transfer. Balance theory says that people are looking for stable relationships, and when a relationship is out of balance we tend to restore it (Heider, 1958). When someone has an indifferent or even negative attitude towards a brand, the sponsorship of an event that you like might help you feel move positive towards a brand. You can transfer the meaning of the event towards

your brand, this however must look genuine and not like you are just borrowing its positive image (Cornwell, 2014).

'Identification' in sponsorship is a feeling of sameness with regard to an event, a team or whatever is being sponsored. When people are starting to say 'we' in an organization you could see identification is apparent. In sport people often feel part of an event or a team, in sport identification is very apparent (Cornwell, 2014).

"The pairing of an event and a brand could be viewed as a type of classical conditioning where people learn over time from associations in their environment." (Cornwell, 2014, p. 50). When combining a sponsor with an event that has positive associations, these associations may build for the sponsor over time as well. After the brand is being associated with the event, it might even evoke feelings of pride on its own (Cornwell, 2014).

Prominence or market share advantage has since long been recognized within the advertising business. People often see and associate market leaders as sponsors which gives them an advantage. It works even better if the brand is in some way related to the event or the sport. Prominent and non-sponsoring brands are more likely to be mistaken as sponsors than those less prominent and unrelated (Wakefield, Becker-Olsen, & Cornwell, 2007).

"Attribution theory deals with how the social perceiver uses information to arrive at causal explanations for events." (Fiske & Taylor, 1991, p. 5). This aspect of information processing is particularly important when dealing with sponsorships that might be perceived as commercially minded. If a company becomes overly commercial in its communications, it is possible that people will develop negative reactions towards a sponsor. On the other hand, if a sponsor is perceived as genuine, positive attributions may arise (Cornwell, 2014).

**Outcomes of sponsoring**
The last box of the model is about the outcomes of sponsoring. The box shows us 3 outcomes: thinking (cognitive), liking (effective) and behavioural. The main cognitive outcome for sponsors is creating brand awareness among the people. But brands also might seek to develop awareness of their products and services. Effective responses could be people liking the brand, people preferring you brand over others, positive feelings towards the brands or improved attitudes. And again, for some sponsors it is more about liking their

products or services then over liking their brand. Through several different mechanisms sponsors can enhance image or attitude towards the brand. Sometimes it might be to create a positive reputation and feelings of goodwill towards the brand. In the end most brand want to change consumer behaviour through sponsorships. This can be measure through sales, but without very good tracking it might be difficult to get exact sales numbers from the sponsorships (Cornwell, 2014).

In general, the model of sponsorship linked marketing by Cornwell (2014), can be used to identify several factors that might or might not influence the sponsorship. It can help me to see how brands within eSports position their brand within the sponsorship landscape.

# 4.0  Methodology

This chapter is all about describing the methodology used in this research. It describes in what way the data is collected, the reason for data collection, how the data was interpreted and why this is the best approach to answer the research question.

## 4.1  Research design

This research tries to find out how companies from different industries can engage with eSports consumers through sponsorship. After the research question was identified and determined, the design best suited to this research question had to be found. According to Veal & Darcy, to decide on which approach to apply, is closely related to the research question itself (Veal & Darcy, 2014). The research design should explain how the data was collected and why it was collected this way. The aim of writing your research design is to see how you are going to accomplish the research. Looking at the research question I can see that the question is quite open which means 'extensive' research might be in place. In an extensive research there is not a multitude of variables which are examined, but it examines many entities. Since I am focussing on all sponsors within the eSports industry, the research is quite broad and it is impossible to research a lot of variables. Also, the academic literature on sponsorships within eSports is still quite limited, therefore it is better to first get an overall understanding of how sponsors can engage in eSports through sponsorships.

The next step was to determine if the research question was explanatory and/or descriptive. Descriptive research can be described as research that seeks to discover, describe or map patterns of behaviour in areas in which have not been researched before. Explanatory research moves beyond description and seeks to find an explanation for what is happening (Veal & Darcy, 2014). In this research I am going to look at how brands can engage with eSports consumers through sponsorship. Since there is not many research done before on eSports sponsorship this will at first be descriptive. Within this research I am trying to form a base for further research on eSports sponsorships which requires to discover this area. However, the actual results of the research can be explanatory as well since the results on the questions can give me some answers that will explain the phenomenon. Therefore, this research shows a mix of both descriptive and explanatory. According to Veal and Darcy

(2014, p. 6): "in some cases particular research projects concentrate on only one of these, but often two or more of the approaches are included in the same research project."

## 4.2 Research approach

The next step is to choose whether this is going to be quantitative or qualitative research. "The quantitative approach to research involves numerical data. It relies on numerical evidence to draw conclusions or to test hypothesis." (Veal & Darcy, 2014, p. 39). "The qualitative approach to research is generally not concerned with numbers but typically with information in the form of words, conveyed orally or in writing." (Veal & Darcy, 2014, p. 39). Because we are not looking for numerical data within this research the qualitative approach was chosen. After the qualitative approach was chosen, the next step was to choose in which way the information was going to be collected.

Firstly, an industry review of eSports was conducted, specifically on its history, its major actors, the different categories and the platform on which eSports is displayed. Since there is not much academic research on eSports, I had to use a lot of non-academic sources. Because these sources are used and frequently mentioned by the eSports community, these sources seem reliable and very much up to date. The eSports industry, however, is growing at a very high speed and that means that the information that was obtained during this industry review may already be outdated. The academic literature on eSports was found by using online academic libraries such as Oria, while the other non-academic sources were mostly found by using online search engines such as Google.

After reviewing the literature on eSports and writing down an overview of the industry, I tried to find theories on both 'sponsorship' and 'experiences', which can help us to answer the research question. By using the theory of the 'experience economy' by Pine & Gillmore (1998), I was able to review the experience part of eSports. And by using Cornwell's model on 'sponsorship linked marketing' (2005) I was able to better understand sponsorship communications.

Based on the industry review and the literature review, a questionnaire with open questions was sent out to a multitude of companies that are or have been sponsoring within eSports. This is done to get a better understanding on how sponsorship within eSports work. A questionnaire is often used within quantitative research, but it can also be used within

qualitative research. When the questions are open and the interviewee has the chance to write down whatever he wants it means you are collecting qualitative data (SurveyMethods, 2017).

**Research method**

Based on the information found in the industry overview and the literature review, it was desirable to do interviews with brands that are already sponsoring within eSports. It doesn't matter if they are sponsoring events, teams, athletes or other sponsorship properties. This was done to get a better understanding how brands are currently sponsoring in eSports, and to analyse what brands could do more when sponsoring eSports.

According to Veal & Darcy interview types are characterized by three points: length, depth and structure (Veal & Darcy, 2014). Questionnaire-based interviews tend to be shorter then in depth interviews. In depth interviews seek to probe more deeply into the content then questionnaire-based interviews. Because an in-depth interview is much more open for conversation, an in-depth interview is less structured then a questionnaire-based interview. Furthermore, there is also a choice between individual and group interviews (Veal & Darcy, 2014).

