

# How can Myst1s Gaming develop its E-sports Brand Based on Consumer Preferences

Asrin Shahsawari



<b>Author(s)</b> Asrin Shahsawari	
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<p>The goal of this thesis was to develop Myst1s Gaming's E-sports brand based on consumer preferences. The commissioned company is a relatively new start-up and therefore demand for researching the customer motivation is essential for the company. The objective of this thesis was to understand consumers in their selection process and give recommendations to the commissioned company. The aim was to aid the commissioned company by giving them tools for managing to grow their operation and evolve their brand in the future.</p> <p>The theoretical framework consisted of subjects from the E-sport industry, sponsorship marketing, branding and consumer behaviour. Branding and consumer behaviour provided a guide for data collection tools utilized in the research. A mixed-method research design was used for this thesis. Data collection methods included a focus group discussion from 5 avid gamers and a survey that was distributed to 62 participants who shared a common interest in E-sports. Data analysis consisted of thematic analysis of the focus group and SPSS analysis of the survey.</p> <p>One of the key findings of this research was that the most important selection criteria for the consumer are the games that organizations are participating in. In addition, results indicated that entertaining content from an organization is the most noteworthy element for consumers. Important platforms for organizational content were YouTube, Twitch, and Instagram and the preferred frequencies were more than once a week.</p> <p>Based on the results, the commissioned company should analyze what games they are participating in currently and if these games are adequate in regards to current trends of the gaming industry. The company should also compare different contents from organizations and determine if their content is adequate in terms of frequencies and different platforms. Recommendations provided for Myst1s Gaming will be managed by the commissioned company.</p>	
<b>Keywords</b> E-sports, Brand, Consumer Behaviour, Customer experience, Sponsorship marketing	

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# 1 Introduction

This is a research-oriented bachelor's thesis for the Degree Programme in International Business taught at Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences and for the major specialization of marketing.

In this chapter introduction of the case company and the motives behind choosing the topic will be discussed. In addition, this chapter will explain the demarcation of specific fields, research questions, international aspect, research methods and the risks involved in conducting this research.

## 1.1 Background

E-sports has become more and more relevant throughout the years. Some people might ask what are the reasons behind it and how to generate the most profit from the industry? If you look at the figures the marketing revenue is skyrocketing, and the yearly increase is 40%. To give a more detailed view of the increase, a demonstration of numbers is applied. The increase from 2017 to 2018 was around 45 million viewers and a 22 million increase in enthusiasts. Estimation growth for 2019 is already reaching 47 million viewers. (Influencer Marketing Hub 2019.)

The E-sport industry is on the rise and there seems to be no limits to the growth, but is this the case or has COVID-19 impacted the industry? The E-sports industry has seen a spike in the viewers of gaming content since the lockdown started. A study conducted by PwC confirms that over two-thirds of viewers under the age of 35 were either watching or playing gaming content. (Dredge 2020.)

Despite the good news, there is some bad news which means that the pandemic has influenced the industry. E-sports is mostly online-based, but not entirely regarding tournaments and events. Organizing the tournaments exclusively online creates some challenges such as ensuring the player's internet connections and guaranteeing that the players are being honest, and cheating is not involved. (Dredge 2020.)

## 1.2 Research Question

This thesis aims to understand what are the factors which are important to consumers in terms of E-sports brands. Several methods are utilized for achieving this objective. Some

of the methods which are being used are; existing literature, researching the commissioned company, building a focus group from avid gamers to aid with the formulation of survey questions and conducting surveys to consumers. After analysis of the different methods recommendations are given to the commissioned company.

The main research question is:

How can Myst1s Gaming develop its E-sports Brand Based on Consumer Preferences

Sub-questions of this thesis:

IQ 1. What are the factors influencing the selection of a specific E-sports company?

IQ 2. What aspects of a brand are important for E-sport consumers in general?

IQ 3. How do consumers view advertisement done by E-sport organizations?

IQ 4. What recommendations could be given to the company?

Table 1 below presents the theoretical framework, research methods and results chapters for each investigative question.

Table 1. Overlay matrix

Investigative question	Theoretical Framework*	Research Methods	Results (chapter)
IQ 1. What are the factors influencing the selection of a specific E-sports company?	Consumer behaviour, consumer selection, sponsorship marketing, personal branding	Focus-group for a group of avid gamers	Analyzation of the gamers and getting an overview about factors that have importance in the selection process
IQ 2. What aspects of a brand are important for E-sport consumers in general?	Consumer preferences, customer experience, how to reach the customers	Survey (analysed quantitatively & qualitatively in 1 question)	To obtain information about the factors which are important for consumers when selecting an e-sports brand
IQ 3. How do consumers view advertisement done by E-sports organizations?	Consumer preferences, brand identity, brand equity, brand awareness, marketing	Survey (analysed quantitatively and qualitatively in 1 question)	To understand HOW the consumers see the brands
IQ 4. What recommendations could be given to the company?	Previously collected literature reviews analysed with the results of focus group discussion and the surveys	Analyzation of various literature reviews and the results from the data collection methods	To give improvement suggestions for the case company

### **1.3 Demarkation**

Demarcation is needed for this topic because without the limitation there would be a lack of clear answers regarding the investigative questions. The decision about excluding the employer branding and the theory behind it were made since it is not that closely related to my thesis topic. Demarcation was utilized for investigating only the Finnish and International E-sport industry. Country specific statistics were left out since this would create challenges and project scope would be too broad.

### **1.4 International Aspect**

This topic fulfils the GLOBBA's requirement of an international aspect because the gaming takes places online and therefore players involved can be from all around the world. Several competitions are organized in different countries which then automatically involves players worldwide. The communication between the players does not only happen through competitions, but players can be in contact with each other all the time since everything happens online. This erases the need to be in the same location physically when the communication is ensured via different platforms online. In addition, communication between the gaming community takes place in different social media platforms that are listed in the chapter (2.3. social media channels) which enforces the international aspect of this topic.

### **1.5 Benefits**

Myst1s Gaming is a new start-up and market research is needed to obtain information about their customers and their preferences. The companies' personal goal is to grow their operation and increase their profit and that is why the last investigative question is about recommendations to the company. These recommendations are based on the literature review and analysis of the result from data collection tools. By understanding their users and the factors involved in the selection of an E-sports brand Myst1s Gaming will obtain tools for targeted marketing. In addition, the case company gets a better understanding of how to market their brand and how to brand their players.

This topic is directly connected to marketing because the process involves researching branding theories, consumer behaviour, and factors for brand selection. Additionally, there will be familiarization with a new industry and concepts that are involved in E-sports. This research would increase my knowledge and allow me to work in the industry if there would

be an open position in the marketing task of a gaming company. This research would also provide me with the tools for working life if future tasks would require conducting marketing research.

## 1.6 Key Concepts

**Brand equity** measures the intangible features of a brand such as a name and symbols which affect the value of the brand (Beverland 2018, 66-67).

**Brand identity** is a distinctive group of associations that the brand strategist seeks to produce and otherwise preserve (Aaker 1996).

**Consumer behaviour** is the research of a single person and actions that occur to satisfy their recognized necessities (Lake 2009, 9).

**Customer experience** is communication that occurs between the organization and the customer. This is perceived over the subconscious and conscious mind of the customer. (Gad 2016, 77.)

**MOBA (Multiplayer online battle arena)** is a genre in a battle arena multiplayer game. Players will control battle characters which are evolving throughout the game and are equipped with different skill set. The game aims to destroy opponent teams' base. (Rönkä 2018, 15.)

