ESPORTS SPONSORSHIP EFFECTIVENESS ON BRAND AWARENESS AND BRAND IMAGE

DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PART FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE MASTER DEGREE OF MARKETING (DIGITAL STREAM)

AT DUBLIN BUSINESS SCHOOL

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Acknowledgement

I would like to express my sincerest thanks to the following people who have contributed to the successful completion of this dissertation.

First and foremost, I would like to thank my parents for giving me the opportunity to study this one year of MSc at Dublin Business School and supported me not only in my studies but also through all my life. Without their help and support, I would not have been able to go so far in my academic career. I will always be thankful for all the things they have done and sacrifice for me.

Moreover, I would especially thank my supervisor Michael Maguire, without whom this thesis would not have been possible. Not only he encouraged and believed in me when I went through a hard time, but as aficionados of the video games, I could not have asked for a more appropriate supervisor.

Finally, I would like to thank my friends, in real life as well as in the vast virtual universe of Internet, which provided me with meaningful sources that led me to a more precise definition of the subject and a better understanding of the potential implications.
I, Chawki BOUAOUI, declare that this research is my original work and that it has never been presented to any institution or university for the award of Degree or Diploma. In addition, I have referenced correctly all literature and sources used in this work and that this work is fully compliant with Dublin Business School’s academic honesty policy.

Chawki Bouaoui

Date: 06th of September 2016
Abstract

Competitive computer gaming (eSports) has emerged as an important aspect of virtual-world consumption. The primary motivation of this paper is to investigate the impact and the effectiveness eSports sponsorship has on a brand.

To achieve this, this paper explores secondary data to establish concept and theories around branding, with a focus on brand awareness and image along with its relation to brand equity and familiarity. This paper move towards exploring sponsorship and its implementation within the eSports industry and further digs into the foundation of the value network of eSports actors through the roles of various stakeholders.

My findings suggest a considerable level of awareness from the respondents towards eSports brands and further suggest a positive corporate image of the sponsor intensified by the association with the sponsored event.

Keywords: eSports, Sponsorship, Brand Image, Brand Awareness, Streaming, Digital
Introduction
Background

The area of video games is a bit tricky to characterise, as it is often part of debates. While the majority of people agree to consider video games as entertainment, many of them would not consider it as an art. Yet, if we consider the definition of art in The Oxford English Dictionary as:

“the expression or application of human creative skill and imagination, typically in a visual form such as painting or sculpture, producing works to be appreciated primarily for their beauty or emotional power.”

It has many of those characteristics and may contain artistic elements such as graphic art, music, and story, among others. The stereotype of the main consumer as a nerdy boy become less accurate as the majority of players are women (Harwell, 2014). Jin (2010, cited in Chalmet, 2015) describe gaming in modern society as still being poorly perceived and not openly accepted as a sport. It is rather considered as a “waste of time and potential” by many parents, adults across the world, and even by certain media, which blamed games for the rise of violence in youth behaviour. The oppositional views of computer gaming as something “bad” and sport as something “good” makes it very interesting to study the phenomenon of eSports (Thiborg, 2009).

From a marketing point of view, the gaming industry is a gold mine as it evolves and merges with the digital progress. Playing game is part of the big majority of digital natives; they are less reluctant about it than previous generations. The changes in consumer behaviour towards digital devices has a direct incidence in the way the game are consumed. For the first time in the
history, mobile consumption became more important than desktop (Bosomworth, 2015). We can observe the same tendency in the gaming industry.

![Pie Chart]

*Figure 1: Game software revenue from $88B in 2015 to $110B by 2018 (Digi-Capital, 2015)*

Within the noticeable changes, the competitive computer gaming, known as electronic sports (eSports) became a significant aspect of virtual-world gaming consumption. It is based on singular persons or team playing video games and competing for prize money and fame (Heaven 2014a). Oxford defines it as: *“a multiplayer video game played competitively for spectators, typically by professional gamers”*. The most important factor in eSports is the passion, the absolute obsession of players, tournaments organizers, investors, game developers and above all, fans. Professional gamers are arousing strong emotions, resulting in fan’s devotion either by giving money or part of their time as their beloved players are worth their attention (Roland, 2016, p.3-4).

Nowadays, games are generally played on a Personal Computer. However, some of them are still played on consoles. ESports is a rapidly growing and distinct segment of computer game consumption where competitiveness and performances play a big role (Heaven, 2014b). Amongst those, numerous high-quality games are based upon the capacity of differentiation between each
player, where the skill prevail. Thus, the individual experience is emerging from a mastery of mechanics, physical control of mouse clicks and keyboard. As software updates keep on going, gameplay mechanics and stats are evolving, and no strategy can remain dominant too long (Roland, 2016, p.3-5). There must be a way of judging players’ performances within the game. The player can be considered either as a winner by a gaming score or by defeating their opponent. Furthermore, the rules and competition format are often set by a government body or a community of eSports players which performs an institutional role by ensuring the consistency and a code of conduct amongst the participant (Seo, 2013). Therefore, it is not surprising to see professional players pushing their boundaries and challenge themselves on a daily basis.

While eSports has had some investment funding, the contribution of sponsorship in the industry is essential and is located at the heart of the economic model. It provides, in many cases, the higher source of funding for many organisations within eSports. Furthermore, industry’s attractiveness for the different actors (e.g. lucrative real prize for players, team and player revenue, cost coverage, etc.) is made partially possible thanks to sponsorship’s contributions (Taylor, 2012, p.154).

**Research question**

In light of the attractiveness and the contribution of sponsorship in this growing industry, the researcher of this proposal would like to further investigate the area of sponsorship within eSports. He is especially interested in the effect on brand awareness and brand image and how effective is it for a company to invest in eSports sponsorship. By considering those aspects, the main research question that the researcher is interested in is:
Does eSports sponsorship increase the brand awareness and brand image?

Sub-research question, which will be explored, are:

- Does brand consumption affect the brand awareness?
- Does the relationship between the event and the sponsor affect the brand image?
- Does the brand which sponsors an event affect the brand image?

Investigate if eSports sponsorship has an impact on people’s brand awareness.

Investigate if eSports sponsorship creates an impact on the corporate image of the sponsor.

The rationale for asking this question is that researcher believes that eSports sponsorship should be considered in a different manner from sports sponsorship:

"eSports sponsorships have to be vetted very differently than traditional sports sponsorships. [...] the practice is rooted in a unique understanding of eSports, the digital landscape, consumer behaviour and what it takes for sponsors to have a lasting impact." (Parsons, 2015 cited in Janoff, 2015)

Therefore, this research investigates the current state of eSports sponsorship from the consumer perspective and aims to reveal its impact on brand awareness and brand image.

The hypothesis stated in this work:
H1: Brand consumption positively affects brand awareness

H2: Perceived fit between the sponsor and the sponsored eSports event positively affects brand image

H3: Sponsoring an eSports event generates a positive image of the sponsor

This thesis is structured into six chapters. The first chapter (Introduction) brings up the subject, discusses the size and the background of the gaming industry and more particularly eSports. At last, it introduces the overall setting in which the study take place by pointing out the research gap within eSports sponsorship area and the establishing the objectives.

The second chapter inaugurates the literature review and the theoretical framework backing up the research. The literature review is divided into three main topics. The first topic is covering the concept of branding and its implication regarding brand awareness and brand image. The second topic focuses on sponsorship as a marketing communication tool, its theoretical framework and, some concepts from marketing communication literature covering sponsorship with particular (e.g. niche, sport, etc.) consideration. The third and last topic covered in the literature review is the area of eSports, its history, and conceptualisation, with a focus in eSports sponsorship.

The third chapter outlines the empirical research conducted in this research. It involves the methodology including, the research design, the process of data collection outlined by an online survey. Data analysis is also presented, followed by a discussion on the reliability and validity of this research.
The fourth section describes, analyse and evaluate the findings of the data obtained. Findings are then translated into practical meanings. The section is going further than just presenting the top-level results by discussing differences between various questions using cross-sectional approach. It will correlate data among different questions to see if the findings hold true for each hypothesis. It will either confirm or reject each of the hypotheses.

The fifth chapter states the research discussion, by interpreting the results of the findings, answering the research question and discuss the implication of the findings. It further involves how this investigation has contributed to the research area, limitations of this research, as well as a critical evaluation of the author’s own work.

Chapter Six discuss the research from an overall perspective. The purpose being to draw a general conclusion through the summarization of the findings. This section contains the conclusion in regards to the objectives based on the results gathered by primary data as well as the secondary data. In addition, the limitations of the research as well as recommendations for further research are outlined in this chapter.

Chapter Seven is a reflective piece on what the author has learned during the process of writing this dissertation. It focuses on the theory of various learning styles and how the author's style best suited the research. It also discusses problems that were encountered and how they were overcome. Finally, it is a reflective piece demonstrating what the author has personally gained from this in educational terms and what the benefits of this process are for his future career.
Literature Review
Introduction

The purpose of this second chapter is to present the literature review which is defined by Randolph (2009, p.5) as the:

“means of demonstrating an author’s knowledge about a particular field of study, including vocabulary, theories, key variables and phenomena, and its methods and history”

will be used as secondary data and will be taken as a solid foundation for this research. It will examine the topic and get an understanding of what is the current thinking around the topic, and what research has been done so far. After the literature review is conducted, a renewed project scope is defined based on the findings in the literature review, which ensures that this research thesis will not reproduce previous academic work within the field.

This chapter is divided into three sections: branding, sponsorship, and eSports. Each of the section explains the concepts and theories that are analysed from a general perspective and made together to build a relationship between the different elements.
Branding and brands are an output of the marketing communication process, which globally achieved the task of image and brand management. Branding is not just about placing symbol or name onto a product to get an identity. Rather, it also entails a set of meaningful attributes that translates an image and produces an association with a product when a person is considering the brand (Pickton et al., 2015). Brands express non-functional features through symbolic meaning.

The way advertising affects consumer has been studied many times in the past. The first formal framework was probably the AIDA (Attention – Interest – Desire – Action) model attributed to E. ST. Elmo Lewis in 1898. Based on this model, other authors (Lavidge & Steigner, 1961) created types of “hierarchy of effects” that has been used and prevailed in many theories since it was published (Vakratsas & Ambler, 1999).
Three stages of response compose the hierarchy. First, cognitive responses followed by affective and finally by conative responses. Each of the three steps contains sublevel going from customer’s awareness to the purchase of a product. Awareness step is challenging as customers might or might not become aware of a brand after their exposure to an advertisement. As such, they are exposed each day to a subsequent number of ads and will remember of only a tiny fraction of products.

Branding is composed by several dimensions located at different levels of consumer’s knowledge of a product. In today’s world, consumers acquire knowledge about a product through several ways (The Internet, retail advisors, packaging, etc.) and this step became more preponderant as they have access to product knowledge much easier than before with the rise of the digital landscape. Therefore, the brand and its identification attribute (e.g. name, logo, colour, slogan, etc.) have become an important differentiation factor (Michel & Rieunier, 2012, p.242).