For this research I have chosen individual interviews, because it was simply not possible to get a group of people together from various different companies across Europe. It was chosen to send a questionnaire-based survey to various brands sponsoring in eSports. Usually interviews are taken face to face, where there is an actual conversation. An interview however can be held through a survey. Instead of asking the questions face to face they are written down by the interviewee. I can therefore consider this personal interview type as a semi-structured questionnaire (Veal & Darcy, 2014). The questionnaires were send by email. The disadvantage of sending over a questionnaire by email is, that it is not possible for the interviewer to observe the interviewee. It is also easier to lie when a questionnaire is send over by email and filled in individually. On the other hand, sending over a questionnaire can also be more relaxing for the researcher and the participant, as the participant has the time to think about the answers and the researcher doesn't have to be there all the time (Wright, 2005). Because the questionnaire is send over to the companies by email it is best to create a semi-structured interview. When filling in, the interviewer does not have the ability to further explain the questions and must therefore structure it very well, in order for the

interviewee to understand the questions (Wright, 2005). But also, cannot be too structured since it will limit the interviewees in fully answering the questions. In the email however, it was clearly stated that the companies could email me back if they had any questions regarding the questionnaire. Furthermore, it was also stated that the results will be published anonymously, due to potentially sensitive information.

**Sample**

A total of 92 companies where approached via email to fill in the survey. 25 out of those 92 (27%) have started the survey, 5 out of 92 (5%) were able to finish the survey. Since I am also investigating the differences between industries that are closely related and the ones that are not, I have categorized all the companies that were approached in 3 categories: 'Closely related', 'somewhat related' and 'not related'. It is up to me to determine in which category a company fits, but I have done this by looking at their core businesses. If a company is 'closely related' to eSports it must be its core business. When a company is 'somewhat related', it does not have eSports as core-business but it has operations that touch upon eSports. And lastly, when a company is 'not related', its business is not related to eSports at all. See table 4 below for the results.

| Relation to eSports | Number of companies | Percentage of total |
|---|---|---|
| Closely related to eSports | 50 | 54% |
| Somewhat related to eSports | 22 | 24% |
| Not related to eSports | 20 | 22% |

*Table 5: Categorization of approached companies (n=92)*

5 companies have filled in the survey and were thus included in this multiple case study. In the table below, you will find a short description of the companies as well if it is closely related to the eSports industry, using the categories above. Since the anonymity of the companies can't be infringed, the companies are named company A, company B, company C, and so forth. In the findings (chapter 5) a more extensive description can be found. As can be seen, I have companies represented in all 3 categories which gives us some representation of each category.

| Company | Short description | Related to eSports? |
|---------|------------------|---------------------|
| **Company A** | Company A is selling computer hardware and computer peripherals. They are selling products such as mousses, keyboards, headphones, mouse mats and other computer related products. | Closely related |
| **Company B** | Company B originated as a seller of website domain names. But over the years the company has grown into more offerings such as webhosting, email services and packages for building websites. | Somewhat related |
| **Company C** | Company C is in the business of selling specialized gaming chairs. Next to the business of selling the chairs they are also at many events renting out the chairs to gamers. | Closely related |
| **Company D** | Company D is a company selling software programmes for businesses. Mainly customer service software. | Somewhat related |
| **Company E** | Company E is a company based in Germany that provides health insurances spread over the whole country. | Not related |

*Table 6: Sample description*

**Process**

Based on the industry and literature review, the interviews in the form of a survey were held with the persons responsible for sponsorship within their companies. A request for filling out the survey was sent by email. The email contained a link to the survey which was made through the program Survio.com. This website offers people to build and set out a questionnaire online. When the employees from the company clicked on the link, they were directed towards the online survey. Since the academic research on eSports is still very limited it is also better to receive as much reactions as possible, with which a more structured interview can help. After a period of 3 weeks only 5 companies had filled in the survey which are not very many. Therefore, I decided to move towards a multiple case study, by examining each case by itself. This was possible due to the fact that we had a good mix of companies within the sample.

## 4.3  Reliability, Validity and Trustworthiness

Reliability is about research being reliable, which means that if the same research is repeated at a later date or with a different sample the initial result should be identical. Validity is

about research being valid, which means that information presented in the research truly reflects the phenomena which the researcher claims it reflects (Veal & Darcy, 2014).

**Validity**

According to Veal & Darcy (2014) validity can be split into two types. External validity means to what extent the results can be generalized to a population wider than the particular sample used. Internal validity refers to how accurately the characteristics of the phenomena being studied are represented by the variables used and the data collected. We could say that data collected in a qualitative way has a greater chance of being internally valid than quantitative methods. In qualitative data collection, more time and effort are often taken to collect any piece of information. Because the sample is smaller there is more time for the interviewer and the facilitator to understand each other. External validity in qualitative research is harder to obtain since a smaller sample is studied. Thus, what has been found among a small sample of people is true but we can quantify to which extent it represents all the sponsors in eSports. This is even more applicable in a case study were a particular sample is being highlighted.

The answers by the brands were filled in by themselves which makes the cases internally valid. It would however have been better if I could speak to the companies face to face. This gives the opportunity to ask follow up questions, which make sure the data is complete. The external validity of this research is not as strong as the internal validity. Since the sample is small, I cannot draw a conclusion for all the brands sponsoring within eSports.

**Reliability**

It may be possible that research becomes less reliable if people change their minds quickly. It is also very likely that if you take a different sample the same thing at a different time in another environment the answers will be different. Therefore, a researcher must be very careful in making general and theoretical statements on the basis of empirical research (Veal & Darcy, 2014). Replicability of qualitative research is unlikely, but accumulation of similar, or logically consistent findings from a number of studies can lead to strengthening of the results. Not really in a statistical sense, but at least the robustness of the findings in different settings. To get a clear view on how sponsorship within eSports work, this study must be repeated to see if it will change over time and if other samples show the same findings.

**Trustworthiness & Authenticity**

It has been noted that the use of validity and reliability is not always appropriated to use in non-positivist research. Particularly in qualitative research the concept of trustworthiness and authenticity have been introduced to replace validity and reliability. This concept of trustworthiness and authenticity was introduced by Lincoln and Guba (1985). "Trustworthiness has four components: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Authenticity includes: fairness and ontological, educative, catalytic and tactical authenticity." (Veal & Darcy, 2014, p. 50).

## 4.4 Ethics

Just like in any other field of human activity, ethical behaviour is an important part of research. Considerations such as plagiarism and honesty in reporting results, arise in all research. Additional issues arise when the research involves human and/or animal subjects. Increasingly issues also arise in research when it might have an impact on the physical environment. The underlying ethical principles of research however are universal to all: "they concern things like honesty and respect for the rights of individuals and animals and the integrity of eco-systems." (Veal & Darcy, 2014, p. 105).

When collecting data for this research, I found several ethical issues and dilemma's which should be tackled. Although I was not directly speaking with the respondents (only via email), he/she needs to consider issues and dilemma's in contacting the potential respondents.