**SEUL (Suomen elektronisen urheilun liitto)** is a Finnish governing body of e-sport. The purpose of SEUL is to govern electronic sports in regard to hobby or competition activities as a national union. These activities include computer, game console, mobile game, and other electronic sports. (Rönkä 2018, 66.)

**Twitch** is a free live stream service where the players can stream their playing live to the viewers. The possibility of browsing different streams is based on various games. (Rönkä 2018, 26.)

## 1.7 Case Company

The case company Myst1s Gaming is an E-sport organization competing in platforms such as CS:GO, PUBG and Valorant. In addition, Myst1s Gaming organizes tournaments.

The company has had activity since 2019 but was officially established in 2020. The company currently employs 21 players, 6 chairpersons, 3 graphic designers and 5 support assistants. The company only operates in Finland but competes in international events.

Myst1s Gaming is a new start-up company and for this reason, obtaining a customer base and acquiring brand awareness is crucial for getting recognition in the E-sport market. Questions on how to stand out and to compete with other more established brands are some of the reasons behind this topic. The consumer's viewpoint is pivotal in the success of the company and this determined the concentration on factors such as brand perception.

## **1.8 Risk Analysis**

The risks involved in the selection process of data collection tools are that the results from the focus group would not deliver clear results and there would be not enough discussion. Furthermore, participants would only provide minimal replies or the answers would be too similar. In addition, there is a risk that the discussion in the focus group would not be adequate to aid with formulating the survey questions. In addition, other risks include the possibility of the selection options of qualitative analysis or quantitative method approach. Which one of these options should be utilized for the survey? Should there be consideration of including both open questions and some with "yes-no" questions and which one of these would create the best result? All these factors must be reviewed and verification about formulating the survey questions correctly needs to be taken into consideration.

## 2 E-sports and the industry

The theoretical framework consists of many parts and all of them must be considered to build a concise thesis. E-sports, branding, consumer preferences and worldwide and regional industry of E-sports are all investigated in this thesis. Sources related to consumer behaviour and understanding the reasons behind these behaviours are equally important for researching the topic and investigative questions (figure 1).

Definition of e-sports must be clarified but going into details about all the genres would not be necessary. Factors that need to be included in the theory are the history of E-sports, social media channels, E-sports organizations and worldwide and regional industry of the industry. Future perspectives for the industry should be discussed briefly. This information is listed to give an overall image of e-sports and then the focus switches to brand and consumer preferences which also need to be detailed.

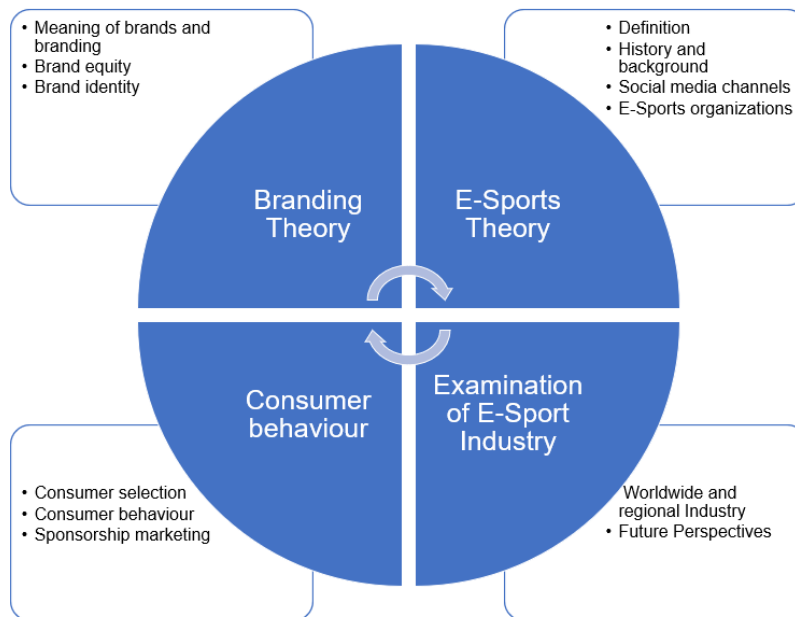


Figure 1. Theoretical Framework

### 2.1 Definition

E-sports has many names such as competitive video gaming or electronic sports, but what does it mean? The question is hard to answer because the general definition has not yet been accomplished. (Wagner 2006.)

As stated by Wagner (2006), *“esports is an area of sport activities in which people develop and train mental or physical abilities in the use of information and communication*

*technologies*”. However, some speculate that this definition is outdated and needs clarification. Hence Hamari and Sjöbolm (2016) have stated, “*a form of sports where the primary aspects of the sport are facilitated by electronic systems; the input of players and teams as well as the output of the eSports system are mediated by human-computer interfaces.*”

## **2.2 History and background**

Dating back to 1958, a game for entertainment purposes called Tennis for Two was created by William Higinbotham. Although the game was programmed for oscilloscope, it was the first game where you could play against your opponent in real-time. Games before did not have this possibility and required playing in turns. (Kraneis & Rantala 2017, 10.)

Playing against your opponent was a minor breakthrough and it enabled the next big step for the gaming world. Space combat video game “Spacewar” was created in 1962 by researchers at MIT. The game reached hundreds of thousands of players, especially students located in different universities. The game was so popular that even tournaments were based on the game. The most famous one being held in 1972, where as many as 5 players could play against each other simultaneously. This was the first video game tournament in history. (Kraneis & Rantala 2017, 10.)

The gaming scene shifted from universities to gaming halls in 1972 when a company called Atari started selling Pong arcade games. At the same time, the first home console “The Magnavox Odyssey” emerged in the markets. The success of the home console demonstrated the commercial potential and consequently, Atari decided to expand their Pong arcade game to home consoles in 1975. Another major revolution was the emergence of the First-Person Shooter gaming genre. (Kraneis & Rantala 2017, 10-12.)

Going forward to 1980, arcade games continued their growth while home consoles increased their popularity in the background. Atari was the first one to organize a grand scale video game tournament “Space Invaders!” championship in 1980, which gathered over 10 000 players. Tournament enforced the position of video games as a hobby and strengthened the competitiveness and pursue of records for the players. (Kraneis & Rantala 2017, 12.)

Even with the growth, the gaming industry suffered a major setback in 1983. The setback led to Atari burying hundreds of thousands of unsold game cartridges. Sceptics thought that the video game industry was over, and the popularity was just a phase. Despite these

events, Japan released the Nintendo Entertainment System (NES) in 1983. Due to its big success in Japan, Nintendo launched the NES video game console in the United States and Europe in 1985. The NES sold millions of consoles which guaranteed the success of the gaming industry. (Kraneis & Rantala 2017, 12-13.) Although Atari had made home consoles popular earlier, the explosion of video games emerged in 1990 when Nintendo and Sega were introduced to the players. Gaming was made simple and games such as Super Mario, Rad Racer and Tetris quickly gained mass popularity amongst players. (Rönkä 2018, 13.)

The most ground-breaking evolution for electronic sports history was the generalization of the internet in 1990. Performance sport and pursue of obtaining high records shifted to players opposing each other in local area network or internet. This also expanded the possibilities for the gaming world and created multiple gaming genres and serials such as Warcraft and Quake. (Rönkä 2018, 13-14.) The rise of the internet also enabled the culture of modifications better known as “modding”. This meant that the most enthusiastic coders made alterations to their favourite games and shared them online. Some of these “modded” games created completely new genres for instance multiplayer online battle arena (MOBA) games. (Rönkä 2018, 14-15.)