Branding, also called brand management in Esch (2012 cited in Fähnle, 2012) researches, illustrated the “goal pyramid” underlying the objective to achieve. The pyramid contains three levels: the top level is the global aim of the company for the long term of a company. The second tier, the economic objectives (e.g. brand equity, sales, or the ability to charge a premium price) cannot be reached directly until the lower level of the pyramid is fulfilled. Thus, the behavioural objectives are aiming at influencing the consumer’s knowledge (the brand awareness or the brand image) about a brand, to ensure the brand success.
Moreover, brand management strategy includes brand personality as a differentiation tool (Ahmad et al., 2014). Mathews (2015) explains brand personality as a humanisation of branding, personified to the extend of achieving attribution of human traits. Thus, Ahmad et al. (2014) summarised brand personality dimensions as such:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Brand personality</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aaker (1997)</td>
<td>Sincere, Excited, Competent, Sophisticated and Rugged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keller and Richey (2006)</td>
<td>Passionate and Compassionate (Heart), Creative and Disciplined (Mind) and Agile and Collaborative (Body)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geuens et al. (2009)</td>
<td>Responsible, Active, Aggressive, Simple and Emotional</td>
</tr>
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*Table 1: Studies Related to Brand Personality Dimensions (Mathews, 2015)*
According to Fisher et al. (2010) brands have a tremendous economic importance to companies. The stronger a brand is, the higher are the chance for a company to charge higher prices while having a loyal customer base. Providing an identity to an object is the essence of a brand, aiming at making it known to the audience. Furthermore, the overall impression of a brand exhibited to the audience can be associated with personality characteristics assuming human traits (Wymer, 2013).

| Brand strength |

The investment in communication, distribution and other activities is substantial when building a brand, and its success might vary across categories. It will depend on factors such as the customers’ predispositions toward the brand (the brand need to be relevant to the customer, especially when having an impact in their buying decision process), the firm’s management capacity and competitor’s activity (Fisher et al., 2010). The complexity of branding interolves the management of corporation’s reputation and the perception of its products and services across multiple stakeholders and all touch points (e.g. sales force interactions, sponsorship, social media, product usage, etc.). Thus, branding aspires to reflect the value proposition made to its stakeholders (McKinsey, 2013).

Consequently, the stronger the brand is, the higher, the chances to obtain better business performances (customer loyalty, price elasticity, margins, etc.) Keller (2009). Thus, it is not surprising that top manager consider branding as part of their highest priorities and invest in related activities (communication, distribution, etc.) to strengthen their brand (Fisher et al., 2010). Keller (2009) further developed the benefits of building a strong brand. He argued that it could increase communication effectiveness, as in general, the consumer may be more
willing to attend, process favourably and recall better the communications. Indeed, Keller and Hoeffler (2003) used the concept of ‘differential response to marketing activity’ when speaking of the outcomes for a ‘strong’ or ‘high equity brand’ and summarised them into a scheme.

![Diagram showing the relationship between brand strength, consumer behaviour, and differential marketing efforts]

Figure 4: Brand strength summary (Hoeffler and Keller, 2003)

They concluded that strong brands often conceptualised via familiarity, or through the outcome-oriented measure, and that part of brand strength relies on brand knowledge based upon positive and unique association including image, reputation, high quality and value, and a positive attitude. Additionally, it can lead
to higher sales, repeated purchase and consumer expectation satisfaction (Gibson, 2003 cited in Srivastava, 2009).

**Brand equity**

One of the major marketing subject arising has been the concept of brand equity and its intangible value brought to companies. While practitioners may have been approaching the concept differently, there has been common census around the conceptualisation of brand equity. According to Keller (2013), there are basic agreements around this definition:

> “Customer-based brand equity occurs when the consumer has a high level of awareness and familiarity with the brand and holds some strong, favourable, and unique brand associations in memory”.

The concept of brand familiarity is highly correlated with the brand choice. It can be described as the most rudimentary form of consumer knowledge (Haley and Case, 1979). Wymer (2013) defines brand familiarity as the amount of knowledge that a target has about a brand. The description assumes that brand familiarity is affected more or less in the same way by advertising exposures, purchase behaviour and product consumption and usage (Baker et al., 1986).

The level of awareness (or brand awareness) mentioned in the definition has been part of numerous research. Einwiler (2001) defines brand awareness as the ability to remember a brand. Aaker (1996) investigated brand awareness and argued that it can be measured in different ways, from recognition (i.e. have you been exposed to the brand before?), to recall (i.e. what brand of this category of product you recall?) to ‘top of mind’ standing for the first brand recalled by a person, to ‘dominant’ which is the only brand recalled. Romaniuk, J. (2004) refers
to the term “spontaneous awareness” when speaking of brand recall and “aided awareness” when speaking of brand recognition. Aaker (1996) further emphasised the difference between brand recognition and brand recall. The recognition reflects familiarity from past exposure whereas brand recall comes in consumers’ mind when its product category is mentioned. Recognition is not as deeply rooted in consumers’ mind as compared to recall. In recognition, questions like where did you encounter the brand? Why does it differ from other brands? And what is the brand’s product class? will not necessary be answered as opposed to recall. It is important to notice that recalled brand tend to be market leaders. The relative power of both has been illustrated schematically in the picture below.

![Figure 5: Recognition Versus Recall: The Graveyard Model (Aaker, 1996)](image)

The movement towards the graveyard tends to shrink sales and market share. In the opposite case, when the brand in moving away from the graveyard, sales and market share is expected to increase (Aaker, 1996).
The media environment changed radically in the recent years. Traditional media (TV, radio, magazines and newspapers) are diminishing and the way consumer processes communications shifted (Keller, 2009). With the rapid proliferation of powerful broadband Internet connections, ad-skipping digital video recorders, multi-purpose cell phones, portable music and video players, marketers had to amend their traditional approach (Thaler & Koval, 2003).

With the proliferation of digital technology and digital communities, the customer-centric aspect became much more vital than before. Businesses need to take into consideration the changes and strengthen the relationship between brands and multiple audiences (Kliatchko, 2009). Karpinski (2005) describes consumers of media and marketing message as intelligent, organising and more trusting of their own opinions and the opinion of their peers.

Digital landscape is changing drastically the concept of branding. It has led to a two-way communication between brands and consumers. Social media implies a direct dialogue with the brands on an everyday basis. It is not only about the visual identity or logo anymore but rather different online touchpoints (e.g. topic interaction platform, product or organisation via website or app, search engine page, etc.) (Rowles, 2014).

The technological improvement led to a radical change in content thanks to the emergence of social networks and various digital platform. The propagation has never been so subsequent since the content became free, available at any time and easily accessible to everyone. Consequently inducing to a loss of control from companies towards the content. Levine et al. (2001, p. 72) argue that:
“Corporate messaging is pathetic. It’s not funny. It’s not interesting. It doesn’t know who we are or care. It only wants us to buy. If we wanted more of that, we’d turn on the tube. But we don’t and we won’t. We’re too busy. We’re too wrapped up in some fascinating conversation”.

The authors further advanced that engagement in these marketplace exchanges is mandatory if companies want to succeed, the company’s voice being the public expression of an identity. Not to mention the influence of feedbacks, as they have the power to let the world know that they are not happy with a corporate attitude. For instance, if there are lack of answers to emails, ordering deficiencies or defecting products, the market will definitely find out that company didn’t hold theirs promises (Levine et al., 2001, p.81). To conclude, the laws of branding still apply in a digital setting. Engaging the consumers in the right ways at the right time while handing over the brand promise. In short, digital allows the best marketers to market better (Nielsen, 2009).
Sponsorship

**Definition and terminology**

The first sponsorship researches were conducted in the 1970s. Academics devoted considerable efforts to the definition of sponsorship in the 1980s – 1990s. While many authors lent themselves to the definition process, a common census has not been established. It reflects the ambiguity concerning the nature of sponsorship and the way other communication methods are impacted.

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<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tr>
<td>Meenaghan</td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Sponsorship is the provision of assistance either financial or in-kind to an activity by a commercial organisation for the purpose of achieving commercial objectives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berrett</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>Sponsorship is a contribution to an activity by a commercial organisation in cash, or in kind, with the expectation of achieving corporate and marketing objectives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ueberroth</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Sponsorship in its simplest form, is when sponsors provide funds or “in-kind” contributions to promoters of events and receives consideration in the form of logo and identity usage in the event.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pope</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Sponsorship is the provision of resources (e.g., money, people, equipment) by an organization (the sponsor) directly to an individual, authority or body (the sponsee), to enable the latter to pursue some activity in return for benefits contemplated in terms of the sponsor’s promotion strategy, and which can be expressed in terms of corporate, marketing or media objectives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IEG</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Sponsorship is a cash and/or in-kind fee paid to a property (typically sports, entertainment, non-profit event or organisation) in return for access to the exploitable commercial potential associated with that property.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incorporated Society of</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Sponsorship is the payment of a fee by a company in return for the right to a public association with an activity,</td>
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<tr>
<td>British Advertisers (ISBA)</td>
<td>item or person, where the purpose is the achievement of a commercial objective.</td>
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<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Medcalf</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Sponsorship is an investment, in cash or any kind, in an activity, in return for access to the exploitable commercial potential associated with that activity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pickton &amp; Broderick</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Sponsorship is a contribution to an activity by and organisation in cash, or in kind, with the expectation of achieving corporate and marketing objectives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fill</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Sponsorship is a commercial activity in which one party permits another an opportunity to exploit an association with a target audience in return for funds, services or resources.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nevertheless, considerable agreement exists when it comes to distinguishing sponsorship from corporate philanthropy, patronage, corporate giving and product placement, although in some cases the limits are difficult to define with precision. Indeed, minimum agreements were identified based upon the exchange between the sponsor and sponsored (also called sponsee) and the marketing objectives related to the exploitation of the relationship between the two entities (Walliser, 2003).

In exchange for paying a fee to a property (e.g. sports, entertainment event, organisation or NGO) (IEG, 2015) or by providing with other ways of contribution such as physical and service goods (Bennett, 1999), the expectation is to access the economical potential associated with the former property (IEG, 2015).

The relationship, as opposed to donations where it can be qualified as a philanthropic character, involves a certain return from the sponsee in exchange for a payment or contribution from the sponsor. The expected return can either be a favourable publicity for a company and / or brand throughout an activity that is not necessarily linked to the core business activity (Bennett, 1999).
Sponsorship clarification

Before further clarifying the concept of sponsorship, it is important to reference the traditional marketing framework from where it was established. Thus, the marketing mix, which originated in the 60s by Neil H. Borden, was composed by twelve elements with the aim to help businesses to succeed their process in a properly way to achieve profitable business operations. Jerome McCarthy narrowed down to four elements (Product, Price, Promotion and Place (Blythe, 2009).

Sponsorship is integrated as part of the marketing mix (Piquet, 1998). Amongst these four elements, Promotion is the section to focus on. It refers to the activities that communicate the merits of a product and persuade the customers to buy it (Kotler et al, 2014, p.77). Sponsorship is also part of the communication mix. Van Heerden (2001) argued that sponsorship when isolated from other elements of the marketing communication mix, is not effective as all the other elements of the communication mix are required for achieving a good sponsorship program.

![Marketing Mix Diagram](image)

*Figure 6: Adapted from De Pelsmacker et al. (2007, p.5)*

Sponsorship is considered as part of communication methods, broadening at a certain extent, the same objectives as advertising (e.g. awareness and image). The two materials, while complementary, contain several differences. Sponsorship influence indirectly the target group with the help of the sponsor. In other words, it does not promote the product directly to the target group but
rather creates an image or notion in people’s minds to make a purchase (Valanko, 2009 cited in Pitkänen 2015). Another major difference lies in the way messages from sponsorship and advertisement are delivered. The control over the message in case of sponsoring is weaker compared to traditional advertising (Meenaghan et al., 1990).

The implementation of sponsorship as a marketing communication tool created significant changes in many regards as of traditional advertising including media choice and placement, and the overall budget allocation at many firms (Cornwell et al., 2005). Researchers further pointed out several changes regarding the two communication methods. Amongst them, Walliser (2003) indicates that advertisement messages tend to be more direct and explicit and are more easily controlled whereas sponsorship messages have to overcome bigger communication barriers. Furthermore, McDonald (1991) argues that audience reaction in regards to sponsorship is expected to be more appreciated compared to more sceptical returns when it comes to advertising practice.

In this regards, two main approaches have been pointed out to obtain sustainable competitive advantage. The first, called “Shotgun-approach” aims at targeting high profile athletes, team or events. The purpose of this strategy is to benefit from a unique image associated with a high-profile entity, excluding any other company to achieve the same kind of image. The second approach is rather focusing on finding a low profile. By using this strategy, it supports both the image of the company, as well as the team (Pitkänen, 2015).