Firstly, I thought about hiding the purpose of the research towards the respondents answering the survey. I chose to not hide the purpose of the research since it did not influence on the reliability of the research. The questions in the survey also strongly suggest what the research is about, and therefore there is no reason existed to keep the purpose of the study as a secret.

Secondly, when contacting the potential respondents, I explained that it would greatly help the outcome of the research if they would be willing to answer the survey, but it was definitely being not obligatory to cooperate. Persons/brands participating in the survey need to choose for themselves if they would like participate in the research or not. They need to fill in the survey voluntarily, based on their own considerations whether this research forms

a danger or a benefit for themselves. Based on the information that was sent out in the email the participants decided to participate or not. Eventually, 5 brands decided to participate in the research by filling in the survey.

Another thing that needs to be considered is the privacy of the respondents. The respondents have the right to privacy, which means personal data can't be published. First of all, the name of the person filling in the survey on behalf of the company/brand was not mentioned at all. Therefore, there is not personal infringement, with the person filling out the survey. It was also clearly stated in the email and the introduction to the survey that the results would be published anonymously. Instead of mentioning the companies by their own names, I chose to call them company A, company B, company C and so forth. For the purpose of this research, it is not necessary to know which brands says what, because the research is about the engagement to eSports by companies through sponsorship in general. The only thing that is useful to know is in which industry they operate in to see what the differences are between several industries are.

The last criterion I would like to mention, is the correct representation of the data. This means that the respondents have the right to be accurately written down. To make the result as accurate as possible, I tried to represent the answer in the best way possible. By receiving data through an online survey, this criterion was not very difficult to uphold. Simply, because the respondents put down these answers themselves. However, it might be difficult for me to interpret the answers from the brands, since there was no face to face contact. I was therefore extremely careful in the interpretation of the answers in the survey.

## 4.5 Limitations

The only limitation to this research is the lack of more responses to the survey. I would have been able to draw a more general conclusion with more data. I have made a big effort in getting as much data as possible. 92 sponsors within eSports were approached to fill in the survey. After a reminder was sent out 5 companies were able to fill in the survey. With these 5 companies I decided to move towards a multiple case study. There were companies closely related to eSports, companies who were somewhat related to eSports and companies who were not related to eSports. This sample therefore gives us a good representation of the different categories.

# 5.0 Findings

In this chapter the findings of the survey will be presented. 5 companies have responded to the survey, which means I have 5 cases. In each sub chapter the findings of company A, company B, company C, company D and company E will be described.

## 5.1 Company A

Company A is a company very closely related to eSports. The company produces computer hardware and computer peripherals. This company has existed for over 30 years and is one of the frontrunners within its industry. It produces computer goods such as memory cards, power supplies, pc-cases, computer cooling systems and solid-state devices. Because of the rise in computer gaming they also released a gaming brand, which produces keyboards, mice's, headphones, mouse mats and other products, specifically designed for gaming. Its products are widely spread amongst eSports professionals and passionate amateur gamers. Its products are regularly featured in computer systems and used in eSports tournaments. This company has gained worldwide respect from the video gaming community, for producing and delivering the newest technologies.

Company A's questionnaire was filled in by its 'eSports and sponsorship manager'. At the moment of filling in this questionnaire the manager had less than one year of experience within this position. They are sponsoring several top performance eSports teams within several different video games. They are also sponsoring one of the biggest eSports event organizers in the world.

This company has been engaged in eSports since 2015. This is not a very long time, but since eSports sponsorship is still relatively new it is also not very short. The company has multiple motives to do sponsoring within eSports but the main ones are to create an impression about its brand, to create awareness among eSports consumers and eventually create brand affinity where 'customers' become 'loyal customers'. When asked about its goals, it says that it is the same as its motives.

The sponsorship is communicated through various methods and channels. Firstly, the sponsorship is communicated through social media channels, press releases, video content and other web content. Secondly, the company is also present at several events to

demonstrate its products and the teams that they are sponsoring are also using their gaming gear while playing. That were all activities that were mentioned in the sponsorship agreement, but the company admits in the survey that it does the same activities with its activational communications (activities that are not mentioned in the sponsorship agreement).

When asked about the experiences the company tries to create among the consumers, it said that this was not easy to say because it depends on each specific situation. The company meant that is has not have one type of experience it wants to create. Unfortunately for the research but understandable from the point of view of the company, the company did not want to unveil its way of measuring the sponsorship since this is confidential. When asked if there were any factors that could influence the results of the sponsorship the company came up with many.

*"Market value of teams, viewership trends of specific games, content platforms like twitch and YouTube, game releases, global economic conditions, corruption, etc."*

Unfortunately, this company does not sponsor in any other sports than eSports and I therefore cannot identify things that are done differently.

When asked if there were any advantages/disadvantages for some industries to do sponsoring within eSports the company answered with:

*"I only have insight on things from and endemic perspective. There are disadvantages, but it's the number one market that makes sense for our company."*

Which indicates that it makes sense for its industry (an industry closely related to eSports) to do sponsoring within eSports. eSports is closely related to its product and that is why it makes sense to do sponsoring within this environment.

Finally, the company had two recommendations for brands to do sponsoring within eSports. As a brand sponsoring in eSports it is very important to understand the value of specific assets. Which means you must carefully look which assets might work for you and which

don't. Also, an overall knowledge of the eSports landscape can help the brand to be successful in sponsoring within eSports.

## 5.2 Company B

Company B is a company not very closely related to eSports. The company originates as a seller of domain names for websites. But over the years this company has developed into a company selling more than just domain names. They have been extending its range of services with webhosting, email services and packages to build your website. This company is trying to make it easy for companies and individuals to build, create and host your website. The overall motto of the company is to make the clients life easier, especially when it comes to building and running your own website. This is not a worldwide operating company but it is definitely not small. Although this company is in the business of computers and the internet, its business has nothing to do with computer gaming.

Company B's questionnaire was filled in by an 'online marketeer' within the company. This marketer had 1-3 years of experience within this position at the moment of doing this research. They are both sponsoring a CSGO (Counter-Strike Go) team and a competition within the same game.

This company has started sponsoring eSports in 2017, which makes this company very new to sponsoring in this sport. Its biggest motive to start sponsoring within eSports is:

*"It is a growing market and has a lot of potential in terms of loyal customers."*

In other words, customers will only buy your brand or product when they are loyal. The goal with sponsoring in eSports is to create visibility for its brand among eSports consumers, in other words branding. They are also trying to create new product propositions that fit the target audience. So they are not only trying to reach the eSports audience, but also adjusting and creating products that fit these consumers.

The sponsorship is communicated through logo display on the t-shirts of the players and the logo is displayed on the website. The company is also using social media to communicate its message towards the eSports consumer. These are all communications that are mentioned

within the sponsorship contract. Currently company B is not doing any leveraging/activational activities outside of the sponsorship contract.

When asked about the experiences they would like to create among the consumers, they answered that they want to make the consumers believe that eSports can be something very big. They want to be part of creating something that has not been there before in their specific country before.