The biggest transformation occurred in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and a whole new industry was established. Small events where players brought their computers and played against each other in the multiplayer online battle arena have expanded from tens of participants to big events and tournaments. The increased interest has gained both media and sponsors attention. Professional players compete in grand tournaments for multimillion-dollar prize money and are viewed by millions of viewers online. Simultaneously the industry employs a huge amount of people such as tournament organizers, event organizers and coaches, managers, experts, game broadcast commentators and E-sport reporters. (Rönkä 2018, 20-21.)

### **2.3 Social Media Channels**

Twitch, Discord and Steam are the biggest gaming platforms. Twitch is an online platform where players can view or live-stream their games. It also allows the viewers to comment through the chat which enables the communication between the players and the viewers. (Johnson 2021.) Twitch is founded in 2011 and has approximately 15 million dynamic users with over 3,8 million live streamers (Yaden 2021).

Discord is an app created for gamers to offer them the possibility of creating online communities and interact with each other. Channels include sharing images, videos, internet links, music, text chat and voice chat. (Delfino & Dean 2021.) Discord is founded in 2015 and has around 14 million daily active users (Curry 2020).

Steam is a gaming platform where players can distribute and access games while simultaneously communicating with other gamers in the Steam platform (Steam 2021). Steam was originally founded in 2003 and reached 120 million users monthly in 2020 (Stanton 2021).

Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and Twitter are some other social media platforms where gamers and E-sports organizations go to. Facebook is a website for social networking and allows users to share content in the form of photographs and videos and chat with other users. The content that is shared on the website can be either public for everyone or shared only for specific groups or people. (Nations 2020.) Facebook was founded in 2004 and has 2,8 billion users monthly which make it the most popular network community in the world (Tankovska 2021).

YouTube is an online video platform where you can either create or watch video content (YouTube 2021). The platform was established in 2005 and has more than 2 billion users (Mohsin 2021).

Instagram is a social networking platform where users can share content through pictures and videos. The platform emphasizes mobile users and communication with other users occurs by following or being followed by the other user, direct messaging, mentioning, writing a remark, or leaving a like to a post. (Moreau 2021.) Instagram was created in 2011 and has over 1 billion monthly users (Tankovska 2021).

Twitter is an online social network site that enables the creation of short content while simultaneously offering the users news and updates. Twitter was founded in 2006 and it has around 100 million active users daily and approximately 500 million tweets are shared every day on the platform. (Forsey 2019.)

## **2.4 Worldwide and Regional Industry**

As stated by Newzoo (2021), E-sports revenue growth was \$957,5 million in 2019, \$947,1 million in 2020 and over 1 billion dollars by 2021 (\$1084,1). It is estimated to exceed 1,6 billion by 2024. In addition, the industry has seen significant growth in the audience in

terms of both occasional viewers and E-sports enthusiasts. In comparison to the audience, which was 435 million in 2020, it will increase to 474 million in 2021. The biggest and most fundamental revenue stream in E-sport continues to be sponsorship. It generates 59% of the whole revenue from the entire industry, with an estimation of \$641,0M. Other revenue streams include media rights (\$192,6M), publisher fees (\$126,6M), merchandise and tickets (\$66,6M), digital (\$32,3M) and streaming (\$25,1M). (Newzoo 2021.)

According to the report conducted by Neogames Finland (2018), the Finnish gaming industry has shown significant growth over the past years. Statistics demonstrate that employees who were recruited in the gaming industry expanded to 3200 employees at the end of the year 2018. There is a significant increase in non-Finnish employees as well which make up more than 27% of the workers in 2018 in comparison to 2016 when there were only 18% of non-Finnish employees. This indicates that Finland is appealing worldwide and considered to be a focal point of the gaming industry. (The game industry of Finland 2018.)

In addition, when comparing the turnover of Finland, it positioned extremely well in terms of game developer countries and was granted a top-three position inside Europe. Another big change that has occurred is the number of games published in 2018. It decreased from 150-200 games in 2017 to only 100 games in 2018. Releasing a new game is riskier than evolving their current games which are explained by the cost of marketing and user acquisition. However, the industry is thriving in Finland and the gaming business is worth more than €2 Billion. (The game industry of Finland 2018.)

## **2.5 E-sports Organizations**

The growth of the E-sport industry meant that the traditional way of self-organized teams needed to be re-evaluated. Earlier players would form a team and take part in different tournaments and events by paying the entry fee themselves amongst their team members. If the team performed well, participants would share the prize money and therefore be compensated. However, with the continuous success of the industry, many other prospects of income were introduced such as various sponsorship opportunities, merchandises, and different chances for advertisement on platforms designed for streaming. This created the need for organizations, which helps the teams to simultaneously advertise the players, produce merchandise and find sponsors. (Steve Van Sloun 2018.)

## 2.6 Future perspectives

As stated by Rönka (2018) smartphones and virtual reality will get a bigger role in the field. There are already multiple e-sports games designed for mobile for example Turbo Racing, Clash of Clan and Clash Royale. However, virtual reality and the impact it could have on the gaming industry currently lacks the technology and still needs development. (Rönkä 2018, 118-119.)

In the future, game consoles will most likely increase their visibility in the field. As stated by the statistics from eSportearning.com, prize money for eSports for console games is currently only around 7 %, but the platform is estimated to grow in the upcoming years. (Merwin, Sugiyama, Mubayi, Hari, Terry & Duval 2018.)

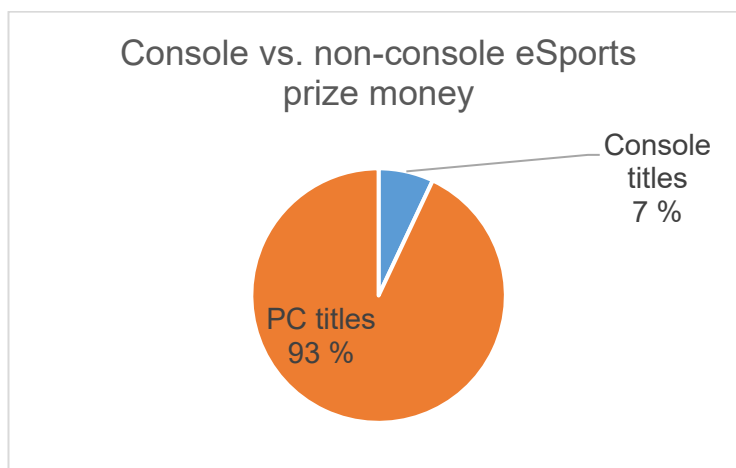


Figure 2. The share of the prize pool for console games (adapted from Merwin, Sugiyama, Mubayi, Hari, Terry & Duval 2018)

### 3 Branding and Consumer Behaviour

The second part of the theoretical framework consists of branding and consumer behaviour. This chapter examines in more detail concepts regarding branding and dives into factors explaining consumer selection. Other important subjects to investigate is the role of customer experience and sponsor marketing and how these elements impact the consumer (figure 1).

#### 3.1 Brands and branding

To completely understand the concept of branding, one must first understand the meaning of the term. A brand is one of the most popular terms used in the marketing world, but the word can have multiple different meanings and therefore makes it harder to define (Avis 2009).