Sponsorship objectives

Sponsorship is a mutually beneficial business arrangement between sponsors and those sponsored for achieving defined objectives (Head, 1981 cited in...
Mason & Cochetel, 2006). Based on the integration of sponsorship in the marketing mix, Piquet (1998) differentiated three type of objectives. The first can be described as exposure-seekers where sponsorship is described as an advertising forum. The second objective aims at a close integration with communication activities and therefore, with a strong association between the event and the sponsors. Finally, the third objectives can be characterised as more influential due to the active role of the sponsor, striving to an extent where it can possibly influence the content of an event itself.

The concept of building a level of exposure through sponsorship as a part of one or more objectives has been part of several other authors. Amongst those, Pope (1998) also identified three main objectives related to sponsorship. The first one is image-based and therefore, the development of brand awareness resulting from aligning images with successful team or athlete. The second one is a marketing objective based on brand promotion by reaching two target audience: those who participate in the sport and the spectators of it. Finally, the third one is a media objective based upon channel exposure. As an example, 30 seconds brought during an exclusive event broadcasted on TV will oftentimes be more expensive than sponsoring the event itself. The brand objectives have also been part of Cornwell et al. (2005) researches, where they argued in this regards that sponsorship has three levels of brand equity outcomes: cognitive (awareness, image), affective (liking, preference) and behavioural responses (purchase intent, purchase commitment and behaviour).

Along the same line, Abratt et al. (1987) stated that sponsorship was a viable vehicle that corporations could utilise to achieve corporate marketing, communication and public relations objectives. According to Fill (2009, p.603), the sponsorship objectives can be divided into two categories. Primary ones are
aiming at building awareness, developing customer loyalty and improving the perception and images of the brand. Whereas secondary objectives are more focused on attracting news users, supporting intermediaries and act as a form of staff motivation and morale building.

Faced with those different objectives, and due to the important number of expectations from sponsorship and the abundance of research covering the subject, it is difficult to classify them in a coherent way as corporations often overlap and mix objectives within one sponsorship relationship (Mullin et al., 2007).

Ultimately, De Pelsmacker et al. (2007, p.330) summarised sponsorship through corporate and marketing communication objectives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Corporate communications objectives</th>
<th>General public</th>
<th>Channel members and trade relations</th>
<th>Employees</th>
<th>Opinion-formers and decision-makers</th>
<th>Marketing communications objectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Increase general public awareness of company</td>
<td>Build trade relations</td>
<td>Enhance employee relations and motivations</td>
<td>Increase media attention</td>
<td>Increase awareness with actual customers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Promote or enhance corporate image</td>
<td>Corporate hospitality</td>
<td>Assist staff recruitment</td>
<td>Counter adverse publicity</td>
<td>Increase awareness with potential customers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Alter public perception of company</td>
<td>Demonstrate trade goodwill</td>
<td>Facilitate prospecting for the salesforce</td>
<td>Build goodwill</td>
<td>Confirm market leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Involvement with the local community</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Reassure policy-holders and stockholders</td>
<td>Increase new product awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Personal objective of senior managers</td>
<td>Induce trial of new product</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 7: Sponsorship Objectives (De Pelsmacker et al., 2007, p.330)*
Each of the categories contains a type of target group and objective. They further pointed out that as part of marketing communications objectives, brand awareness, and image building is the most achieved strategy. The effects are becoming visible in the long run. As part of corporate communication objectives, promoting corporate image and increasing goodwill with a variety of target group is the most common objective. Those can be achieved, by transferring the value of the event to both external public and their own staff (De Pelsmacker et al., 2007, p.330).

**Sponsorship effectiveness**

Several authors have investigated the consideration of sponsorship as part of an integrated marketing communication (IMC) tool. Although sponsorship is considered by the big majority of researchers as being part of a promotion in the marketing mix and having their own branch in the communication mix, Pickton et al. (2015) classifies sponsorship as an aspect of public relation which is one of the four principal areas of IMC.
Figure 8: The Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) Mix Model (Pickton et al, 2015)

Quester & Thompson (2001) argues that impact of sponsorship is more consequent when it is leveraged and properly integrated into the company’s IMC plan. Nowak and Phelps (1994) refers to the term “one voice marketing” when describing the process of maintaining a clear and consistent image, position, message across all marketing communication disciplines and tools. Part of its effectiveness is therefore related to the way companies are implementing sponsorship as regards to the other marketing communication instrument. An effective marketing program combines the element of the marketing mix into an integrated marketing program to achieve company’s objectives by delivering value to their customers (Kotler et al, 2014, p.77). Nevertheless, while its efficiency is partially related to its implementation within the general marketing framework, it does also vary depending on its proper factors.

Similar to the measurement of the effectiveness of other communications tools, measuring the effectiveness of sponsorship is complicated as a number of
factors (e.g. simultaneous use of communication mix instrument, a creative management issue, media coverage, etc.) affect the overall outcomes (De Pelsmacker et al., 2007, p.342).

In their paper, Speed & Thompson (2000) argued that the most commonly reported method for measuring sponsorship effectiveness is the quantity of exposure (created through the mention of the brand’s name, appearance of the logo, ...) by converting into a monetary value and therefore, calculating the cost of advertisement to achieve equivalent exposure. However, they pointed out that this method contains some shortcomings, as the measurement is made post hoc and thus cannot be used directly for decision-making guidance or sponsorship guidance. The authors further suggested a conceptual framework containing the factors influencing the sponsorship response.

Figure 9: Determinant of Sports Sponsorship Response – Conceptual Framework (Speed & Thompson, 2000)
The framework splits three categories of attitudes: (1) attitudes toward the event, (2) attitudes toward the sponsor, and (3) perception of congruence between the sponsor and the event. Firstly, is has been argued that a positive attitude toward the event is associated with a positive response toward the sponsor (Thompson et al., 2000). Thus, sponsors will benefit from gratitude that emerges from fans, especially from those that strongly likes the event (Crimmins et al., 1996 cited in Thompson et al., 2000). The second behaviour is the attitude toward the sponsor (or brand) and the positive influence of having a favourable image, be described as sincere and be motivated by a philanthropic intention instead of pure commercial motivation. The third and last category is the perception of congruence between the sponsor and the event. Several researches suggest that perception of congruence has a direct impact on sponsorship response. Their findings show a stronger response when consumer perceive a consistent fit between the sponsor and the event. (Thompson et al., 2000).

De Pelsmacker et al. (2007, p. 343) ultimately summarised four type of sponsorship effectiveness:

![Image of sponsorship effectiveness diagram](image)

*Figure 10: Type of sponsorship effectiveness measures (De Pelsmacker et al, 2007, P.343)*
Exposure: Either by counting the number of attendees to an event, the number of consumers reached or the frequency of consumer exposure to the brand. It can be translated into two type of exposure: the audience attending the event and the audience of media coverage. One can estimate that the potential of sponsorship audience can be broad and subsequent, nevertheless, Pickton et al. (2015, p.575) argue that sponsorship is an efficient communications instrument as it enables the targeting of a specific audience with a specific message.

Communication results: Very similar to advertising campaign effectiveness as brand awareness, brand image, correct attribution of the sponsor with the event can be measured.

Sales and Market share: Not a primary objective of sponsorship, however, the commercial impact can be estimated as a long-term sponsorship effectiveness impact.

Feedback from participating groups: Some type of sponsorship are more likely to be measured with the opinion of employees. Their nature generally lies in the reaction of participants to corporate hospitality sponsorship (e.g. cultural or cause-related sponsorship).

Brand awareness in sponsoring

Sponsorship can affect purchase decision by creating brand level awareness and interest. Consequently, it generates perceived differences between the sponsored brand and the other from the same category (Cuneen & Hannan, 1993).
Grohs et al. (2004) suggested concentrating on recall factors when measuring the awareness generated by sponsorship. They further argued that people who are aware of and know the sponsor and its brand before the event takes place tend to have a higher sponsor awareness after the event. Moreover, a closer perceived fit between the sponsored event and sponsor tend to result in the better recall of the sponsor, the spectators retrieve the sponsor’s name from their memory without any problem. In other words, the target audience is likely to remember the name of the sponsor when the association between the event and the sponsor nicely fit together (Walliser, 2003).

The level of the spectators’ involvement as well as its interest in regards to the event reduces the number of incorrect sponsor attribution, and therefore, increases the tendency to better recall the sponsor (Grohs et al. 2004). McDonald (1991) came to the same conclusion about the positive relationship between interest and awareness.

When it comes to the length of the sponsorship activity, Mason and Cochetel (2006) argues that there are considerable evidence showing that the duration of a sponsorship can have an effect on awareness and recall. In the long-term benefit, between three and five years, sponsorship increases brand recognition and awareness (Mason and Cochetel, 2006; Pitts and Slattery, 2004). Mason and Cochetel (2006) further investigated the effect of awareness when there is a change of sponsors. The previous sponsor still remains in the mind of the audience and new sponsor, when taking over from a long-running sponsorship, needs to break the old relation and build new links between the sponsor and event.

However, Walliser (2003) stated that results of previous studies focusing on awareness emerging from sponsorship are inconsistent. Nonetheless, they do
provide identification of factors influencing sponsorship awareness. Koschler and Merz (1995) even stated that sponsorship activities, even when used for a longer period of time, are not very effective in generating brand awareness and is rather used to broaden existing brand awareness. Pham and Jolar (2001) who concluded that well-known sponsors have a higher chance to be identified as compared to sponsors that are not prominent in the marketplace also share this point of view.

**Brand image in sponsoring**

Enhancing brand image (along with brand awareness) have traditionally been the most important sponsorship objectives (Walliser, 2003). According to Walliser (2003), evidence shows that sponsorship can contribute to the modification of certain image dimensions. Sponsor identification affects the judgment of one dimension of the brand image.

As the fundamental aim of sponsorship is to generate positive feelings and attitudes towards the sponsor, evaluating the image transfer can be considered important. Grohs et al. (2004) concluded a general transfer of associations from the sponsored event to the sponsor, regardless of the industry. Nevertheless, he further suggested paying attention to the sponsor specificities as chances are to attribute those specificities (aiming at differentiating the different sponsors) to additional promotional activities or to the fit between the event and the sponsor.

Corporate sponsorship often generates a favourable image for the sponsor, both at the corporate and brand levels (Gwinner and Eaton, 1999). In general, according to Javalgi et al. (1994), companies employing corporate sponsorship as a communications goal tend to have a more positive public image than companies not involved in sponsorship. Their findings suggest that it can
enhance the corporate image but the outcomes are not automatic as it may occur only if a company benefits from a prior good image and if the consumer does not hold a prior negative perception. Nevertheless, if the sponsor is considered as a prominent brand, the chance are higher for benefiting of a positively perceived image (Pham and Jolar, 2001). Chien et al. (2011) further suggested that brands category being consistent and related to an event lead to a perception of a higher brand meaning and clarity. The idea of perceiving the brand / event image fit has also been developed by Gi-Yong et al. (2006) where they suggest the outcomes to receive a more positive cognitive and affective response.

Generally speaking, Cornwell et al. (2001) found out in their research that the perceived contribution of sponsorship tends to be larger when it comes to corporate and brand image as well as brand awareness as opposed to more distinctive elements such as brand personality, brand loyalty, and image of quality, as well as differentiating the brand from competition.

**Sponsorship in eSports**

There is no general definition in regards to what is professional niche sport; however, some sports (e.g. eSports) can contain some specifications. Miloch and Lambrecht (2006) stated that niche sports can be best described as sports that are not mainstream and do not appeal to a mass audience. These are targeted to a niche of demographic or a sub-segment of sports consumer. They further provided examples of diverse niche sports such as tennis, lacrosse, bowling, fishing, curling, horseracing, and action or extreme sports like skateboarding. Although some of the sport mentioned above have seen their participation
increased (SGMA, 2005), one can consider that part of them might not be classified as a niche sport anymore.