*"We now have physical champions and we want to be part in creating digital champions."*

Unfortunately for the research the company does not want to reveal its way of measuring the sponsorship, because this is considered confidential information. There are however some external factors that might influence the result of the sponsorship. They feel that the market for sponsoring in eSports is still very small and a lot of things are still very new. Things that are new, often go together with making mistakes.

Company B is sponsoring in other sports but it is not able to tell whether they are doing things differently yet. Company B is also not able to identify any disadvantages or advantages for certain industries.

When asked about any recommendations for companies to start sponsoring in eSports, they answered: "do it". Which indicates that the company feels happy with the sponsorship so far and recommends others to step in as well. Although they feel new grounds such as sponsoring within eSports come with mistakes they also recognize that it is worth to at least try it.

## 5.3  Company C

The growth of video gaming has caused several markets to grow, such as the market producing specialized chairs just for gaming. This business is very closely related to eSports and company C is one of the many brands producing gaming chairs. The founders of this company saw a rise in the demand of these products and decided to enter the market by building their own chairs. By looking at the chairs of other companies and asking for feedback from the gamers using them, they adjust and improve their chairs continuously. Next to just selling the chairs, they are also renting chairs to gamers who need a chair during

a tournament. This idea of renting out chairs started at one event and it was so successful that they are now renting out chairs to a multitude of events. This company has found a new business model in selling as well as renting the chairs. Its current market is mostly based in Europe.

The questionnaire of company C was filled in by a 'chairman' of the company. He/she had over 3 years of experience within this position. Company C is sponsoring within various eSports events, which can mainly be found within the Benelux (Belgium, Netherlands and Luxembourg).

From all the companies that filled in the questionnaire, company C was the first one to start sponsoring in eSports, namely in 2014. The main motive to do sponsoring within eSports is for branding purposes. Making its brand and products visible for a larger audience is very important. Its biggest goal for engaging in sponsoring, is to expand towards a worldwide market.

The sponsorship is communicated through social media, mainly Facebook. Next to the sponsorship contract, the company rents its chairs and sells second hand chairs at several events. Which can be seen as leveraging/activation since its chairs will be visible at the eSports events.

The company wants to create the experience that its chairs are comfortable. Also, they would like gamers to experience the rental possibilities of its chairs. The results of the activities within the sponsorship contract are measured with the growth in rental services and its sales volume. The leveraging and activational strategy is measured by using social media and website statistics. These statistics can give very much insight in number of clicks, number of views, number of sales, etc. One factor which they feel can influence the outcome of the sponsorship within eSports, is positive media attention. Positive media attention will give them more visibility.

This company is not sponsoring in any other sports than eSports since this is its core business. When asked about advantages/disadvantages for certain industries to engage in sponsoring in eSports, the company said it was not sure if there were any.

Company C strongly recommends companies to carefully select the right events for sponsoring. Selecting the right event can make a lot of difference for the result of the sponsorship.

## 5.4  Company D

Company D is a company not very closely related to eSports. The company was founded more than 20 years ago by two students. The company is the business of selling customer service software. It claims that its software is easy to use, quick to set up, suitable for each department and that it integrates with other software. With over 4000 customers, the organization has grown from 2 to 500 employees with multiple branches worldwide.  Its product is based on 20 years of experience and best practices. The software business is somewhat related to computer and digital technology, but not very much related to the world of eSports.

Company D's questionnaire was filled in by the 'team leader of sales & campus recruiter'. He/she has more than 3 years of experience within this position. They are currently sponsoring a student eSports association and an eSports event location (a place where many eSports events are organized).

Company D started sponsoring within eSports in September 2016. They have entered sponsoring in eSports (motive), because:

*"Brand awareness from a recruitment perspective and helping eSports reach a higher level."*

They also wanted to help eSports grow to a higher level. The goal is to reach potential new employees for its company. Another goal is to make sure everyone in the eSports world knows that company D is a fun and motivating company and employer.

The sponsorship is mainly communicated through social media and by the presence at certain events (both on/offline). These are activities are mentioned in the sponsorship agreement, but the company also has activities outside the agreement. To activate the sponsorship, company D also organizes its own eSports events. Its presence at other eSports events can also be considered as activational.

The experience they are trying to create among the eSports consumers is:

*"Open and informal environment. Laid back community. We're trying to create this by organizing interesting events and being present and easily approachable at a lot of different events."*

The sponsorship is measured mostly by website and social media statistics such as clicks and views. They also ask people how they know company D. The leveraging/activational measurement is at this point in time not very extensive. A big factor that could influence the result of the sponsorship would be for eSports to become more mainstream. If this would happen, it gets a broader audience and that would increase its engagement.

Company D is also sponsoring in other sports than eSports, but the company doesn't see a very different. The only difference it sees, is that eSports has a lot more focus on online events. There are certainly a lot of advantages/disadvantages for industries to do sponsorship within eSports, but it is hard to tell.

A final recommendation by company D to start sponsoring within eSports, is to just start doing it and find the match between your company and eSports. You also have to support it in order for it to grow, which is also to your advantage.

## 5.5 Company E

The final company, company E is one of the biggest health insurance companies in Germany. Which makes this company not related to eSports. They have over 26 million people insured, with a coverage of almost a third of the German population. The company has over 60.000 employees and operates in 1380 branches. The company guarantees a high-performance service to all its clients.

The questionnaire was filled in by the 'sport marketing coordinator'. This coordinator had, at the moment of writing, 1-3 years of experience within this position. Company E is currently sponsoring several talented gamers who are playing in professional eSports tournaments.

Company E is, in this sample, the youngest company when it comes to sponsoring in eSports. The company started sponsoring in eSports at the beginning of 2018. Its motive is to attract a bigger crowd of people, to be precise, to attract the eSports crowd. The goal is:

*"We hope we can get to the people by sending messages which are about starting to get a better life and eat healthy food. We want to start this with young people and also with the fans of eSports. They have to work on balance and get a compensation of the process on the computer."*

The sponsorship is communicated through the gamer who is positioned as an influencer. They are also regularly visiting the gaming events at which its gamers perform to talk to the fans. At these events flyers and other papers will be handed out to the eSports fans. Finally, they were also using social media to communicate the sponsorship to the fans of eSports. For now, the company has not done any leveraging or activational activities outside of the contract. Since it is still very new for this company, they will wait and see how it works for now. They first wanted to get some more feedback before we go any further into the sponsorship.

They are trying to create an experience where the gamers that they sponsor form an example of a healthy lifestyle as a gamer. Social media is used to let young people say that professional gamers support a healthy lifestyle. The sponsorship is currently measured by going to the events and talk to the eSports gamers themselves and the consumers of eSports in general. Since there are not activities outside the sponsorship contract, there is also no way of measuring this. A factor that could influence the result of this sponsorship a lot is:

*"When eSports gets a normal sport status in Germany it will definitely get more attention."*

eSports is still growing very much in Germany. As soon as eSports gets a normal sport status in Germany it will definitely get more attention which means the sponsorship will also gain more attention. This however does apply to all of eSports sponsors, however a bigger audience is not necessarily good for improving in sending your message. A more mainstream audience means you have to send a more mainstream message and not a message which is specific for eSports.