In the book, Beverland (2018, 7) gathers definitions from different researchers of brands and branding. For example, Aaker declares that *“a brand is distinguishing name and/or symbol intended to identify the goods and services of one seller and to differentiate those goods and services from those competitors”*. Whilst Burgess defines the word simply as *“a brand is the reason to choose”*. (Beverland 2018, 7.)

Brands are important because they simultaneously decrease the labour and the danger of purchasing items and therefore produce customer value. Hence, making it appealing for suppliers to finance efforts concerning the quality and alterations. Additionally, branding might increase the experience obtained by the customer in terms of attractiveness and psychological factors. (Clifton & al. 2003, 10.)

Over the years the significance of brands has increased and for most companies, it has turned into the most essential resource. The brand is the intangible that can have the biggest influence on the business value. This phenomenon can be explained by the economic force that brands possess, which therefore affect factors regarding consumers, workers, shareholders, and different government authorities. (Clifton & al. 2003, 27-28.)

As demonstrated by the study from Ocean Tomo (2015), intangible assets make up 87% of corporate value in 2015. This shows that between 1975-2015 the intangible asset grew from 17% to 87%. (Stathis 2015.)

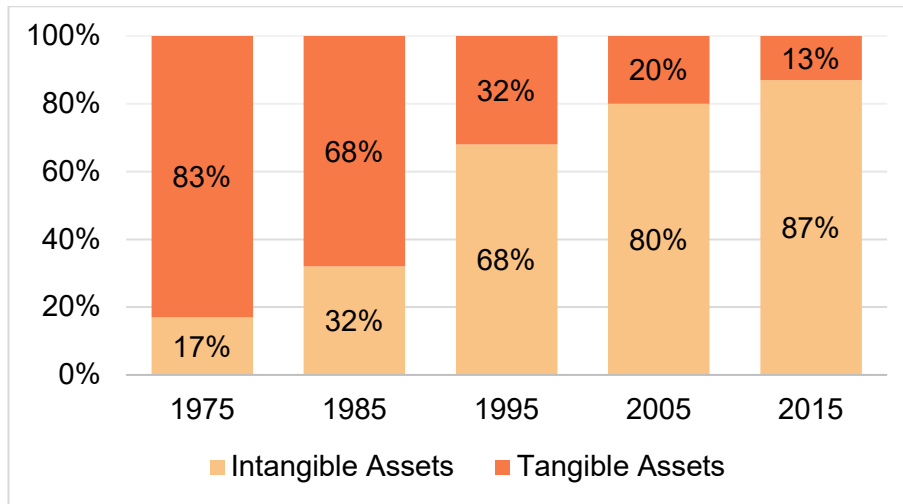


Figure 3. The relation between tangible and intangible assets (Stathis 2015)

### 3.1.1 Brand Equity

Aaker (1991) states that regardless of the resources and the liabilities that differentiate the brand equity in multiple circumstances, grouping into five separate categories can be accomplished. Aaker goes on to list the categories as following, “*brand loyalty, name awareness, perceived quality, brand associations in addition to perceived quality and other proprietary brand assets- patents, trademarks, channel relationships etc*”. The model indicates that these categories benefit both the customer and the company. Some of the added value for the customer include determination about the purchase choice, ability to comprehend a large amount of data from different brands and products and lastly increased satisfaction of user experience. Simultaneously it profits the company in various ways such as gaining competitive advantage, increasing the positive outcomes of marketing efforts, and easing the route to brand extensions. (Aaker 1991, 15-18.)

On the contrary, Beverland (2018) indicates that the customer’s mind is the only place where the brand exists and based his statement on Keller’s brand pyramid. Keller’s brand pyramid emphasizes factors such as the knowledge customer has about the brand, the emotional attachments towards it and how it felt when in use (see figure 4). Resonance, which is at the top of the pyramid measures brand recognition and after marketers have successfully built that part, the concentration switches to judgements and feeling customer have about the brand. These approaches are taken place to strengthen the comprehension customer has about the brand identity. Afterwards, the customer is the one in charge and ultimately forming the image of the brand through performance and imagery. (Beverland 2018, 77-80.)

Even though the pyramid might understate human behaviour, brands would benefit from advantaging and replying to these questions mentioned in the model. Brands guide customers to make productive choices and most consumers tend to choose from a limited amount of only 4-5 brands in each product category. (Beverland 2018, 77-80.)

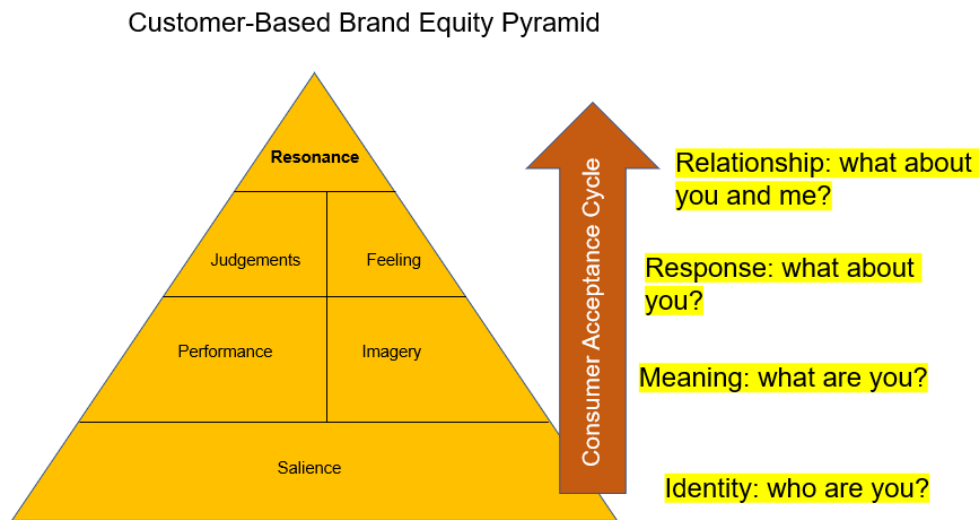


Figure 4. Brand equity pyramid (adapted from Beverland 2018, 78)

### 3.1.2 Brand Identity

Aaker (1996) suggests that there are four brand identity perspectives that organizations should take into consideration when reflecting on the meaning of their brand identity. These four viewpoints include brand as a product, brand as an organization, brand as a person and lastly brand as a symbol. Incorporating all these perspectives is not always needed and sometimes even one is sufficient for creating a distinctive and clarified identity. Nonetheless, these perspectives should be all considered when determining what values are desired to be displayed in the customer's mind. (Aaker 1996.)

### 3.2 Consumer behaviour

There are multiple different factors involved when discussing consumer behaviour. These elements include the behaviour arising to an individual or inside a group and it consists of services, propositions, and concrete products. Not forgetting the inclusion of the usage, destruction and means of the purchase of the products. In some cases, it might also affect society for example advertisement for fast food. (Budica, Puiu & Budica 2010.)

Lake (2009) summarizes that consumer behaviour seeks answers for these statements; what is the reason for consumers to purchase, are external and internal elements affecting these purchases, from who are they purchasing from, in which moment do they purchase and by what method are they using to buy. (Lake 2009, 10.)

### 3.2.1 Consumer selection

According to Budica & al. (2010) consumer selection choice is multiphase. Firstly, the consumer recognizes a problem and therefore starts to seek information for finding a solution to the given problem. Following the information, the consumer starts assessing different options and finally concluding with buying stage which is mostly the final phase. Occasionally one more stage is applied, and the post-buying stage occurs in cases such as returning the product to a store. (Budica, Puiu & Budica 2010.)