While there are many investment forms within eSports, sponsorship remains the heart of the economic model. This funding mechanism can either be in the form of peripherals provision (headphone, mouse, keyboard, …) or financial support for salaries or diverse costs (travel, rent, …). It supports not only prices but also operation costs. The influence of sponsorship is such that it has the power of making or breaking a team or give the chance to a player to remain active and compete or not. Therefore, taking into account the importance of sponsorship in the industry, it is not uncommon to see team owners, leagues and tournament organisers spending time and giving a special attention into cultivating affiliations (Taylor, 2012, p.154).

The attractiveness of a niche sports sponsorship is its cost effectiveness, a more targeted audience, a decreasing niche sponsorship clutter and a greater flexibility in helping sponsors to achieve their objectives. These unique attributes help niche sport to compete against mainstream sport to gather funding. For professional niche sport, funding is so vital that the event itself might be cancelled if sponsorship is not there to support it such as the case of lack of money that can emerge from unsold tickets, media contract or any tierce activity to raise money (Greenhalgh et al., 2013). Furthermore, the process of developing relations with sponsors can sometimes be more difficult than expected when he is not part of any traditional eSports sponsor. In fact, the sponsee often needs to explain and reassure the new sponsor of its investment by explaining why a player can be a public figure and be profitable for their brand (Taylor, 2012, p.154). Increasing financial pressure combined with a stronger competition pushes sponsee to become more innovative when designing a demand toward a sponsor. Indeed,
these pressures led to assess more efficiently the return on investment of sponsorship and forced sponsee to pay closer attention to the need and objectives of corporate partners (Miloch et al., 2006).

As the relationship between the sponsor and the sponsee is crucial, several researchers studied the different factors that constitute sponsorship. Amongst them, Farrally et al. (2004, as cited in Chalmet, 2015) mentioned four core pillars: (1) trust, (2) commitment, (3) economic and (4) non-economic satisfaction. (1) The degree of trust is the most important pillar, as it appears to be the most important factor in building long-lasting relationship aiming for both parties, to work to their full potential. (2) Commitment is generally changing throughout the year of relation. As sponsorship within eSports was a new phenomenon, the contract requirements and desires were not easily fulfilled by both sponsor and sponsee. Thus, resulting in commitment variation. (3) Economic and (4) non-economic satisfaction are directly influenced by the level of trust and commitment. Teams and players would not be able to be as active within the eSports scene without the sponsorship of corporate brands. The tournament prices and individual donations contribute to their survivability, nevertheless, sponsorship additionally allows them to focus more on their activity and gain in professionalism (Chalmet, 2015).
eSports: a general landscape

The research focuses on sponsorship within eSports industry. Therefore, the author chose to present a general landscape of what eSports is, in which way it has evolved, and all the implications that make the industry appealing to the eyes of sponsors. To accomplish this, the thesis researches the existing literature within the project domain, where the literature is evaluated and analysed in terms of the key research questions, and further summarised in a renewed project scope.

**eSports History**

ESports is not as new one might think. According to Hope (2015), the first event was held in 1981 for an arcade game named ‘Space Invaders’. At the time, many events were based upon arcade games; therefore, Borowy and Jin (2013) raised the question around the consideration of these primary events as ‘eSports’. It turns out that the first real event including prize money for the winner was a ‘space war’ competition happening in 1972. Nevertheless, many people including Borowy and Jin (2013), consider that Space Invader tournament is the first video game tournament ever staged with a prize at the end.

ESports development remained very slow until the 1990s, mainly due to the lack of technology and powerful materials. In the 1990s, technological empowerment and the ability to play over the Internet let to multiplayer capacity (Hope 2015). It gave the birth to two well-known game genre used today: FPS (First Person Shooter) and RTS (Real Time Strategy).
Many of the eSports games were created in the 90s, Doom (1993), Warcraft (1994), Quake (1996), Starcraft (1998) and Counter-Strike (1999); with a lot of them being still competitive nowadays and attracting a huge community (Wagner, 2006). The reason behind it is that the value of multiplayer gaming is the community and their involvement rather than the product itself (Taylor, 2012, p.7). The 90s was also the opportunity for well-known game distributor brand like Nintendo, to launch their first World Championship (Chobopeon, 2012).

However, the democratisation of eSports really happened during the next decade. Major events started in the year 2000 where price pools reached up to $600 000. eSports companies like IEM (Intel Extreme Masters) and MLG (Major League Gaming) surfaced (Hope, 2015). Furthermore, eSports communities and the concept of the team began to really emerge at this time with the first example of SK Gaming created in 2003 (Devil, 2011).

Another fundamental step was settled in 2007 when the first real live streaming platform named ‘Justin.tv’ (today known as ‘Twitch.tv’) was created. It gave the opportunity to professional players to be seen online by a large audience. As eSports grow drastically the following years, tournament focusing on various game genres was held everywhere. In 2009, Riot Games launched the game League of Legend, which is today seen as one of the leading game played in the world in the field of eSports (Hope, 2015). As such, the world final made over 36 million viewers throughout their tournament in 2015 (Magus, 2015).

Considering the constant growth, the future of eSports is looking bright. However, as the culture of eSports is still in the early ages, some considerations have to be made. One of the numerous concern is about the physicality of the sport as one of the most defining characteristics of sport (Witkowski, 2012). The
implementation of virtual reality as a way to combine the design of videos games with the physical skill of real sports is heading in this direction (Hewitt, 2014).

It is impossible to speak about eSports without considering the phenomenon and the role of South Korea in the discipline. The country is a seen promised land in the eyes of many respected professional players. In the same way than mainstream sports stars, eSports players are holding sponsorship contracts with the latest sports gear from Nike and Adidas, and where competition are broadcasted on major television channel engendering a huge fan base (Taylor, 2012, p.17). It became such a phenomenon that over 10 million South Korean are regularly playing eSports and that the fan clubs is much higher number than the actor or singer’s fan clubs. By comparison, it represents the same amount of people who go spectate pro basketball, baseball and soccer put together (Schiesel, 2007).

Major Actors

Although the outstanding growing number of the industry is consequent, one of the most important aspect for marketers is the nature of value that consumers seek through engagement in competitive gaming. It involves almost no physical product and a few services. As such, what is evaluated is the experience related to this form of consumption, which is the outcome of multiple marketing actors such as gaming companies, players, online communities, governing bodies and stakeholders (Seo, 2013).
Tournaments have aroused ambitious organisers, wanting to form official events, aspiring to create the next NFL or FIFA. Professional teams are a core part of pro gaming. In many regards, the structure works like a normal company. Indeed, many steps are similar, with a recruitment phase and a formal contract...
between the team players and the owner. The recruiting process can be troublesome and owners sometimes have to engage in serious competition against other teams, by offering appealing benefits in order to enrol players in their team. As eSports requires up to date and very competitive players, the eventuality of letting team members go as their skill drops is not rare. Alike several of companies, teams have their own vitrine by using a website to exchange with their fan base and selling many branded logo merchandises (Taylor, 2012, p.147).

ESports team alike sports team work similarly in the way that players train together to compete against competitive teams to earn the best spot. However, one major difference is the financial entry level of team ownership compared to traditional sports. As a consequence, the boundaries between team owner and members is less apparent. Therefore, rarely a coach acts and mediate between the owner and the players. There is no robust model of coaching model in eSports and often, the owner (or manager) is not kept over the course of several international competition (Taylor, 2012, p.150).

Team sponsorship and brand advertising through esports is becoming more significant. Matt Wolf, Coca-Cola’s global head of gaming said: “eSports is at a point now where the company feels like it’s time to move into the industry. There are several signs that show that this is real, it’s sustainable, and the growth is astronomical”.

The advertiser that made the first move were majorly IT companies as eSports enthusiast are extremely valuable for digital media providers & headset or other computer products manufacturers but other big brand became attracted too as viewers are more likely to have an online subscription, a high income and a full-time job. Much of the eSports scene still remains within the
scope of technological product (e.g. Intel, Steelseries, MSI), as eSports is still struggling with the image and stereotypes of geek culture and computer games. However, notable changes are emerging and several teams partnered with other brand categories and manages to overcome the technological brand barrier. As such, teams like ESL landed Adidas, Volkswagen and Suzuki for periods of time and MLG scored some partnership with sponsors like Old spice, Bic, Doritos, and Hot Pocket. Evil Geniuses, SK Gaming, and Meet Your Makers on their side partnered with Adidas, Kimikuro, and Puma (Taylor, p.156-157).

This is the results of several phenomena. As the channel platform became more popular, the type of person forming the audience is more diverse than before. Where you had at one time a more ‘hard-core gamer’, tech-enthusiast, geeky public; it grew into a more diversified crowd. This is also due to the technological empowerment. Platforms were not so well designed and attractive than nowadays, the internet connexion was not high enough to allow the user to watch a high-quality content. The public had to head for replays instead of live stream. It became more convenient and much more accessible for a larger audience.
Shooting games demand the key skill of aiming. The player’s attention must be focused in two places at once, the area around the avatar and the target the player is shoot at (Adams et al, 2007, p.436). First-Person Shooter were created in the 1970s but the style really emerged in the 1990s with a game called “Doom”. At the time, Doom led to controversy due to their usage of satanic imagery and the association with the perpetrator of the columbine High School Massacre but the real game that contributed and revolutionised the genre is called “Counter-Strike”. Unlike the earlier games where players were fighting against beasts and demons, Counter-Strike is a team game, where humans are competing against human and can choose either to be terrorist or counter-terrorist (Li, 2016, p.10). While Counter-Strike remains the biggest FPS within the eSports scene, the game itself was never meant to be a formal competition. It
really wasn’t about eSports, it was about playing with a bunch of strangers and having an experience that was fun’ (Li, 2016, p.11).

E.g: Country-Strike, Call of Duty, Battlefield, Overwatch

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Real-time Strategy (RTS) is a game genre which can be difficult to apprehend for new players. It is a mixture between combats that are settled by the deployment of characters and the management of resources being harvested from a specific map. The camera clarifies the view of hidden areas through various troops that the player controls (Taylor, 2012, p.13).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E.g: Starcraft, Warcraft, Age of Empire</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MOBA</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Multiplayer on-line Battle Arena (MOBA) is a category of game, which allows the presence of two teams to battle against each other. Maps are usually statics and the content provided to players is constantly growing to scale the game. MOBA have the particularity to work with characters that are evolving in time during the game (e.g. power or ability evolution) (Cannizzo and Ramírez, 2015).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E.g: League of Legends, Dota 2, Smite, Heroes of the storm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MMORPG</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Massive multiplayer online role-playing games (MMORPGs) represents a collaborative form of online multiplayer games where the players create and assume an avatar or unique role to each game. Players begin at a novice level and are evolving through the acquisition of skill, possession, and the achievement of quests (Badrinarayanan, 2014).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**E.g: World of Warcraft, Guildwars, Dofus**

### Fighting games

Fighting games are hand-to-hand combat, between pairs of fighters using exaggerated moves vaguely modelled on Asian Art techniques. The usage of local weapons (e.g. sword, shield, etc.) and range weapons is usually part of the discipline (Adams *et al.*, 2007, p.440).

**E.g: Street Fighter, Tekken, Mortal Kombat**

### CCG

Collectible card game (CCG), also called trading card game (TCG) is typically working by purchasing a starter set, containing a manual and a playable deck of cards that showcases the rules and mechanics of the game in an introductory fashion. In general, CCGs are comprised of three basic components: (1) the rules of the game, (2) the cards themselves and (3) the intellectual property (Superdata, 2010).

**E.g. Hearthstone, Magic**

### Sport

Unlike the other categories of games, sports games simulate a world where the player knows about (sporting events as in real life). A sport game simulates some aspect of athletic sport by playing matches or managing a team, career or both. Sport games uses strategic and physical challenges (Adams *et al*, 2007, p. 543).