Company E is also sponsoring in other sports, but it is difficult to say if the approach is different since they have just started in sponsoring eSports. Because the company has just started, it is also hard for them to say if there are any advantages/disadvantages for companies to do sponsoring within eSports since it has been so short. They admit that they just have to wait and see how it work, although they believe they at least have to try.

# 6.0  Discussion

In this chapter I will discuss the results of the research and compare them to the literature discussed earlier. Therefore, I will follow the sub-research questions and the discussion around them in order to finally answer the main research question in chapter 7 (conclusion). Next to the sub-research questions there is a part about 'other points for discussion' which have popped up during the research.

## 6.1  Motives & Goals

One of the sub-research questions is about which motives and goals the brands had/have for moving into eSports sponsorship. With two different questions in the survey, the brands were asked about their motives and goals. This was done on purpose since a motive and a goal are two different things. 4 out of 5 companies were able to define both their motives and goals. Company A, however, felt that its motives and goals where the same.

Looking back at the goals as described by Cornwell (2014), I can see that most goals are very common when it comes to sponsorship. In this case eSports is no different than other sponsorship objectives. Some of the goals which are frequently mentioned are branding, raising awareness and creating new target groups. Most of them are trying to brand their company or products in some way to improve their image. Most of them are also trying to create more awareness through displaying their logo, their products or being visible at the events they sponsor. This confirms Bouaoui's (2016) statement that brand image and brand awareness are very important for sponsors within eSports. Company D has a special goal with sponsoring in eSports. It uses sponsoring to recruit new talents/employees for its company. This is something which is not often seen in sponsoring. As described by Cornwell (2014), this can be perceived as a sophisticated objective/goal.

When looking at the motives, I can conclude that the companies are interested in the target group of eSports (consumers), which is eSports fans. The companies within the sample feel that eSports is a growing market and gives them potential to reach a target group that is very hard to reach with other marketing communications. One company even wants to help eSports grow to another level.

In general, I saw that the motives were similar or very similar to the goals that were named by the companies. Theory says that a goal is different than a motive, but maybe when we are looking to sponsorships within eSports they do not differ that much. 'Reaching a new target market' for example can be both a motive and a goal when you think about it. However, it remains that companies must think about' why', 'what' do I want to achieve and 'how' am I going to achieve this. This is important to really enhance the potential of sponsoring within eSports.

## 6.2  Communication activities

The second sub-research question is about which activities are done by the sponsor and how the agreement between the sponsor and the sponsee is leveraged. In other words, how is the sponsorship communicated. This includes both the communications mentioned in the sponsorship contract and the activational activities, that are not mentioned in the agreement.

The companies have indicated several communications that are mentioned, but there is one type of communication that is mentioned by each company within this sample. Social media seems to be very important in communicating the sponsorship within eSports. Just like eSports social media has been growing very fast and it symbolises the digitalization in the 21st century. Although more and more people from all generations are becoming active on social media, the majority of social media users are still below their 30's. Especially when you look at how active social media is being used by different generations. Since the majority of eSport consumers is also below their 30's, social media and eSports form a good combination. Cornwell (2014) has mentioned that social media will start to play a bigger role in sponsorships in the future. Also, it is known that word of mouth communication works a lot better than regular advertising. The electronic world has the same potential, especially when it creates online communities, people will feel connected to the brand (Huang, Hsiao, & Chen, 2012). Social media gives excellent possibilities to create online communities, which gives brands the chance to really connect with people within their online community. Other communications that are written in the sponsorship contracts, are the displaying of logo's (on website's, player shirts, events, etc.) and their presence at certain events. Some of the companies are present at some of the events which they are sponsoring, having direct communications with the participants and/or attendees of the events. Another interesting communication is the use of certain eSports professionals as influencers. An

influencer might help a brand to get extra attention from those who are following these professionals closely.

When looking at how the results and these communications are measured, I found that two out of five companies did not wish to answer this question because this was considered confidential information. Only one out of the other three companies answered that they were using the measurement tools that social media has to offer. Beech and Chadwick (2007) mentioned that it will become more and more important for companies to measure their sponsorship outcomes. Therefore, it is strange to see that not much companies seem to use the measurement tools that social media has to offer. Cornwell (2014) writes that the biggest challenge within sponsorship remains the measurement of outcomes. However, she also says that the rise in social media can help solve this issue since social media has very good possibilities in tracking outcomes. Although all companies are using social media for their communications, only one is using the measurement tools that social media offers. Another way of measurement, is looking at the growth of sales, a disadvantage of this measurement, however, is that you can't see where this growth is coming from. You can only assume that the growth is (partly) coming from sponsoring in eSports.

So far, I have looked into the communications mentioned in the sponsorship contract. Recall this from the literature review: "in sponsorship it is believed that a brand must leverage the sponsorship agreement with additional spending, or the brand will risk wasting the initial investment." (Cornwell, 2014, p. 57). Are the brands sponsoring in eSports doing enough leveraging to make the sponsorship successful? Looking at the overall picture, I can see from this sample that the companies are not very active in leveraging the sponsorship agreements. 3 out of 5 companies say that they are not engaged in doing extra activities to leverage the sponsorship agreement. Most people with knowledge about sponsorship will agree that there are wasted opportunities when a contract is not backed with additional spending (Cornwell, 2014). Therefore, these companies may consider to apply additional spending's to make sure that all the opportunities are taken. Company D however is really active in leveraging the sponsorship agreement. By organising its own eSports tournaments, it is really showing that the brand cares about eSports and wants to contribute in making it bigger. According to Cornwell (2014) there are 3 central reasons to leverage in sponsorships: ability to tell your story, use as a defensive strategy and the possibility of repetition and variation of your message. By organising their own tournaments, they have their chance to tell their own story

at these events. They also minimalize the risk of competitors coming to ambush them since it is their tournament. Finally, by organizing their own tournaments they have the chance of repeating their message by varying in different events. It therefore seems that company D has a good leveraging strategy.

Since the leveraging strategies are not existing much within this sample there is also not a way of measuring this. Company D, who has a very extensive leveraging strategy, says that there way of measuring within their leveraging is not extensive yet.

## 6.3 eSports experience

Seo argues that eSports consumers mostly identify themselves with the experience associated to eSports (Seo, 2013). Therefore, it is very important for brands to engage themselves with the experience of eSports. Just starting to sponsor within eSports can already be seen as trying to incorporate yourself in the experience. Showing your logo during a gaming event, may be enough for eSports consumers to recognize you as a part of the experience that this event has to offer. However, since there are many events with many different sponsors, something extra might be necessary to really engage in the experience. Therefore, the companies were asked what kind of experiences they are trying to create among the eSport consumers.