Next, we go deeper into understanding how consumers form purchase decisions and which factors influence these choices. Lake (2009) states that both emotions and motivations play an important part in the purchase decision (see figure 5). Consumer experiences motivations unconsciously and these can be both strengthened and provoked by organizations communication methods. Regardless of the item, which is being purchased, the consumer ought to have a positive emotional association between themselves and the product involved. Producing a relevant emotional connection grows the probability of a consumer buying a certain product. (Lake 2009, 72-77.)

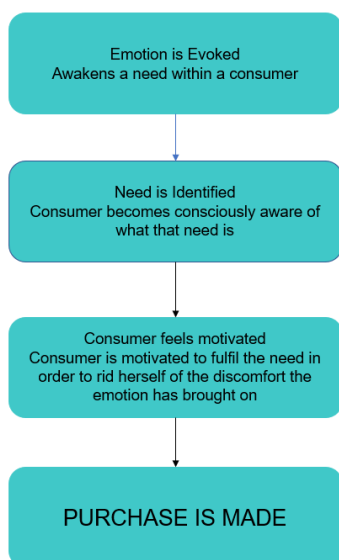


Figure 5. The influence of emotion and motivation in purchase decisions (adapted from Lake 2009, 77)

### 3.2.2 Factors influencing customer experience

Customer touch-points are the interactions that the consumers have with the company during their journey. This might be either tangible or communicational interaction between the parties. Customer experience is guided through static, human and digital touch-points (figure 5). These elements construct the brand and are also characterized in the brand strategy. These touch-points differ from each other in many ways. In a static touchpoint, the communication is one-sided and happens through measures such as promotions and advertising. Whereas the human touchpoint is two-sided and includes elements from call centres and management contacts. Digital touch-point is the only one that is many-sided and occasionally even keeps out the brand owner and instead the concentration is on the contacts between the consumers. Some of these include emails, social media, and web-site. (Gad 2016, 90-91.)

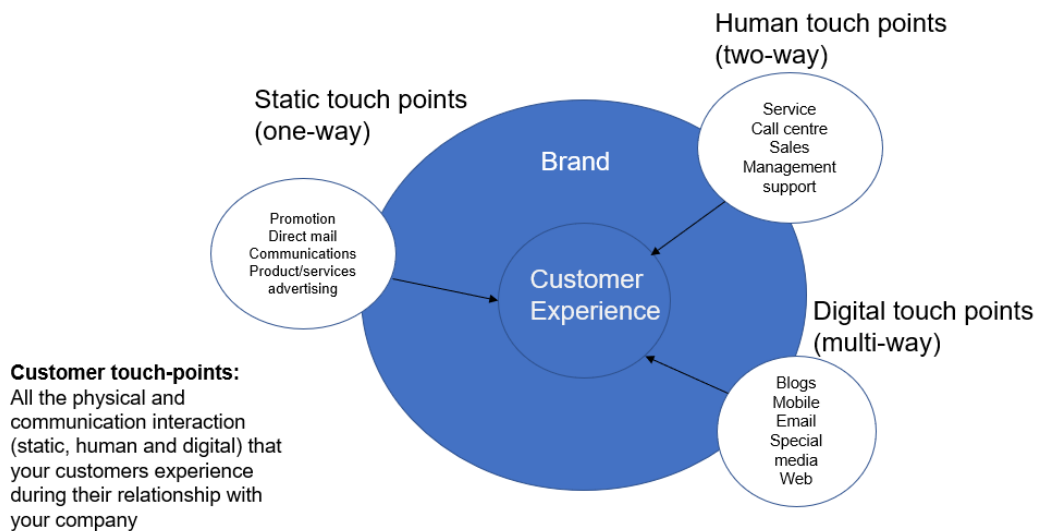


Figure 6. Touch-points affecting customer experience (adapted from Gad 2016, 91)

### 3.2.3 Sponsorship marketing

Before going into details about why sponsorship is essential, there must be a clear definition of the term. International Chamber of Commerce (2021) defines sponsorship as “*any commercial agreement by which a sponsor, for the mutual benefit of the sponsor and sponsored party, contractually provides financing or other support in order to establish an association between the sponsor's image, brands or products and a sponsorship property, in return for rights to promote this association and/or for the granting of certain agreed direct or indirect benefits*”.

Social and digital resources have received bigger importance amongst business partners in terms of a partnership. Acquiring and preserving sponsors means that the concentration should be in digital and social media segments. Additionally, these segments that are created by associations and teams should be distinctive and personalized to a degree that could allow followers and the sponsor`s audience to relate. (Jessop 2014.) The reason why brands make a connection with consumers is by taking part in their experiences. The perspective of the sport is explained by the intensity of the game and appeal for live viewing. (Cornwell & Kwak 2015.)

Many different outcomes are presented both directly and indirectly when it comes to sponsorship marketing. An indirect benefit is advantaging the resources of the event or a person. Direct advantage enables the possibilities for increasing marketing efforts by methods such as product displays and endorsements. (Keller 2009.)

When discussing the different elements that are involved in sponsorship marketing, there must be the inclusion of personal branding. As stated by Lebreque, Markos & Milne (2011), *“similar to product branding, personal branding entails capturing and promoting an individual's strengths and uniqueness to a target audience”*. Numerous brand researchers compare personal branding to product branding where the process starts with the identification of brand identity and later leading it actively to trade with the aid of direct brand positioning. (Lebreque, Markos & Milne 2011.)

According to Szikszai (2020) creating a strategy that emphasizes the personal branding of the player is beneficial and therefore expands the consumer`s loyalty while simultaneously growing the fan base. On top of these advantages, it produces higher dedication towards the athlete and serves the interest of the organization as well by affecting positively to collaborations, ticket sales and communities. In addition, with the rise of cybermedia, sports organizations have now the possibility to construct the appearance of their public figures and brands in comparison with the past when the media oversaw the given image. (Szikszai 2020.)

## 4 Research Methods

The research approach which is selected for this research is a mixed method. The research will have both qualitative and quantitative data and later comparative analysis is utilized for the integration of information from gamers and consumers. The information required for the research include the players and consumers viewpoint of E-sports brands and this is achieved by a two-phase sequential research design (figure 7).

To acquire the best results based on the investigate questions both qualitative and quantitative data collection is needed. The first qualitative focus group is formed and analysed and later this information aids with the creation of a survey. (Creswell 2014, 155-156.) The qualitative phase would consist of both unstructured and semi-structured focus group discussion from the avid gamers to get a deeper understanding of the perception and the motivation towards the selection of an E-sports organization. It is crucial to understand both the gamers and consumers perception of E-sport organizations. (Barriball & While, 1994.) The utilization of open-ended and close-ended questions was applied in the focus group. Open-ended questions were selected to allow the respondents liberty and the choice of giving the information that they wish to deliver. Close-ended questions were used to generate opinions on a specific topic. (Stewart & Shamdasani 2015, 82-83.)

After the analysis of the qualitative phase, a survey is created for the consumers. This survey concentrates on the different brand elements and the significance of these elements amongst the consumers. I am more interested in “why” and “what” than numeric values that consist of answering questions such as “how many” but getting answers from the users based on only open questions might be challenging. This is the reason why close-ended questions must be included as well and the data collection tool that is utilized is a survey and this then qualifies as a quantitative method (Creswell 2014, 155-156.)