**E.g. Fifa, Pro Evolution Soccer, Rocket league**
In Europe and North America, attention has been paid on FPS, with several releases in the 90s such as Medal of Honor and Quake (Seo, 2013). In the current state of eSports, this category can still been seen as one of the most popular game genre broadcasted in the EU (Twitch.tv, 2015) with Counter-Strike being played for over 10 years and contains the highest spectatorship and activity base in Europe and one of the biggest player base in the world (Chalmet, 2015).

Conversely, RTS games are dominating the Asian market. It started with the release of Starcraft in 1998, made by Blizzard Entertainment, which dominated first the Korean market before prevailing in the entire Asian Market (Seo, 2013; Huhh, 2008). It became so popular that some Korean television channels were created to promote young adults, aiming at giving success to individual players, about the same as professional athletes competing in major sports leagues (Wagner, 2007 cited in Seo, 2013).

**Streaming Platform**

eSports (also known as Competitive Gaming or Electronic Sports) in an entertaining sport based upon individuals or team performances. While the industry is massively growing and one cannot say why (Hope 2014; Hewitt 2014), the actual awareness of eSports is not considered as optimal compared to many other sports. Indeed, as the main broadcasting method used is Internet, the public that is the aware of this industry appears to be relatively young. The main digital channel used by professional gamers and tournament is ‘Twitch.TV‘ formerly known as ‘Justin.tv‘. This made it possible for all professional players, and all tournament to show the maths online rather than having stages show with large televisions.
The platform has been created in 2007 by Justin Kan and Emmett Shear, two students who graduated from Yale. The key appeal of the website is its community and the ability to interact with the broadcaster. By July 2008, the platform already passed 1 million registered without any marketing (Li, 2016, p.80-87). The streaming company became the fourth most-trafficked Web property in the U.S (Twitch, 2014).

![Graph showing internet traffic by company](image)

*Figure 13: The new face of gamers (Twitch 2014, p. 08)*

Considering the growth from the year 2012 to 2013 alone, the number of visitors rose by 874%; generating 38 million visits in 2012 to 371 million in 2013. Respectively, the growth of YouTube and Facebook the same year accounted for 48% and 17% (LifeCourse, 2014) and 76% of the platform’s audience is estimated to be under 35 (Quantcast, 2013). In May 2014, Twitch made headlines after rumours surfaced that Google planned to acquire the site for $1 billion (McMillan, 2014).

While the growth over the years has been consequent, the picture is not all bright. Indeed, the platform was seen as a “copyright violator” and were sued for copyright infringement for sports broadcasting. Numerous viewers were able to
watch illegally uploaded content, and sports companies alleged that Twitch did not make enough to address the problem (Li, 2016, p.90).

In the end, and thanks to years of work, Twitch is now supporting millions of viewers, with content accessible with a click and free for viewers. With the Internet expansion and the spreading of the personal computer, streaming users increased without any real extra costs (without considering the usage of professional webcam or microphones) (Li, 2016, p.94).

**Literature conclusion**

Much research had been conducted about sponsorship effectiveness, especially in the sports industry. While eSports is a relatively new industry booming with potential, much research has not been done on sponsorship within eSports (Chalmet, 2015). The literature review summarised the importance of eSports considering its tremendous growth. The direct impact of targeting a very specific population (generally, male players from 17 to 35 years old) through eSports make investments for brands very profitable. International event audiences bring as many viewers as the world biggest sports event and much more than soap opera. The sponsorship investment, seen in relation to a growing visibility gives an extremely interesting target cost compared to more classical communication investment (e.g. advertising in television). All those reasons make eSports and digital streaming platform very attractive and chances are, that it leads them to a bright future. Therefore, it is undeniably an area to further explore by adapting existing sponsorship effectiveness theories into the sponsorship landscape that eSports constitutes and where the presence of digital is everywhere.
Methodology
Introduction

This research adopts the steps described by Saunders’ Research Onion model (Saunders et al., 2015, p.124). The scheme covers the process of numerous dimensions regarding data collection and data analysis. The researcher will go steps by steps through the different dimensions, by supporting the most adequate and suitable element for this paper. He will further consider and evaluate the different ethical and limitation of the research methodology. This section is principally based on the book *Research methods for business students* by Saunders et al. Seventh Edition, 2015.

*Figure 14: The research ‘onion’* (Saunders et al., 2015, p.124)
Research philosophy relates to a set of beliefs and assumptions regarding knowledge development (Saunders et al., 2015, p.124). The philosophy used for this research is **positivism**, which is created from an observable reality based upon facts rather than the nature of the viewer and his impression which would lead to the production of credible and meaningful data (Crotty, 1998). To support the argument, positivism implies the adoption of universal rules and the law to predict and explain phenomena.

As a positivist research, the hypothesis stated in this work:

- Sponsoring an eSport event generates a positive image of the sponsor
- Perceived fit between the sponsor and the sponsored eSport event positively affects brand image
- Brand consumption positively affects brand awareness

Will be tested and either completely or partially confirmed or on the contrary, refuted and in which case, additional developments need to be suggested for further development. The research findings will have to be handled in a detached and neutral way to minimise any kind of influence that could be generated if not done properly (Crotty, 1998).

Several other research philosophy do exists. Amongst them, **Critical realism** focuses more on a “what you see is what you get” basis. The experience of the researcher forges the way he will portray the world. Furthermore, the observed see reality as external and independent rather than emerging from the researcher’s observation (Saunders et al., 2015, p. 139). Reed (2005) further advanced that critical realists have to go through two phases when understanding the world. First, by going through experiences or sensations and second, by reasoning
backwards and detecting reasons that might have been the origin of the phenomenon. It acknowledges bias by worldviews and cultural experiences but at the same time, tries to minimise bias and error by being as objective as possible. The direct realism considers the first step to being enough.

Interpretivism is a research philosophy in which researchers are a part of what they observe. The social part is very important for this positioning because researchers using interpretive position are focused on the understanding of what is happening in a given context. Therefore, the different actors’ perceptions may change and consequently, different realities are possible.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research approach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

There are three different approaches to conducting research: deduction, abduction, and induction. Deductive occurs when a conclusion can be made based upon a set of assumptions; the conclusion being true when all the assumptions are confirmed (Ketokivi and Mantere, 2010). It has a lot in common with the scientific method where theories are emitted first and in a second time, tested to conclude the trustiness of them. The process of deduction is the following: (1) set hypothesis from an existing theory, (2) from literature deduce a testable proposition, (3) Examine the assumption and compare the argument with existing theories to generate further understanding (4) test the proposition with data collection, (5) confirm or reject hypothesis, and (6) revise the theory (Saunders et al., 2015, p.146).

Inductive, in contrast, is conducted when there is a gap between assumptions and the conclusion. The conclusion being qualified to support the observations made (Ketokivi and Mantere, 2010). The inductive approach is more used in the field of social sciences. Indeed, taking a human into account is an important
aspect of induction. It is the principal reason why the researcher should use induction for their research. The approach is generalising from the specific to the general, it is generally used to explore phenomenon, themes, and patterns and from this point, generate conceptual framework (Saunders et al., 2015, p.145).

**Abductive** is the combination of deduction and induction. It moves from an observed surprising fact, which is rather the conclusion than the assumption, and works out a theory to explain the facts (Ketokivi and Mantere, 2010). The assumption made are thereafter considered sufficient of nearly sufficient to explain the conclusion (Saunders et al., 2015, p. 144). Like the inductive approach, it is generally used to explore phenomenon, themes and patterns. However, it will, later on, locate these in a conceptual framework and test them through data collection. The Abductive approach will, therefore, explore deeply existing theory and modify them or build none.

Within this research, the abductive approach would have been interesting to use, to thoroughly explore eSports sponsorship by modifying existing theories and literature review applied in sports sponsorship. However, the researcher is opting for the deductive method, which is based upon the generalisation of sponsorship and draws a conclusion to the specific area of eSport sponsorship. Furthermore, according to (Saunders et al., 2015, p.146) by the use of deductive approach, a hypothesis (or set of hypotheses) is developed to form a theory and a research strategy is designed to test the hypothesis. In this research, the hypotheses are the following:

- H1: Brand consumption positively affects brand awareness

Although we expect brand awareness to be affected by brand consumption, as well as another criterion such as advertising exposures, purchase behaviour,
product usage, etc. (Baker et al, 1986). There is no evidence yet, of a positive effect regarding the consumption of the brand being present within the eSports scene and its awareness with this specific audience. Nevertheless, the researcher suggests the same tendency over eSports brands.

- **H2: Perceived fit between the sponsor and the sponsored eSports event positively affects brand image**

Previous research suggests that the relationship between the sponsor and the event tend to have an impact in the consumers’ mind. Indeed, the stronger the relation, the higher the chance of generating a positive association (Thompson et al., 2000; Mason and Cochetel, 2006). Following the tendency, the researcher assumes the same pattern for eSports sponsorship as in other sponsorship.

- **H3: Sponsoring an eSports event generates a positive image of the sponsor**

Sponsorship, as argued by (Waliser, 2003), contributes to the modification of certain image dimensions. Previous research (Gwinner and Eaton, 1999; Pham and Jolar, 2001; Chien et al., 2011) suggest a positive image when using sponsorship as a communication tool. Therefore, the researcher expects the same tendency regarding eSports sponsorship.

The quantitative data gathered leads to statistical analysis, providing a rational explanation and links the different analysed variables (eSports sponsorship and brand awareness, eSport sponsorship and brand image) which also translates the inductive approach.
Quantitative research is generally used as a data collection technique that generated or uses numerical data. In contrast, qualitative may be summarised as the collection of non-numerical data. Both methods, while being by definition opposed, can be used at the same time for a research. It can be seen as “two ends of a continuum, which in practice are often mixed” (Saunders et al., 2015, p.165).

It is common to associate quantitative data to positivism because of the highly structured method of this philosophy. Moreover, quantitative tends to be more associated with the deductive approach when researchers use data to test a theory. Nevertheless, it can also be identified by the inductive approach when a collection of data is used to develop a theory. Finally, quantitative study design can either be in (1) mono method when it involves a simple data collection technique (e.g. questionnaire) or (2) multi-method which consists of the collection of data through more than one technique (e.g. questionnaire + structured observation).

Qualitative research, on the other hand, tends to be associated with interpretivism philosophy because, by undertaking a qualitative data collection, researchers try to have a deep understanding of the research context to explore a phenomenon. Consequently, the inductive approach appears to fits the best as
it is used to build new theories and enrich existing ones. However, qualitative can sometimes begin with a deductive approach to testing existing theories or be using the abductive approach where inductive assumption are developed and deductive one tested during the research.

The association between both quantitative and qualitative can be combined to form a mixed method. The research design of the mixed method can be either deductive, inductive or abductive. The potentiality of mixing both qualitative and quantitative is tremendous. There are advantages to using the mixed method if the researcher wishes to use two sources to corroborate his findings or support the interpretation of the findings. Consequently, a large range of forms has been established. There is no need to discuss them at any length here, as this method is, ultimately not used for this research.

This research is undertaken by using the mono method through a single quantitative data collection system. It was considered the most appropriate for the task due to the large population sample required. Furthermore, for achieving the objectives:

- Investigate if eSport sponsorship has an impact on people’s brand awareness.
- Investigate if eSport sponsorship creates an impact on the corporate image of the sponsor.

The researcher estimated that quantitative data collection appears to be the most suitable way to elaborate his research regarding these objectives.
Research Strategy

Saunders et al. (2015) list eight strategies: (1) **experiment** to study the probability of a change through experimental group and measurement; (2) **survey** which involves a structured collection of data using questionnaires, observations and interviews; (3) **archival research**, it is the collection of data using administrative records and documents; (4) **case study**, an empirical examination in the real-life context to examine a modern fact; (5) **ethnography** which is focused on the description and the interpretation of the social world through first-hand field study; (6) **action research**, a repetitive process of research to develop solution to organisations’ problem through participative and collaborative approach; (7) **grounded theory**, used to build up a theoretical analysis of social interactions and process including business and management contexts among others; and then (8) **narrative inquiry** which consist of the collection of experiences to reconstruct them into narrative.