Looking back at the 4E's model of Pine & Gillmore (1998) and comparing it with the answers that were filled in by the companies, I can see that the brands can position themselves in more than 1 of the 4E's within the 4E's model. Company A for example doesn't mention a specific way on how they design experiences, but they are saying that this is varying per situation. This indicates that they can position themselves in more ways than just one. Company B, is very clear in what kind of experiences it wants to create. It wants people to realize that eSports can become very big. This fits very nicely in the 'educational' realm of the 4E's model. They also would like to create digital champions just as we have physical champions. This fits well within the 'entertainment' realm where people participate passively and absorb the action by the professionals who are becoming the heroes. Company C, is a company that is very often present at the events where it demonstrates and lets gamers try out their products. They want eSports consumers to experience the comfort of their products. In this case consumers are actively participating because they can test the products themselves, but they do not influence the outcome of the actual eSport event which means

this is also more of an 'educational' experience. However, there are huge events in which all attendees can participate. In this case absorption becomes immersion because they play themselves. The experience will then move towards an 'escapist' realm. Companies D and E are also very much designing educational experiences by informing eSports consumers about their brands and products.

In figure 2, Seo's (2013) model was displayed where he placed all the important marketing actors of eSports within the 4E's framework. From this sample I have now seen that sponsors can place themselves across several places within this spectrum. However, most experiences come from the absorption dimension, with the educational realm being used most. It is possible for brands to be more immersed in the eSports experience, which I saw with company C. However, this is difficult, especially when your brand or product doesn't have a direct link with eSports. I do think that it is not impossible to create these links when being creative. As Pine & Gillmore argued (1998), the richest forms of an experience can be found when al 4 realms are incorporated. But this is an incredibly hard thing to do.

## 6.4  External factors

So far, I have only discussed factors that the companies have chosen themselves. There are however multiple external factors that could influence the results of the sponsorship. One of the questions in the survey was about identifying external factors that could influence their sponsorship result. Earlier I have showed you the 'model of consumer-focused sponsorship-linked marketing communication' made by Cornwell (2005). This model can help me identify and categorize the external factors which were named by the companies.

Company A, named several factors which they thought could influence the results of their sponsorship in eSports. Among those were the market value of teams and the viewership trends of specific games. Both of these factors are typical 'market factors' as described by Cornwell (2014). When certain teams have a bigger market value, it often means they have a higher brand equity. According to Cornwell (2014), companies with high equity have some advantages when communicating through sponsorship. The viewership trends of specific games are also a factor that has to do with brand equity, although it is not the equity of the brand or the event, but the equity of a specific game that will rise. But because brands are sponsoring in events that display the game, the communication of that sponsor will automatically be seen more. The same occurs when the viewership of a certain game will go

down, then the communication will automatically be seen less. Company C mentions 'positive media attention' as a factor that might influence the result of the sponsorship. This is also a 'market factor' and has the same effect as when the viewership of a certain game will go up or down. When you receive positive media attention, you will also have more attention for your sponsorship. Looking at the other companies I can mostly see that they are all seeing the growth or viewership of eSports as the biggest external factor that could influence sponsorship.

Under market factors within the 'model of consumer-focused sponsorship-linked marketing communication', I can also see the factor 'clutter' (Cornwell, 2005). However, none of the companies have mentioned this in the factors that could influence the results of their sponsorship. In case of clutter in communication there is to many sponsorship communications which confuses the attendants of the event (Cornwell, 2014). At big eSport events where a lot of teams come together to compete against each other, such clutter might exist. The event has its own sponsors, all the teams competing have their own sponsors and even some of the athletes might have their own sponsors. The clutter of sponsors might even be more existing in eSports, since a majority of the sponsors still come from the computer and hardware industry. All the different companies represented within this industry will be present at the events and this may create confusion among the eSports consumers.

## 6.5  Advantages/disadvantages for certain industries

Another question I have asked the brands within the sample is, if they could identify any advantages or disadvantages for certain industries to engage in sponsoring within eSports. Company A was not really sure since it only knew the perspective of his own company. He did see however that this was the number one market for his company to do sponsoring within eSports. By this he/she means that the market of eSports fits very well with his brand and products. An advantage therefore could be to have a product that fits the industry of eSports. The companies that are not closely related to eSports, did not have any answer to this question. This indicates that they are not identifying any advantages or disadvantages for them, relative to other companies from different industries.

## 6.6 Further aspects for discussion

Next to the answers given on the sub-research questions, some other interesting things have popped up during the survey. In this sub chapter I would like to talk about those.

**Year of engagement**

I would like to mention the year in which companies have started to engage within eSports. The companies closely related to eSports (company A & C) were the first of this sample that started sponsoring within eSports. However, the sample also shows that in recent years more companies from outside this industry seem to have found their way into sponsoring eSports. Another thing I can clearly see from the sample is that eSports sponsoring is still very new, the earliest company from this sample who started sponsoring in eSports is from 2014, which is only 4 years ago.

**Type of companies**

Another interesting thing I would like to mention is the sort of companies that have replied to the survey. From previous literature I could see that most sponsors in eSports are coming from the computer and hardware industry (Heuvel, 2016). Because of my search of potential brands that I could sent the survey to, I can confirm that this is still the case. Especially in the smaller events, all or the majority comes from this industry. In the bigger events and teams, you can see that more and more brands are starting to sponsor in eSports without having a connection to the computer and hardware industry. In this sample 3 out of 5 companies that filled in the survey are not 'closely related' to eSports. What does this show us? Because this sample is not very large, I can't draw a distinct conclusion. On the other hand, it may be an indication that companies are getting more and more interested.

**Influence of game developers on sponsorship**

Lastly, I also saw in the industry review that the game developers are waving the sceptre in eSports right now (Vila, 2016). Although this is more a debate in the direction of eSports being a real sport or not, this could also influence the sponsorships in eSports. Although the sponsors are not directly related to the game developers, there might be an indirect influence on them. If eSport events or teams get certain restrictions from the game-developers, this could cause a disadvantage to the sponsors. This however was not mentioned by any of the

sponsors in their answers on the survey, therefore I cannot make any comments right now if this can be of influence on sponsorships.

# 7.0 Conclusion

This research started with the main research question: "How can companies inside and outside the computer and hardware industry engage with eSports consumers through sponsorship?" Throughout this study, I have been looking at various factors of sponsorship within eSports. I have seen that there are different ways in sponsoring, but most of these factors indicate that there is not a very big difference between companies sponsoring within different industries. First, I looked into the different motives & goals where I saw that they are not that much different from sponsorships on other properties. I did however get a feeling that companies should think more about their motive since their motives were very similar to their goals. It is very important to think about 'why' you are starting to sport in eSports.

Secondly, I looked at the way in which the sponsorships are communicated. I found that most of the communications are similar to other sponsorships. Things such as the displaying of the logo and being present at events were frequently mentioned. One thing however that really caught the eye is the use of social media. It looks like social media is key in communicating within eSports sponsorships. A downside within the communications of the sponsorship was the use of leveraging. It seemed like companies were not very active in leveraging the sponsorship agreement by spending more money on top of the contract. By not leveraging extensively, companies are taking the risk to waste their initial investment.