Validity for both qualitative and quantitative data must be proven. It is crucial to ensure that the instrument which is developed in the research would advantage the abundance of qualitative findings information. In addition, the sampling for the qualitative and quantitative phase should not be repeated and different respondents must be chosen for each phase. (Creswell 2014, 227.) Reliability is proven by being as forthcoming as possible and this means showing different steps involved in the research as detailed as possible (Creswell 2014, 201-203).

Since mixed method research was applied to this study and both qualitative and quantitative data is applied, focus group and survey is divided into their sub-categories in the following chapter.

**RQ: Developing Myst1s Gaming e-sports Brand Based on Consumer Preferences**

IQ1: What are the factors influencing the selection of a specific E-sports company?

IQ2: What aspects of the brand are important for E-sport consumers in general?

IQ3: How do consumers view advertisement done by E-sport organizations?

IQ4: What recommendations could be given to the company?

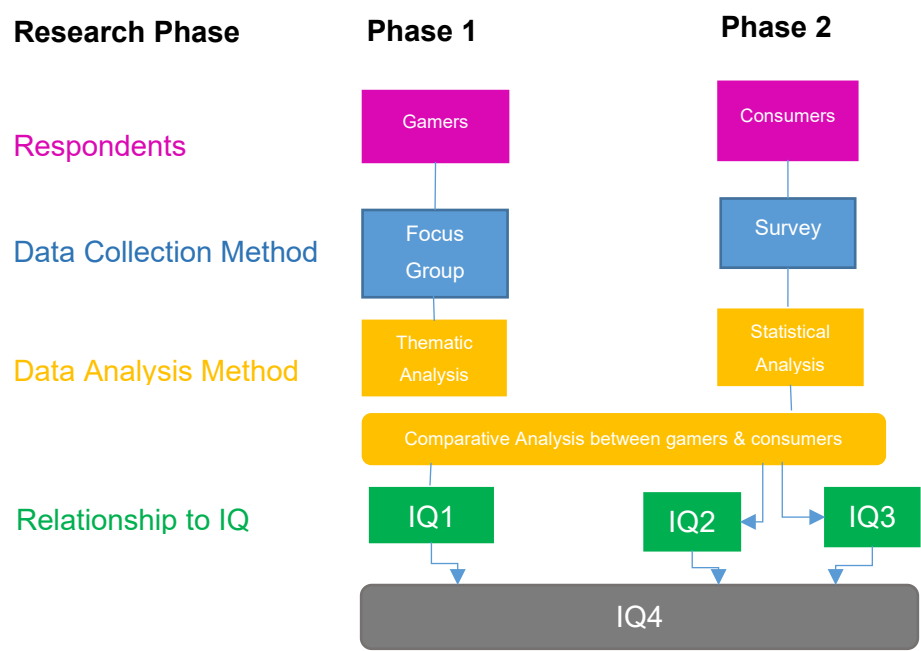


Figure 7. Research design

**4.1 Research Methodology**

Comparative research was utilized to identify what are the common differences and similarities between the groups of gamers and consumers. The goal is to understand what factors are attached to the research topic which causes these dissimilarities. (KAMK 2021.) This information is obtained by conducting a small-scale focus group with gamers to gain an understanding of influencing factors of the selection process in regards to E-sports organizations. This information is later utilized for creating a survey for consumers. After the analysis of the survey, an evaluation of different mixtures that guide to the level of commitment amongst the consumers is provided. (Kahwati & Kane 2020, chapter 1.)

## **4.2 Research Design**

Exploratory research design should be used in this case because the subject has not been researched exceedingly and there is a need to test and research an instrument that is not available. Exploratory sequential research design is utilized to conclude discoveries made in the first qualitative phase from the small number of participants to a bigger sample collected in the second quantitative phase. (Creswell & Clark 2011, 86.) The goal is to aid with further research. If the company would decide to concentrate on a specific part that is investigated in the thesis, further examination would be needed. Utilization of collecting focus group data from avid gamers and based on the qualitative data collection results, developing an instrument for the survey (Creswell 2014, 226).

## **4.3 Reliability and Validity**

Reliability was proven by documenting all the steps involved in the study. Some of the procedures that were included in ensuring the reliability of the research were inspecting the summary from the focus group discussion, comparing the collected data with the themes that were identified and making notes about the meanings of these themes. (Creswell 2014, 203).

Since it is impossible to duplicate the focus group discussion, objectivity of data collection was attempted to the furthest extent and all the discoveries from the discussion were presented. For improving the reliability of this study, questions of the focus group discussion were selected based on the question guide (table 2). This research only examined one focus group of five avid gamers and therefore results could vary. The utilization of more than only one focus group would validate the results further.

Validity was demonstrated by measures such as providing a detailed description of the discoveries (chapter 4.6.1). All the themes that were identified in the discussion appeared and were explained in further detail. In addition, negative data that did not go along with the themes were presented as well. Validity was measured by defining the bias of the study in measures such as selecting the focus group members since the participants shared a common interest in gaming and were familiar with the E-sports industry. (Creswell 2014, 201-202).

In addition, other concerns such as creating the right implementation tools had to be considered. It is also crucial that these implementation tools obtain the full benefit out of the qualitative discoveries. (Creswell 2014, 227).

## **4.4 Data Collection**

### **4.4.1 Focus Group**

Based on the literature review obtained from the theory of this study, a focus group was selected. This data collection method was picked out because there was the need of collecting data on a particular subject (Morgan 1998, 31). Focus group aims to comprehend participants opinions and encounters (Morgan 1998, 11). The utilization of both unstructured and semi-structured open-ended questions was included in the focus group. These questions allow the participants to express freely what aspects come to their mind. (Stewart & Shamdasani 2015, 71-72.)

Due to this being exploratory research in nature, transcribing the discussion was not essential. A summary was composed based on the discussion which will later aid with the creation of the survey. (Stewart & Shamdasani 2015, 116.)

### **4.4.2 Survey**

The goal of the focus group discussion was to provide a method for gathering information for survey creation (Rea & Parker 2014, 80). Survey pursuers to understand various features from a sample of a specific group in which a larger group would be identified in. Aspects of interest for the survey were the participant's knowledge, beliefs, and feelings (Groves & al. 2009, 2-4). Question formats included both open-ended and close-ended questions. Open-ended questions allowed participants to respond with a larger scope and close-ended granted the possibility of selecting from a predetermined list of possibilities that were provided in the questionnaire. (Rea & Parker 2014, 50.)

Descriptive statistic was utilized in this study and this selection was made since the study aims to understand the attribute of a specific population (Groves & al. 2009, 2). The population that was examined were participants who were interested in the E-sports industry and gaming activities.

## **4.5 Collection Method**

### **4.5.1 Focus group**

Before conducting a focus group discussion, the identification of various steps in the process needs to be clarified. First and foremost, problem identification is required. Decisions

about factors such as what kind of data is collected and who are the participants in the focus group must be included. (Stewart & Shamdasani 2015, 49-50.)

Based on the theoretical framework and careful examination of moderating and implementing a focus group, the objectives below were selected for the focus group.

The focus group discussion at Zoom surrounding had 7 distinct objectives:

- 1) To get a better understanding of the level of experiences and amount of significance that gamers have about E-sports organizations.
- 2) To recognize attachment towards the activity of gaming.
- 3) To investigate different factors that affect the decision about selecting an E-sport organization.
- 4) To shed light on the role of emotions in the selection process.
- 5) To gain insight into the influence that organizations different marketing activities provoke for the gamers.
- 6) To distinct which platforms are being used for following organizations.
- 7) To utilize the findings of this study for formulating survey elements for the questionnaire.