This research is using an online survey, which was considered best suited for gathering a large amount of data for a broad group of people over a short period of time. Saunders et al. (2015) argue that surveys are best suited to respond to the questions “what”, “who”, “where”, “how much” and “how many”. In addition, the data collected can be used to draw possible reasons for the particular relationship between variables. Another reason to use online survey in this research is that the majority eSport audience is closely using the internet as part of their everyday life. Therefore, considering the digital channel they are utilising, the online survey appears to be the most suitable strategy for reaching the adequate respondents.
Time Horizon

Do I want my research to be a “snapshot” taken at a particular time or do I want it to be more akin to a diary or a series of snapshots and be a representation of events over a given period? (Saunders et al., 2015, p.200).

Time horizon can be either cross-sectional or longitudinal. Longitudinal is used to collect data over a period of time, and therefore it is an effective method to study changes and developments. Predictions can sometimes be made base upon trends that happened over time.

This research strives to provide a view of the current state of eSports sponsorship. Furthermore, as part of a master study in digital marketing and the consideration of time constrained requirement, the researcher opted for the use of cross-sectional time-horizon.

Sampling

The sampling technique consists of reducing the amount of data that need to be collected by considering only a subgroup rather than all possible cases or elements (Sanders et al., 2015, p.272). Saunder et al. (2015) further argue that samplings occurs when (1) there is an impracticability to survey the entire population; (2) there is budget constriction that limits the access to perform a survey to the entire population; (3) there is a time constriction preventing the researcher from being able to survey the entire population.

The research uses a non-probability sample of the population, as it would be difficult to get a sample subset that is completely representative of the overall population. Indeed there is no geographical segmentation, nor any further
population division of any kind (e.g. age, work, ...) and our research aims at targeting only people that are watching eSports events. Nevertheless, efforts are made to obtain a subsequent number of responses from an as heterogeneous set of participants as possible in order to provide a good indication regarding the main trends of the overall population watching eSports.

Figure 15: Sampling Techniques (Saunders et al, 2015, p.276)

The collection method uses the volunteer self-selection sampling method, whereby allowing individuals to identify their desire to take park in the research. This process goes through two main steps: (1) Publicise the need for the research by choosing the appropriate channels; (2) Collect data from those who respond. This includes posting on appropriate online newsgroups and discussion groups, hyperlinks from other websites as well as letters, emails or tweets of invitation to colleagues and friends.
Collecting primary data add considerable richness to the research data. Sanders et al. (2015, p.354) distinguishes four type of data collections: (1) **observation**, based upon qualitative research and derives from the work of social anthropology; (2) **structured observation**, used in quantitative research and is more concerned about frequency of action; (3) **Internet-mediated observation** which involves collection of data from online communities; (4) **observation using videography** involves recording moving images onto electric media to collect observational data.

The researcher is using a quantitative internet-mediated observation by passing through ‘Surveygizmo’. The paid solution has been chosen as conditional questions were settled. ‘Surveygizmo’ has been chosen over ‘Google Docs’ for it’s a complete questionnaire customization and the ability to build conditional variable adapting the questions to the respondent answers.

![Diagram of questionnaire types](image)

*Figure 16: Types of questionnaire (Saunders et al., 2015, p.440)*

For this research, the different questionnaires are mainly sent through the social media ‘Reddit’ within gaming pages and companies. Other platforms were
considered in order to reach a subsequent number of the respondent. However, a differentiation has to be made between the respondent interested in gaming and those interested in eSports. Therefore, the questionnaire is designed with filtering question, to avoid answers from players that are not really following eSports. The author listed the different subreddit through which the survey was sent:

/r/SampleSize
/r/beyonddesummit
/r/Competitiveoverwatch
/r/lolesports
/r/starcraft
/r/pccmasterace

Due to the number of variables in the research model, the data analysis was made using Surveygizmo analytic tools and SPSS. Through the use of Surveygizmo analytic tools, the quantitative variables gathered from the questionnaires were analysed in the following particular aspects:

Frequency distribution in terms of:

- Age
- Gender
- Games Consumption
- Streaming Consumption

Cross tabulations, on the other hand, is made through SPSS software. The following relation:

- Levels of connection and Image
- Previous consumption of the product and Awareness
The strength of a relationship between two or numerous variables can be evaluated through a coefficient of correlation. This thesis uses the Pearson’s product-moment correlation coefficient (PMCC) to assess the strength of a relationship based on numerical data or from the binary question. This thesis also uses Spearman’s rank correlation coefficient as it assumes the usage and comparison of ordinal (or ranked) data (Saunders et al., 2015, p. 546).

Statistical tests to be applied:

- **Person’s correlation coefficient**: level of awareness and brand consumption.

- **Spearman’s rank correlation coefficient**: level of sponsorship fit and brand image association.

---

**Research Ethics**

Business and management research implies, almost all the time, human participants which have the effect to generate greater ethical concerns (Saunders et al., 2015, p. 220). Saunder further argued that ethic is an important part of the research; ethical questions are presents during the whole dissertation process from the design, the plan of the research to the collection, the analysis, and the report of data.

All social research involves consent, access and associated ethical issues since it is based on data from people and about people (Punch, 2006).

The main ethical issue this research can be facing is to obtain the informed consent from the participant that are going to be part of the questionnaire.
The importance of making appropriate use of data gathered from the respondent by only treating it for research purpose and maintaining the confidentiality of the participants.

**Limitation of Research**

The researcher has decided to use a cross-sectional research strategy, which by nature is limited. The purpose this research is to evaluate eSports sponsorship effectiveness in regards to brand awareness and brand image. Therefore, a longitudinal research strategy could have led to a better understanding of this factor. Nevertheless, considering the amount of time given to complete this research, a longitudinal study could not be selected.

The implementation of an online self-administered questionnaire as a data collection instrument also limits the type of response that can be gathered. Several aspects contribute to this limitation. First, there is a lack of opportunities to clarify any issue during the fulfilment of the questionnaire. If the respondent does not understand a point while filling the questionnaire, there is, unfortunately, no effective way to clarify the thoughts initially established.

Delivering the questionnaire online also raise a limitation regarding the spontaneously of the respondents. Instead of delivering an honest and direct answer, respondents have the time to search additional information, whether online or by consulting other people, creating undoubtedly an impact on the overall result of the research. Nevertheless, this method was selected as it provides an easy access to an audience directly related to eSports’ interest.
Data Analysis and Findings
The following chapter describes the data gathered from the survey and discuss how they relate with the proposed hypothesis. The aim of the questionnaire was to obtain information concerned with the research topic. Accordingly, the core part of the research question: the brand awareness and the brand image, related to the eSports sponsorship, are independently displayed and elaborated.

Moreover, the findings also highlight the apparent patterns and any biases that might be apparent for the rest of the research. The questions are not discussed in the same order as they were asked in the survey, however, they have been organised into a more logical structure in order to obtain a more rational flow. All the questions and its initial order that were asked can be found in the appendices.

This research is primarily interested in the impact of eSports sponsorship on brand awareness and brand image. The primary targeted audience is online video game players and online streamer watcher. The author chose ‘Reddit’ as a platform to spread the survey. Several subreddits are related to the different eSports games involved in the survey, and Reddit audience, in general, appears to be the most appropriated as compared to the other social media.

The survey is built with conditional questions, adapting themselves along with the respondent answers choice. Therefore, many questions are not filled by the totality of the audience who undertook the questionnaire. This strategy has been chosen for two main reasons: Firstly, to shrink the drop out ratio and secondly, to offer appropriate questions suitable to the respondent answers.
Another important detail to mention is the function ‘Forward-Only’, which was applied to the questionnaire. The need to gather raw answers, not influenced by follow-up questions, is primordial. Therefore, the ability for the respondent to go back after answering a question is null. Nonetheless, while this method can be frustrating for some respondent, as it generally increases the number of people abandoning before the end of the questionnaire, the author chose to pursue this strategy to harvest the most unaltered answer possible.

The survey was answered by 361 respondents who began the questionnaire. However, even with conditional questions and due to the requirement of certain questions (e.g. brand name by typing), 254 respondents ended up the whole questionnaire. Out of the 254 respondent, 251 are either playing a video game online OR watching eSports on a streaming platform.

**Demographics**

Demographics are an important factor to consider for any marketer. As eSports appeals to various sections of the society (and by considering the subreddit used), chances of addressing the younger, male population are to be expected.

On the geographical perspective, as the survey is asked in English and through Reddit, the majority of the respondent are located in Europe as well as in the U.S. The participants’ country is not asked by the respondents. The location is determined by the IP address to lighten the survey length.
The respondent of the questionnaire consisted of 239 males at (95.2%), and 12 females at (4.8%). In term of the age groups, category 3 consisting of (18-25 years) achieved the highest response score with 58.2% of the valid response followed by 27.1% of the age group category 4 consisting of (26-35 years). The third in term of representation is a younger category (12-17 years) with 11.2% of the respondent. Finally, the 3 different age group consisting of over 35 years old represent only a tiny fraction of the overall survey with 3.6% altogether.
Before advancing further in the findings, information regarding the respondent have been asked. As mentioned previously, the importance of gathering information emerging from an audience who is playing games online or watching eSports on streaming platform is crucial. Therefore, questions relating to those activities have been asked.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you play a video game online?</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.8</td>
<td>.8</td>
<td>.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>99.2</td>
<td>99.2</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 20: Do you play a video game online?*

With 249 out of 251 respondents, of almost every person interviewed, (99.2%) is playing at least one video game online. Amongst the online games played, *Overwatch* appears the most frequently played. The respondent chose the game more than half of the time which is (54%). It is closely followed by *Starcraft II* with 48.2% giving the answers. A little further down, CS:GO gathered (2.9%), League of Legends, (23.3%), Hearthstone (20.9%), it’s picked by about ¼ of the respondents. World of Warcraft (16.9%) and Dota 2 (12.4%) which represents the lower tier of the online games respondents. Finally, other online games are represented at a smaller scale (14.5%). Various games are cited in this category (*Rocket League, Call of Duty, Guild Wars 2, etc.*).
Figure 2: Game playing

As mentioned previously, asking the respondents about their habit to watch or not eSports throughout a platform allows us to further filter of the audience. Amongst the respondents, 95.2% are watching eSports.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you watch competitive games (eSports)?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Valid</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Yes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Within the proportion of persons who watches eSports, information like the frequency as well as the medium used has been gathered. Most of the respondents (44,8%) spend 4 to 8 hours a week watching eSports. Then, with 19,7%, the second watching period is either less than the precedent with < 3 hours or more with 9 to 15 hours. 10,5% spend more than 20 hours a week watching eSports. Finally, 5,4% of the respondents watch 16 to 20 hours a week.
13. How many hours a week do you spend watching competitive games?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 3</td>
<td>19.7%</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 to 8</td>
<td>44.8%</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 to 15</td>
<td>19.7%</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 to 20</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 20</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>239</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 23 Watching hours a week*

The platform used to watch eSports is without a doubt Twitch with 97.1% of the respondents. The popularity of YouTube Gaming is becoming reasonable with 31.4% of the respondents using it to watch online games. There is very little public awareness in regards to Hitbox, as it represents only 3.8%. Finally, other platforms (Azubu, Afreeca, etc.) represent 6.8%.
6. Through which platform(s) are you watching the eSports events?

![Bar chart showing the percentage of respondents using different platforms for watching eSports events.]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Twitch</td>
<td>97.2%</td>
<td>444</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hitbox</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YouTube Gaming</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other - Please specify</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 24: Platform eSports stream*

**Objective 1**

This research objective 1 is to:

- Investigate if eSports sponsorship has an impact on people’s brand awareness.