After this I looked at how companies can connect to the eSports experience. I found that companies outside the computer & hardware industry find it more difficult to connect to the eSports experience. Because their brand and/or products don't have a direct relation to eSports, it is harder for them to connect to the experience. Companies outside the computer & hardware industry did not mention any disadvantages for them. The connection with the eSports experience is however very important and could be seen as a disadvantage for those not closely related to the eSports industry.

Finally, I looked at external factors that could influence the sponsorships. Most of the factors that were mentioned within this sample were market factors such as the influence of 'brand equity'. It was however surprising to see that none of the companies closely related eSports, mentioned the clutter of sponsorships as a factor. Which could be a big factor for them since the majority of the sponsorships within eSports is still closely related to eSports.

The eSport industry is still a very young industry with a lot of opportunities. The sponsorship of eSports properties is even younger (considering the fact that the earliest company within this sample started sponsoring in 2014) and I believe this will continue to grow as more companies will start to sponsor within eSports. Therefore, I would like to recommend companies that are interested to sponsor within eSports to start sponsoring right now. The market will give you an opportunity to really connect your brand with eSports. In this new digital age where some consumer groups are very hard to reach, eSports can provide brands the opportunity to reach some of the younger target groups. Especially companies outside the computer & hardware industry have this possibility, since their competitors are often not sponsoring in eSports yet. But before companies start doing this they must set a clear strategy on 'why', 'what do I want to achieve' and 'how' am I going to do this. With a good strategy that is well thought of, I am convinced that companies can get a lot of results out of their sponsorships within eSports.

The only limitation to this research was the lack of more responses to the survey. With more data I would have been able to draw a more general conclusion on eSport sponsorships. To draw a more general conclusion, this study must be repeated with different samples. Therefore, I would like to encourage scholars and researchers to do further research within eSports sponsorships. Not only the repetition of this study is an interesting topic to do further research on. From this study a couple of other interesting questions have been raised.

Firstly, it would be very interesting to identify leveraging strategies that are working for sponsorships in eSports. I saw from this sample that most companies are not active in leveraging the sponsorship agreement. As many sponsorship experts are saying, extra leveraging is needed to get the most out of a sponsorship contract. Identifying these successful strategies could help companies to get more out of their sponsorships within eSports. Successful sponsorships will also attract other companies to start sponsoring in eSports as they see it is working for others. This in turn will help the growth of eSports in general.

Secondly, we saw that companies from outside the computer & hardware industry are having troubles to connect to the eSport experience. As seen earlier eSport consumers feel mostly associated to the eSport experience, and therefore it is important for sponsors to connect to

it. To get more companies from outside the eSport industry to start sponsoring within the eSport industry, it is important to show that it is possible for these companies to really connect with the experience. Therefore, an interesting topic for future research could be to find out how companies from outside the computer & hardware industry can connect to the eSport experience.

Lastly, I could still see that most sponsors are very closely related to the eSport industry. At big gaming events many sponsors come together in one place. Not just the sponsor of the event, but also the sponsors of many teams/players can be found in such an environment. Many competing sponsors will feature at the event and this could cause 'clutter' among eSport consumers. Although this was not identified as a disadvantage within this sample, it would be interesting to investigate this.

# Bibliography

Beech, J., & Chadwick, S. (2007). *The Marketing of Sport.* Harlow: Pearson Education Limited.

Bouaoui, C. (2016). *eSports Sponsorship Effectiveness on Brand Awareness and Brand Image.* Dublin: Dublin Business School.

Burroughs, B., & Rama, P. (2015, October). The eSports Trojan Horse: Twitch and Streaming Futures. *Journal of Virtual Worlds Research, 8*(2), 1-5.

Chalmet, X. (2015). *Sponsorship Within eSports: Examining the Sponsorship Relationship Quality Constructs.* Gotheburg: University of Gothenborg.

Cornwell, B. (2008). State of the Art and Science in Sponsorship-Linked Marketing. *Journal of Advertising, 37*(3), 41-55.

Cornwell, B. (2014). *Sponsorship in Marketing: Effective Communication Through Sports, Arts and Events* (Vol. 1). Abingdon: Routledge.

Cornwell, B., Weeks, C., & Roy, D. P. (2005, June). Sponsorship-linked Marketing: Opening the Black box. *Journal of Advertising, 34*(2), 21-45.

Entertainment Software Association. (2012). *Essential Facts About the Computer and Video Game Industry*. Retrieved February 2018, from theesa.com: http://www.theesa.com/facts/pdfs/ESA_EF_2012.pdf

E-Sports Earnings. (2015). *Top Games of 2015.* Retrieved January 2018, from esportearnings.com: https://www.esportsearnings.com/history/2015/games

E-Sports Earnings. (2017a). *Top Countries for 2017*. Retrieved January 4, 2018, from esportsearnings.com: https://www.esportsearnings.com/history/2017/countries

E-Sports Earnings. (2017b). *Top Games of 2017*. Retrieved January 4, 2018, from esportsearnings.com: https://www.esportsearnings.com/history/2017/games

E-Sports Earnings. (2018). *Largest Overall Prize Pools in eSports*. Retrieved April 2018, from esportearnings.com: https://www.esportsearnings.com/tournaments

Fiske, S., & Taylor, S. (1991). *Social Cognition* (Vol. 2). New York: McGrawHill.

Gamespot. (2012, November 14). *Major League Gaming reports 334 percent growth in live video*. Retrieved 2018 March, from gamespot.com: https://www.gamespot.com/articles/major-league-gaming-reports-334-percent-growth-in-live-video/1100-6400010/

Groen, A. (2013, May 14). *Why Gamers in Asia are the World's Best eSport Athletes*. Retrieved January 2018, from pcworld.com:

https://www.pcworld.com/article/2036844/why-gamers-in-asia-are-the-worlds-best-esport-athletes.html

Heider, F. (1958). *The Psychology of Interpersonal Relations.* New York: John Wiley.

Heuvel, P. v. (2016, October 12). *Why Sports & Brands Want to be in Esports.* Retrieved January 2018, from Newzoo: https://newzoo.com/insights/trend-reports/why-sports-brands-want-to-be-in-esports/

Huang, J.-H., Hsiao, T.-T., & Chen, Y.-F. (2012). The Effects of Electronic Word of Mouth on Product Judgement and Choice: The Moderating Role of the Sense of Virutal Community. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 42*(9), 2326-2347.

Hurst, J. (2015, February 18). *12 Types Of Computer Games Every Gamer Should Know About.* Retrieved February 2018, from thoughtcatalog.com: https://thoughtcatalog.com/jane-hurst/2015/02/12-types-of-computer-games-every-gamer-should-know-about/

IEG Sponsorship Briefing. (2013, January 7). *2013 Sponsorship Outlook: Spending Increase Is Double-Edged Sword.* Retrieved December 2013, from sponsorship.com: http://www.sponsorship.com/IEGSR

Jenny, S., Manning, D., Keiper, M., & Olrich, T. (2016, March 11). Virtual(ly) Athletes: Where eSports Fit Within the Definition of "Sport". *Quest, 69*(1), 1-18.