Questions that were selected for the focus group discussion were based on the question guide. The question guide has provided a heart attack as an example, but this can be adapted to another issue and connected to the researcher's topic (see table 2). The template suggests that the discussion should start with an introductory question and then move to the transition question. After this, the guide proposes that the focus question is introduced. Focus questions should have a direct connection to the research question. Additionally, summarising and concluding questions should be added to the focus group discussion. (Liamputtong, 75-77.)

Table 2. Question guide example (Liamputtong 2011, 76)

INTRODUCTORY QUESTION	Can you please tell us about your experience of having a heart attack?
TRANSITION QUESTION	Can you tell us briefly about what helped your recovery from a heart attack?
TRANSITION QUESTION	Do you know any help or support services that are available for people who have had a heart attack?

FOCUS QUESTION (These should be based on research questions)	What are the greatest needs feeds by people after a heart attack?  What can health professionals do to help people recover from a heart attack?
SUMMARISING QUESTIONS	As you know, we are going to be implementing a programme to assist those who have recently experienced a heart attack. Think back on your experiences and our discussion today and tell us what we can do to improve the care people receive.
CONCLUDING QUESTIONS	Is there anything else that anyone feels that we should have talked about but didn't?

Various question types were selected for the focus group discussion. Probing, direct, indirect and follow-up questions were utilized in the research. (Liamputtong 2011, 77-78.) Since the moderation occurred in a virtual environment, it was crucial to ensure the interest of the participants and the engagement level of the group. This was obtained by applying projective techniques. These techniques included the use of incomplete sentences where the participants could finish the sentence and describing the topic with a single word to discover the associations related to the subject. (Stewart & Shamdasani 2015, 166-167.)

The focus of this study is to comprehend the subject from the gamer's viewpoint. Therefore, the study aims to get a better understanding of gamers motivations in regards to E-sports organizations and the motivations behind selecting an organization to follow.

#### **4.5.2 Survey**

The utilization of a web-based survey was selected for this research. Some of the reasons why this technique was chosen included the convenience of filling out the questionnaire in any desired location. In addition, quick data collection, privacy, and safety and gathering data from a specific population were the factors that influenced the selection of web-based survey. Hence there are also disadvantages with this approach. These disadvantages include the self-selection bias which ultimately results in a smaller response rate within the respondents. Additionally, since the interviewer is not engaged in the survey process, the possibility of explaining ambiguous questions is not possible. (Rea & Parker 2014, 12-13).

According to Rea and Parker after the initial survey draft, certain factors must be considered. The survey needs to be clear and understandable to the respondents. This includes examining the response choices and evaluating if these choices bring out the desired data. In addition, there must be consideration of eliminating unrelated questions from the survey. To ensure the functionality of the survey the length of the survey has to be reviewed and the privacy of the respondents guaranteed. (Rea & Parker 2014, 37-38).

When creating the final survey, the wording of the questions is crucial. The questionnaire should pay special attention to the level of the phrasing, avoiding unclear phrases and words and using double-edged questions. Besides these elements, the questionnaire should not include unsuitable emphasis or involve words and phrases which might be emotional. (Rea & Parker 2014, 59-67).

Another essential component to remember is the formation of the survey. Multiple and scaled responses were advantaged in this survey. Occasionally, respondents need to clarify their rank preferences, and this is the reason why multiple responses were included in the survey. In these cases, the survey must indicate that answering to multiple options is allowed. Furthermore, the survey should only have a maximum of ten alternatives to choose from. This helps with the clarity of the questionnaire and prevents the respondents from intimidation. In addition, scaled questions measure the viewpoint of the respondents by offering them two extreme levels to choose from. (Rea & Parker 2014, 70-77).

The goal of this survey was to investigate viewpoints from consumers viewpoint and therefore gain insight from their perception and preferences.

## **4.6 Population and Sampling**

### **4.6.1 Focus Group**

One focus group was conducted on April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2021 on Zoom surrounding. The focus group consisted of 5 avid gamers between the ages of 14-31. The group consisted of 4 male and 1 female participant. The group was selected because being gamers themselves meant that they could provide different perspectives and opinions about the topic.

The focus group was video and audiotaped, and it lasted for 60 minutes. A summary was constructed from the tapings and was later utilized for data analysis. The discussion was lead around the level of experience and the number of significance gamers has for E-sports organizations, factors involving the selection process of an E-sports organization,

the role of emotions in the selection process, effects that arise from different activities of an E-sports organization, platforms which are used for following organizations.

#### 4.6.2 Survey

Based on the findings from the focus group discussion a survey was created and distributed on various platforms. The target population of this survey were people from the age of 16-51 or older who know E-sports and play games themselves. The survey was distributed on multiple platforms on Facebook which had members that share a common interest in E-sports. In addition, the survey was shared both in Myst1s Gaming and SEUL platforms. The selection of these platforms was utilized because survey participants must have a connection to the gaming and the E-sports industry.

### 4.7 Data Analysis

#### 4.7.1 Focus group

This segment displays the discoveries made from the focus group discussion structured in the form of abstract summaries regarding the responses from participants to presented questions. Data of this section portrays the evaluation based upon these factors; (1) notations that were produced during the group discussion, (2) assessment of audio and video recordings, (3) a thematic analysis of the composed summary from the given meeting.

Table 3 below presents the identified themes that were distinguished from the focus group discussion.

Table 3. Identified themes

Objectives	Themes
Experiences about organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No experience</li> <li>- Little experience</li> <li>- A vast amount of experience</li> </ul>
Significance of organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- New opportunities for consumers</li> <li>- New opportunities for players</li> <li>- Normalizing the concept of gaming as a hobby</li> <li>- Feeling of unity</li> </ul>

Meaning of gaming activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Aroused emotions</li> <li>- Hobby</li> <li>- Stress reliever</li> <li>- Playing together</li> <li>- Escaping reality</li> </ul>
Basis of selection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Interaction between the organizations and the players</li> <li>- Games that the organizations are participating in</li> <li>- Players of the organization</li> </ul>
Significance of emotions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No significance at the beginning of the selection process</li> </ul>
Marketing efforts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Beneficial for organizations</li> <li>- Dislike</li> <li>- Negative consequences</li> </ul>
Platforms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Twitch</li> <li>- YouTube</li> <li>- Twitter</li> <li>- Instagram</li> </ul>

### **Experiences and meaning of E-sport organizations**

Participants of the focus group recognized the following factors about the experiences and the significance they have from E-sports organizations.

**Experiences about organizations.** Some of the participants emphasized the fact that they lack experience, but watch organizations play games. Equally some gamers highlighted the fact of having little experience and using random selection for watching a specific game. Experiences during childhood were mentioned based on the vast amount of experience regarding organizations. In addition, brand players were strongly connected to organizations and experiences. Additionally, some participants highlighted the differences between big and small organizations in regards to the money that is distributed to the players of the organization. Another aspect that was included in the discussion was the toxicity of the industry and the difficulties of reducing this factor since communication occurs mostly online.