This objective aims at analysing the consumer exposure to eSports sponsorship. The level of brand awareness has been part of different questions, focusing on how deep the different brands are implemented in the consumer’s mind. Furthermore, the survey also aims at establishing relationships between multiple variables. Amongst them, the relation between brand awareness and the level of involvement with the event, as well as the relation between brand awareness and the brand consumption need to be explored.
In order to investigate the subject of brand awareness, question involving the degree of intensity has been asked. As a strong intensity, the respondents have to evaluate if they are able to recall a brand sponsoring eSports events. Amongst them, 87% evaluated being able to cite one or more brand(s). 13% of the respondents estimated not being able to cite any brands. Therefore, those were automatically redirected to a question with a lower level of intensity.

9. Would you be able to cite brand(s) that are sponsoring eSports events?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>87.0%</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>239</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 25: Brand citation - recall*

Categorization of products regarding brand recall has been established. Products categories are organised as follows: beverage, food, technology, sport, and other.
Amongst the beverage, the five most typed brands are: Red Bull (88 times), Monster (74 times), Hot6ix (44 times), Coca-Cola (26 times), and Mountain Dew (6 times).

![Image]

Figure 26: Beverage recall

Amongst the food, the five most typed brands are: Doritos (15 times), Quest Nutrition (13 times), Chicken Maru (11 times), Papa John’s (8 times), and McDonald’s (6 times).

![Image]

Figure 27: Food recall
Amongst the technology, the five most typed brands are Razer (74 times), Intel (67 times), HyperX (35 times), Logitech (31 times), and Zowie (23 times).

![Figure 28: Technology recall](image)

Amongst the sports brand, the five most typed brands are Schalke 04 (7 times), ESPN (3 times) Nike (2 times), NBA (2 times) and NFL (1 times).

![Figure 29: Sport recall](image)
The respondents who are not able to answer the question 9 in regards of the brand recall, were asked if they could recognise brands from a list of propositions. In case of a positive answer, they had to pick the brands they noticed so far.

16. Would you be able to recognise brand(s) that are sponsoring eSports events?

![Pie chart showing 71% Yes and 29% No]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>71.0%</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>29.0%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total: 31

Figure 30: Brand recognition

71% of the respondents, who were not able to answer to the question 9, were able to recognize the brands and 29% (only 9 persons) were not able to either cite or recognize any brand.
The predominant brands recognized are: Razer (90.4%), Red Bull (86.1%), Intel (85.7%), Monster (77.8%), Nvidia (77%), Samsung (59.1%) followed at a lower scale by Coca-Cola (31.7%), Doritos (30.9%), Pokestar (17.4%), Xbox (17%), PlayStation (15.7%), New Balance (7.4%) and other (9.1%)

7. Which brand(s) have you already seen during an eSports event?

![Brand recognition chart]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coca-Cola</td>
<td>31.7%</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red Bull</td>
<td>86.1%</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monster</td>
<td>77.8%</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doritos</td>
<td>30.9%</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samsung</td>
<td>59.1%</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intel</td>
<td>85.7%</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Razer</td>
<td>90.4%</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nvidia</td>
<td>77.0%</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playstation</td>
<td>15.7%</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xbox</td>
<td>17.0%</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pokestar</td>
<td>17.4%</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Balance</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other – Please indicate</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 31: Brand recognition list*
Relation in regards to the brand awareness and the brand consumption is analysed by the researcher throughout a cross tabulation method. The aim is to investigate the hypothesis 1:

- **H1:** Brand consumption positively affects brand awareness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Would you be able to cite brand(s) that are sponsoring eSports events?</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Are you consuming any brand(s) you mentioned in the previous question?</strong></td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% consuming brand(s)</td>
<td>57,1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cite brand(s)</td>
<td>100,0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% consuming brand(s)</td>
<td>4,8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cite brand(s)</td>
<td>100,0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 32: Cross tabulation between brand citation and brand consumption**

92,4% of the respondents who consumes at least one brand have a high level of brand awareness as they are able to cite at least one brand. However, the same tendency can be pointed out by those who did not consume any brand as 86,1% of them are still able to cite at least one brand.
Correlations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Consuming</th>
<th>Cite</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Consuming</strong></td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cite</strong></td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>0.099</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 33: Pearson correlation between brand citation and brand consumption

Objective 2

This research objective 1 is to:

- Investigate if eSports sponsorship creates an impact on the corporate image of the sponsor.

This objective aims at analysing the sponsor’s image throughout the consumer exposure to eSports sponsorship, and to determine whether it creates a positive corporate image for the consumer or not. For achieving this objective, the researcher uses a five-item Likert scale where respondents are asked to answer whether they strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree or strongly disagree with the different statement that make allusion to the corporate image of the brands they mentioned previously in the survey.

Hypothesis 2

- Sponsoring an eSports event generates a positive image of the sponsor

The respondents mainly agreed with the positive influence of brands that are sponsoring eSports events. Indeed over half of the respondents: 22.2% strongly agree and 39.1% are agreeing with this fact. 25.2% of them have no opinion in
regards to the brand appreciation. 11,3% believe that there is no influence and 2,2% strongly believe that there is no higher appreciation in regards of companies sponsoring eSports.

![Pie Chart: The brand(s) sponsoring eSports events make me appreciate them more](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>39.1%</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>25.2%</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 34: Brand appreciation*

The objective 2 aims to establish a relation between the brand and the event. 23,9% of the respondents strongly agree and 53% agree with the fact that there is a logical connection between the brand and the event. 17% are neutral, and only a few of them disagree with 5,2% and only 0,9% strongly disagree.
10. There is a logical connection between the brand(s) and the eSports events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>23.9%</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>53.0%</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>17.0%</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 35: Fit between the event and the brand*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

![Perceived fit between the sponsor and the sponsored eSports event positively affects brand image](image)

As show in the figure below, from the people who strongly believe that there is a connection between the event and the sponsor, 84.3% are agreeing (44.3% strongly agree and 40% agree) with the fact that it makes them appreciate more the brand. From the respondents who believe that there is a connection between
the event and the sponsor, 62.7% are agreeing (17.2% strongly agree and 45.5% agree) with the fact that it makes them appreciate more the brand.

Amongst the respondent who strongly agree that there is a connection between the event and the sponsor, only 5.4% (1.8% strongly disagree and 3.6 disagree) think that it does not make them appreciate more. The people who agree that there is a connection between the brand and the event are 13.2% (2.5% strongly disagree and 10.7% disagree) to believe that it does not make them appreciate more the brand.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The brand(s) sponsoring eSports events make me appreciate them more</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% logical connection</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% appreciation</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% logical connection</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>44.3%</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
<td>25.4%</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% appreciation</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>53.4%</td>
<td>41.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% logical connection</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% appreciation</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% logical connection</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
<td>43.6%</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% appreciation</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
<td>19.2%</td>
<td>29.3%</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% logical connection</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>45.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% appreciation</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>24.4%</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
<td>49.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% logical connection</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% appreciation</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% logical connection</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
<td>35.9%</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
<td>20.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% appreciation</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 36: correlation between logical connections and brand appreciation
## Symmetric Measures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Asymptotic Standard Error</th>
<th>Approximate T</th>
<th>Approximate Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interval by Interval</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pearson's R</td>
<td>.386</td>
<td>.061</td>
<td>6.316</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ordinal by Ordinal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spearman Correlation</td>
<td>.389</td>
<td>.058</td>
<td>6.373</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measure of Agreement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kappa</td>
<td>.200</td>
<td>.047</td>
<td>5.084</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of Valid Cases</td>
<td>230</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.
b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.
c. Based on normal approximation.
Discussion
Introduction

In this section, the researcher will review the work done previously by combining primary and secondary data. The author will refer back to the research questions and objectives in order to discuss how the research has contributed to the research area. Thorough commentary in regards to the results will be emitted. Furthermore, limitations of this research will be given as well as a critical evaluation of the author’s own work.

Findings’ discussion

Research objective 1

The research objective 1 is investigate if eSports sponsorship has an impact on people’s brand awareness. The main intention of this objective is to analyse the effect of consumer exposure to sport sponsorship. In this case, the following questions appearing in the survey aims to investigate this objective:

- Q6. Would you be able to cite brand(s) that are sponsoring eSports events?
  - Q7. Based on the following categories, please name the brands that you remember during eSports events.
- Q8. Would you be able to recognise brand(s) that are sponsoring eSports events?
  - Q9. Which brand(s) have you already seen during an eSports event?

While many respondents thought they were able to cite a brand, a consequent number (~ 20%) of the respondents failed at providing names when the answer was required. Indeed, the question constituted the biggest reason of drop off amongst the survey. Nevertheless, asking Q6 is crucial to establish whether or not, brands are deeply incorporated in the mind of the consumer.
When answering negatively to Q6, the Q8 popped out as an alternative with a lower level of knowledge. Consequently, the respondent from Q8 are lower than Q6. The purpose of Q7 is to gather top of minds brand or brand recall (spontaneous awareness) in eSports industry while Q9 intent to gather brand recognition (aided awareness).

The author suggest a table summarising the spontaneous brand awareness based upon the findings of Q7.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Citation</th>
<th>Diversity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beverage</td>
<td>Very High</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Very High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As seen in the literature review, the main brands emerging in the eSports landscape was technological brands (Taylor, p.156-157). While brand category are diversifying with time, the findings suggest that tech companies remains very important in the mind of the consumer. Indeed, the respondents nominated far more tech brands compared to other product category.

Surprisingly, beverage brand like Red Bull, has been cited more than any other brand. Drawing conclusion over one brand, especially when its implication appears to be very strong in general sport might not be appropriated. Nevertheless, the place of beverage brands remains very important amongst the eSports scene. At a lower scale, food brands has not been cited much but its diversity appears to be quite strong. Finally, sport brands seems to be quite rare and not very well established yet.
In regards to Q9, they seems to be a correlation between the assumptions the author stated previously. Through the process of brand recognition, the respondents tend to further pick the brands related to technology and drinks first, before food and sport. The dominance of this category of products, which emerged with brand recall, are further stressed with the process of brand recognition.

The hypothesis 1: *Brand consumption positively affects brand awareness* has been emitted based upon the literature review (Baker et al., 1986). The result gathered through cross tabulation of two questions (Are you consuming any brand(s) you mentioned in the previous question - Would you be able to cite brand(s) that are sponsoring eSports events) suggest a higher awareness when consuming the brand.

Nevertheless, considering the respondents who are able to cite brand(s) with the difference between the person who are consuming the brand (92,4%) and those who aren’t (86,1%), it is tough to conclude with certainty in this case, that brand consumption clearly affects brand awareness. Moreover, the Pearson correlation being considered as very weak (9,9), it further supports the uncertainty in regards to the effect of brand consumption affecting brand awareness.

Research objective 2

The research objective 2 is *Investigate if eSports sponsorship creates an impact on the corporate image of the sponsor*. The main intention of this objective is to analyse the effect of consumer exposure to sport sponsorship, in order to define whether it creates a positive corporate image on the consumer or not.
In this case, the following questions appearing in the survey aims to investigate this objective:

- Q1lb. The brand(s) sponsoring eSports events make me appreciate them more
- H2: Sponsoring an eSports event generates a positive image of the sponsor

This hypothesis is confirmed with the majority of the answers towards the statement: “The brand(s) sponsoring eSports events make me appreciate them more” placed on the positive side of the scale, specifically on the “agree” response option.

- H3: Perceived fit between the sponsor and the sponsored eSports event positively affects brand image

As show in the findings regarding this question, the respondents believe that sponsoring eSports events creates a positive image as they do appreciate them more. Only a small proportion (13.5%) are disagreeing with this statement.

As seen in the literature review, Gi-Yong et al. (2006) argued the consumer who perceive a connection between the brand and the event are likely to have a positive cognitive and affective response. Furthermore, Chien et al. (2011) suggested a higher brand meaning and clarity when brands are consistent with the event. Therefore, examining statistical analysis was used by the researcher, specifically cross tabulation, in order to analyse if there is a relation between the variables perceived fit and the brand image.