Korpimies, S. (2017). *Sponsorships in eSports.* Helsinki: Aalto University.

Li, R. (2016). *Good Luck Have Fun: The Rise of eSports.* New York: Skyhorse Publishing.

Lincoln, Y., & Guba, E. (1985). *Naturalistic Inquiry.* Beverly Hills: Sage.

Papadimitriou, D., & Apostolopoulou, A. (2019). Olympic Sponsorship Activation and the Creation of Competitive Advantage. *Journal of Promotion Management, 15*, 90-117.

Pine, B. J., & Gillmore, J. H. (1998). Welcome to the Experience Economy. *Harvard Business Review, 76*(6), 97-105.

Pitkänen, J. (2015). *Value Creation Through Sponsorship in Electronic Sports.* Lappeenranta: Lappeenranta University of Technology.

Popper, B. (2013, September 30). *Field of Streams: How Twitch Made Video Games a Spectator Sport.* Retrieved February 2018, from theverge.com: https://www.theverge.com/2013/9/30/4719766/twitch-raises-20-million-esports-market-booming

Quester, P., & Thompson, B. (2001). Advertising and Promotion Leverage on Arts Sponsorship Effectiveness. *Journal of Advertising Research, 41*(1), 33-47.

Sahnoun, P. (1989). *Le sSponsoring: Mode d'emploi.* Paris: Chotard.

Seo, Y. (2013). Electronic Sports: A New Marketing Landscape of the Experience Economy. *Journal of Marketing Management, 29*(13-14), 1542-1560.

SuperData Research. (2017). *Esports Courtside: Playmakers of 2017*. Retrieved 2018 February, from superdata-research.myshopify.com: https://superdata-research.myshopify.com/products/esports-courtside-playmakers-of-2017-esports-market-brief

SurveyMethods. (2017, September 5). *What is the Difference Between Qualitative Research and Quantitative Research?* Retrieved May 2018, from surveymethods.com: https://surveymethods.com/blog/what-is-the-difference-between-a-qualitative-and-quantitative-survey/

Tassi, P. (2012, December 20). *2012: The Year of eSports*. Retrieved 2018 February, from Forbes.com: https://www.forbes.com/sites/insertcoin/2012/12/20/2012-the-year-of-esports/#1caa76327e11

Taylor, T. (2012). *Raising the sStakes: E-sports and the Professionalization of Computer Gaming.* Cambridge: MIT Press.

Thiborg, J. (2009). eSport and Governing Bodies - An Outline for a Research Project and Prelimanary Results. *Kultur-Natur Conference.* Norrkoping.

Tiedemann, C. (2004). Sport (and Culture of Physical Motion) for Historians, an Approach to Precise the Central Term(s). *IX international CESH-Congress.* Crotone.

Veal, A., & Darcy, S. (2014). *Research Methods in Sport Studies and Sport Management - a Practical Guide.* New York: Routledge.

Vila, F. S. (2016, December 12). *Do eSports Lack Structure?* Retrieved April 2018, from dw.com: http://www.dw.com/en/do-esports-lack-structure/a-36930847

Wagner, M. (2007). Competing in Metagame Space – eSports as the First Professionalized Computer Metagame. In F. v. Borries, S. Walz, U. Brinkmann, & M. Böttger, *Space time play – Games, architecture, and urbanism* (pp. 182-185). Basel: Birkhäuser.

Wakefield, K., Becker-Olsen, K., & Cornwell, B. (2007). I Spy a Sponsor: The Effects of Sponsorship Level, Prominence, Relatedness and Cueing on Recall Accuracy. *Journal of Advertising, 36*(4), 61-74.

War, P. (2014, April 9). *eSports in Numbers: Five Mind-Blowing Stats*. Retrieved 2018 March, from redbull.com: https://www.redbull.com/ie-en/esports-in-numbers-five-mind-blowing-stats

Warman, P. (2017). *2017 Global Games Market Report.* Amsterdam: Newzoo.

Weeks, C., Cornwell, B., & Drennan, J. (2008). Leveraging Sponsorships on the Internet: Activation, Congruence, and Articulation. *Psychology & Marketing*, 637-654.

Wright, K. (2005). Researching Internet-Based Populations: Advantages and Disadvantages of Online Survey Research, Online Questionnaire Authoring Software Packages, and Web Survey Services. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 10*(3), 00.

Zajonc, R. (1968). Attitudinal Effects of Mere Exposure. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 9*(2), 1-27.

# Appendix 1: Research instrument

## eSports Brand Engagement

Dear Sir / Madam,

Thank you for visiting this survey. My name is Robin Wessels and I am currently studying Sport Management at Høgskolen i Molde (Norway). For my master's thesis I am doing research on how sponsorships within eSports work, and how brands can engage with eSports. Therefore I would like to ask you a few questions. I would like to ensure you that the data being used will be published anonymously. The survey will take max. 15 minutes.

Thank you in advance!

### What is the name of your brand/institution?

### What is your position within the institution?

### How many years of experience do you have within this position?

○ Less than one year

○ 1-3 years

○ More than 3 years

63

## Who/what are you currently sponsoring within eSports?

Question instructions: *Events, Teams, Athlethes, etc.*

<br>
<br>
<br>

## 1. Since when is your brand engaged in eSports sponsorships?

Question instructions: *Year of first engagement?*

<br>
<br>
<br>

## 2. What are the current motives for your brand to do sponsor/engage within eSports?

Question instructions: *In other words, why are you sponsoring/engaged within eSports?*

<br>
<br>
<br>

## 3. What are the goals for your brand to do sponsorship/engagement within eSports?

Question instructions: *What do you aim to achieve with eSports sponsorship/with eSports support?*

<br>
<br>
<br>

64

## 4. How do you communicate your sponsorship/your engagement with eSports?

Question instructions: *Entitlements inlcuded in the sponsorship agreement/support?*

## 5. How do you leverage/activate your sponsorship/your engagement with eSports?

Question instructions: *Activities on top of entitlements, like advertisements, sales promotion activities*

## 6. What experiences are you trying to create among eSports consumers? And how are you creating those experiences?

Question instructions: *Please specify?*

## 7. How do you measure your eSports sponsorship/engagement?

Question instructions: *Please specify!*

65

8. How do you measure your eSport sponsorship/engagement leveraging/activation strategy?

Question instructions: *Please specify!*

9. Could you think of any external factors that could influence the results of the sponsorship/engagement within eSports?

Question instructions: *Please specify!*

10. Are you sponsoring/engaging in other sports then eSports?

Question instructions: *If yes, do you have a different approach in eSports compared to other sports?*

11. Are there any advantages/disadvantages for certain industries to do sponsorship/engagement withing eSports?

Question instructions: *Please specify!*

66

12. Do you have any recommendations for brands to do sponsoring or to engage within eSports?

Question instructions: *Please specify!*

Are there any additional comments you would like to add to this questionnaire?

Are you interested in receiving the final result of the master thesis? Please leave your email address below!

Question instructions: *If not you can leave this box empty!*

67