Based on the findings gathered, there is significant evidence of the impact of the perceived relation between the sponsor and the eSports events. The dominance of the respondents who perceive a fit between the event and the sponsor with the fact of appreciating more the brand is strong.
Nevertheless, with the Kappa value of 0.20, the correlation is estimated to be very weak. Even though the tendency of the results shows a strong impact, the certainty of the hypothesis cannot be claimed. Therefore, it can only be suggested without being 100% sure, that perceived fit tends to affect positively the brand image.

The aim of this research is to measure and analyse the impact on brand image and brand awareness of eSports sponsorship. From the secondary data (or literature review), the author gathered information in regards to those specific aspects and established areas to look into. Furthermore, the author contributed to the research area by gathering information and perspectives from different authors in order to establish a personal opinion based on the knowledge obtained from a depth research done. Analysing the secondary data further pointed out issues, which contributed to the primary research done in this thesis and contributed to the general eSports sponsorship research area.
In this chapter, the author draws conclusion by summarising the findings gathered throughout the online survey. Those will be linked and put in relation with general issues and concepts that arose during the literature review. The purpose being to illuminate and clarify them for the reader. Conclusion is a reflective and critical chapter including further recommendation and limitation to the paper.

**Summary of the findings**

The aim of this research was to examine the impact of sponsorship effectiveness on brand awareness and brand image in the context of the eSports industry. The purpose of this study was influenced by Parsons (2015, cited in Janoff, 2015), where he argued that measuring the impact (on digital generation) of eSports sponsorship involves a unique understanding of the digital landscape, consumer behaviour and what it involves to have a lasting impact as a sponsor. Therefore, for the purpose of this research, the author aimed to analyse the relation between eSports sponsorship and awareness as well as the relation with the corporate brand image in order to measure its effectiveness in regards to sponsorship and to further understand the consumers’ attitude and perception towards sponsored brands. This study was conducted only with online communities through Reddit.

The first objective, which is investigating if eSports sponsorship has an impact on people’s brand awareness, has been undertaken with the help of the online survey. The secondary data suggested different ways of measuring awareness going from brand recall to recognition (Aaker, 1996). From the primary data gathered, the majority of the respondent (87%) were able the cite at least one brand and (71%) of those who were not able to recall any brand, were able to
recognize at least one of them. Additionally, other dimension related to the level of brand awareness has been investigated. As such, the influence of previous brand knowledge (Grohs et al., 2004), the perception of a sponsored brand (Cuneen and Hannan, 1993) has been part of the study. The findings suggest that the respondents who previously consumed a specific brand are more able to recall it from a sponsored event (92,4%).

The second objective is investigating if eSports sponsorship creates an impact on the corporate image of the sponsor. In term of brand image, the secondary data suggest that sponsorship contributes to a modification of an image dimension (Walliser, 2003) by often generating a positive feeling towards the sponsor (Gwinner and Eaton, 1999) and by establishing a transfer of association from the sponsored brand to the event (Grohs et al., 2004). The primary data gathered suggest (61,3%) a positive image from the brand sponsoring a eSports events. The respondents further estimated (76,9%) a logical connection between the brands and the sponsored event.

Altogether based on the results gathered by the primary data and supported by the theories from the secondary data, it can be suggested that eSports sponsorship strategy tend to be effective on brand awareness and corporate image.
Limitation of the research

The present study contains some limitations which have to be kept in mind when interpreting its results. These limitations can be identified as follows. To start, the research framework was created on the author’s own consideration. To date, studies explicitly focusing on eSports sponsorship impact does not have any existing models or frameworks were identified which would combine sponsorship as a marketing communications instrument and the eSports industry. Therefore, the author used secondary research as a primary process to build an adequate survey taking with consideration the various dimension affecting brand awareness and brand image. Nevertheless, even if the current academic research in the fields of sponsorship and branding was used as a foundation for the survey’s framework, the rigor of the research may be influenced by the fact that some assumptions had to be made in regards to the questionnaire structure.

Moreover, while the factors influencing brand awareness and image were covered in the secondary data, the ability to investigate into the numerous elements that influences its effectiveness was limited. Also, the conducted research took into consideration the combination of relevant element in regards to branding and sponsorship efficiency, more extensive data collection methods could have been employed in order to gather deeper understanding, including interviewing eSports spectators. Nevertheless, as a result of the time constraints and practicality based around the choice of opting for a survey format not being too consequent as some question already asked a certain effort from the respondents.
Recommendation of future work

As previously outlined, research on eSports sponsorship is rather limited resulting in several potential research opportunities of which four are identified in the following.

First, as the different aspect that constitutes brand awareness and image are various, other viewpoints on those element related to the sponsorship could provide interesting foundations for the study of eSports sponsorship. For instance, the longevity of a particular sponsored event (Mason and cochetel, 2006; Pitts and Slattery, 2014), or the effect of a sponsor replaced by a new one (Mason and cochetel, 2006), the effect of being a prominent brand (Pham and Jolar, 2001), etc.

Second, this study has been conducted from the audience’s perspective and from their interpretation of the different brands present in the eSports scene. Further research could be made from the sponsor companies, with their interpretation and insights, in regards to the awareness and image of the brand. Thus could offer a solid base and fruitful insights for readers attracted by the area of eSports sponsorship from a company’s perspective.

Third, branding as seen in the literature review, is part of a communication process involving brand management (Pickton et al., 2015). The different aspect which constitute branding have not been part of the research. The author chose to investigate only the brand awareness and image. Nevertheless, other dimension such as brand familiarity, brand equity, brand association, etc. could be explored.

Fourth, conducting research similar to the present study in context of other countries related to eSports sponsorship as sponsorship definition and
importance can vary amongst countries (Walliser, 2003). The way Europe, U.S or Asian countries (e.g. Korea) is behaving towards eSports sponsorship might be different and further investigation could be undertaken in this regards.
Reflexion
Self-reflection on own learning and performance

The knowledge I acquired during my Master degree at the Dublin Business School gave me the possibility to conduct properly this dissertation. Moreover, the way of working that I have acquired at DBS was essential to complete the dissertation stage. The process of writing academic dissertation appeared to be quite different from what I used to. It required a consequent amount of time before understanding and achieving a good quality of paper. Going through academic author and researchers, discussing and resulting with a rich conclusion while putting forwards thorough argument and keeping its neutrality was not easy to achieve. Although I have improved in the way I write in English, I do estimate that I still have a lot to learn. Nevertheless, writing an MSc thesis appeared to be thrilling and quite challenging.

The idea behind this thesis came out during my course of Strategic Marketing Management. The activity of watching streaming as a hobby and the understanding of the platform’s attractiveness as a medium thrived me to write about it. As eSports itself is a relatively new area, only a few research has been conducted so far in regards to this subject. Some future implication have been drawn in the different research, however rare were those related to the marketing aspect in general. Therefore, investigating into sponsorship appeared almost naturally as it constitutes the main type of funding of this industry.

This is undoubtedly one of the largest academic project I have ever made in my life; this has provided me not only with academic knowledge but also with skills to draw into my future academics, career and even into my life outside of employment. This chapter will provide a focus on what I have achieved over the last
number of months and relate this to current theories on learning styles to help me begin to use this added knowledge and experience in a productive manner after the completion of this course.

Reflective learning theory

The self-reflection part of my dissertation is based around Kolb’s experiential learning theory (ELT) created in 1984. The principle of Kolb’s ELT is that a person would learn through discovery and experience. The process of learning described by Kolb’s model is a multi-linear scheme of adult development, based on the knowledge we already know, the knowledge we learn, grow, and develop.

![Diagram of Kolb's learning style](image)

**Figure 37. Kolb's learning style**

© concept david kolb, adaptation and design alan chapman 2005-06, based on Kolb's learning styles 1984. Not to be sold or published. More free online training resources are at www.businessballs.com. Sole risk with user.
Kolb’s ELT is segmented into four stages:

- **Concrete experience (feeling)**: the first stage and the beginning of the model. It starts with a task assigned to either individual, team or organisation. Kolb’s model preconize involvement rather than just watching or reading about the task, as it will efficiently contribute to a better learning outcome.

- **Reflective observation (watching)** is the second stage in which the individual has to take a step back and review the assigned task. The purpose being to communicate with other member of the team by using an appropriate verbalisation and discuss the questions related to the assignment.

- **Abstract conceptualisation (thinking)** (third stage) is the process of interpreting and making sense of the knowledge acquired. It is a reflection based on the understanding of the developed knowledge acquired through several ways (e.g. ideas from colleagues and superiors, previous observation, etc.).

- **Active experimentation (doing)** is the final stage of the learning cycle. This stage happens when the learner considers the content that is implemented, based on the knowledge learn previously. The process is to translate new understanding into what will happen next or by translating the implication resulting of this understanding. Thus, the contextualisation is primordial to reflect the usefulness of the understanding in order to avoid what is likely to be forgotten very quickly.
The four stages is an evolution that constitutes the whole process of learning. The stages are complementary; they cannot be achieved at the same time. The consequences of wanting to make more than one step at the time creates conflict, resulting undoubtedly with the inevitable choice of doing or watching, and decide to whether think or feel.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feeling (Concrete Experience - CE)</th>
<th>Doing (Active Experimentation - AE)</th>
<th>Watching (Reflective Observation - RO)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Accommodating (CE/AE)</td>
<td>Diverging (CE/RO)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thinking (Abstract Conceptualization - AC)</td>
<td>Converging (AC/AE)</td>
<td>Assimilating (AC/RO)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

▶ **Diversers** are sensitive people who are able to look at things from different perspectives. They prefer to watch and gather information to solve problem rather than performing actions.

▶ **Assimilaters** are more interested by ideas and abstract concepts. They are more attracted to logical theories and approaches rather than practical value.

▶ **Convergers** can solve problem by using the learning acquired to find solution to practical issues. They prefer technical task, like to experiment new ideas, to simulated and work in practical applications.

▶ **Accomodater** are problem solvers, hands on type and rely on intuition rather than logic. They are attracted to new challenges and experiences and act with their instinct. They rely on information from others to problem solve rather than their own analysis (*Businessballs, 2013*).
Considering the dissertation process and the way I proceed during the different stages of its establishment, the learning style I adopted was a bit of a mixture of the various four types mentioned previously.

Like a Diverger, I gathered the necessary information to undertake the thesis. As the research has to be realisable, especially regarding the way to gather primary data, I worried about its feasibility. I further researched all relevant articles and browsed around appropriate website to constitute my literature review. Moreover, there were Assimilates criterions, as I had to research logical theories and approaches to figure out how to approach the research. Finally, some aspect of Accomodater like following my instinct was necessary as the subject was new in the area and almost no studies has been made yet in regards to eSports.


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Appendix
1. Do you play videogames online?

- Yes
- No

2. What game(s) are you currently playing?

- League of Legends
- Dota 2
- CSGO
- Stardew Valley
- Heartstone
- Owning
- Witch of Wasteland
- Other: [Blank]

3. Do you watch competitive games (esports)?

- Yes
- No

4. Through which platform(s) are you watching the eSports events?
5. How many hours per week do you spend watching competitive games?

- Less than 3
- 4 to 8
- 9 to 15
- 16 to 20
- 20 or more

6. Would you be interested in playing that competitive game?

- Yes
- No

7. Would you be interested in playing that competitive game?

- Yes
- No
8. Box the following categories depending on the brand that you remember:

- Revenge
- Food
- Technology
- Spot
- Other

9. Which brands have you heard of sending emails to you?

- Coca-Cola
- RedBull
- Mentor
- Doritos
- Samsung
- Intel
- Sony
- Nvidia
- PlayStation
- Xbox
- RhiBos
10. Are you consuming any brands you mentioned in the previous question?

- Yes
- No

11. Share your opinion about how you perceive the brands mentioned before when sponsoring an event.

The board sponsors the event. The more

Study/Age  Age  Number  Degree  Study

Degree  

The board sponsors the event. The more
12. Gender

M: Male
F: Female

13. How do you?

Under 12
12-17
18-25
26-35
36-45
46-55
0-55

14. Feel free to make any comments on the subject of UX research which you feel may be relevant.