**Meaning of E-sports organizations.** The common theme that was recognized in the discussion analysis was the opportunities that E-sports organizations provide for both players and gamers. Participants pointed out that, because of organizations there were new opportunities in the job market and becoming a player was now a possibility. In addition,

through E-sport organizations gaming was becoming recognized and normalized as a hobby. Some other themes that surfaced in the discussion were the feeling of unity that the organizations bring to players and opportunities to interact with like-minded people.

### **Activity of gaming**

Participants of the focus group identified the following factors about the attachments that they have towards the word “gaming”.

**Meaning of gaming activity.** The themes that were identified during the discussion were the aroused emotions and it was described to be a fun activity. Participants also pointed out that during the games you become unconscious of your surroundings and the significance of time invested loses its meaning. Some other themes that surfaced in the discussion were the factor that gaming is a good way of relieving stress. In addition, some participants mentioned that they associate gaming as a common activity with friends and therefore considered it as a hobby.

### **Selection criteria for E-sport organization**

Following elements about the influencing components regarding the selection of a specific E-sports organization were identified amongst participants.

**Basis of selection.** The importance of the interaction between an organization and viewer was an important theme in the discussion. Especially if the organization was creating fun content for the audience. Another significant aspect of selection was the games that the organization was playing. Participants highlighted that if they played that specific game themselves, they were more likely to watch it due to the interest they have in the game and aspirations of becoming a better player and learning from the best. Furthermore, some participants recognized that players of the organization being the most important selection criteria. The reasons that were identified for this selection was the need for identifying to a specific player.

**Significance of an established organization.** The theme that was recognized when talking about the added value of an established organization was that there was no significance in the matter. The only acknowledgement towards established companies was that there is a bigger possibility of recognizability since they have a bigger presence in the community. Another factor that was raised was the relevance of the games that organizations are participating in.

**The importance of the player.** Participants recalled the role of the player to be the most important factor of the selection criteria. It was described to be the most significant part of the organization. Some of the participants emphasized that the role of the players was only important if they had a personal connection with the player and instead the community itself had bigger importance for them.

### **Emotions in the decision-making process**

Participants picked out these elements concerning the significance of emotions in the selection process.

**Significance of emotions.** Participants recalled that emotions do not play an important role in the selection process. However, emotions come to play in the later stage when there is more knowledge about the organizations and players. Some participants emphasized that the possibility of bringing out emotions were directly connected to the games that the organization is playing.

### **Role of organizations marketing activities**

Participants highlighted these components from the organization's marketing activity efforts towards the consumers.

**Marketing efforts.** The theme that was identified from the discussion was that advertisement and promotions are beneficial for organizations. However, advertisements should be done with good taste and without discriminating against any group. Participants expressed that marketing which creates an open discussion about important topics such as circumstances of women players in the industry is appreciated. Some participants added that they disliked all the marketing done by organizations despite the fact of the perceived added value. However, the discussion highlighted the negative consequences that advertisement has for the younger audience. There might be the exploitation of the younger demographic in terms of product advertisements done by organizations.

**Social media activity.** The theme that was distinguished from the discussion was that social media activity is paramount to organizations. Factors such as the funds of the organization were listed as being an important factor regarding the capability of an active social media presence. Some participants included the role of the player and the importance of utilizing the player brand in their social media presence.

### **Identification of used platforms.**

Participants registered the platforms which were being utilized to follow E-sports organizations.

**Platforms.** Participants recognized the most important platforms as being Twitch and YouTube. Reasons for selecting these platforms were the freedom of selecting a game of interest and following that specific game. A small number of participants listed Twitter and Instagram but emphasized that the use of these platforms was mostly based on the general information and news that they obtained from the E-sport industry.

### **Creating the survey elements**

Based on the focus group discussion outcomes, the suggestions for the consumer survey proceeds as follows:

- 1) Constructing survey items that would take into consideration the themes that were recognized at the experience level. Highlighting what is the most common experience level.
- 2) Develop items to survey that would identify what is the most important factor from the themes listed regarding the meaning of E-sports organization.
- 3) Track the motivations behind playing video games based on the pointed themes in the discussion.
- 4) Building items to survey that measures the importance of identified themes for the selection of an E-sports organization.
- 5) Constructing items to survey that would point out consumers perception of marketing done by organizations. Highlighting the consumer`s opinions and the desired frequencies of marketing content.
- 6) Developing components that would distinguish the platforms used for following E-sports. Concentrating on what is the most used platform.

### **4.7.2 Survey**

This segment demonstrates the discoveries made from the survey which was created by using the Webropol program. Analyzation of the survey was conducted by SPSS and the results of the different survey questions are presented.

Table 4. Distribution of gender

	Frequency	Percent
Female	5	8,1
Male	56	90,3
Prefer not to specify	1	1,6
Total	62	100,0

Table 4 indicates the distribution of gender. Most of the respondents were male (90.3%). A small number of female replies was gathered in the survey and (1,6%) of the respondents did not specify their gender. This small percentage was disregarded in the research results.

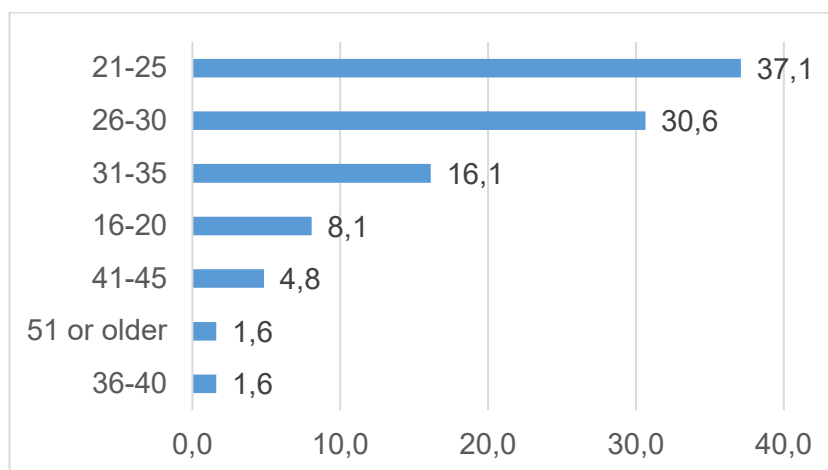


Figure 8. Distribution of age group (n= 62).

The highest group were respondents from the age group of 21-25 (37.1%). The second highest group were respondents from the age group of 26-30 (30.6%). Replies varied from each age category, but the smallest group were 36-40 (1.6%) and 51 or older (1.6%). (Figure 8.)

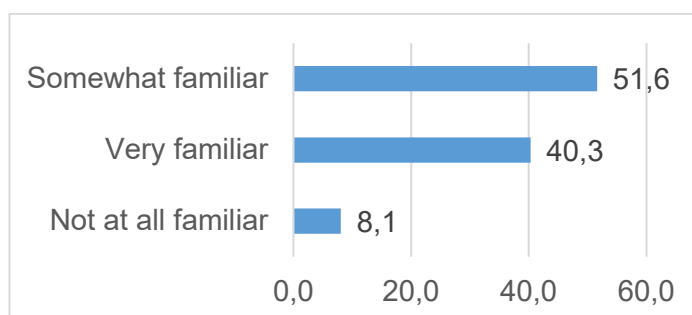


Figure 9. Experience level (n= 62).

Participants highlighted that the most common experience level was somewhat familiar (51.6%). Most of the participants were either somewhat familiar or very familiar with the E-sport industry. Some of the participants (8.1%) indicated that they were not at all familiar with the E-sport industry. (Figure 9.)

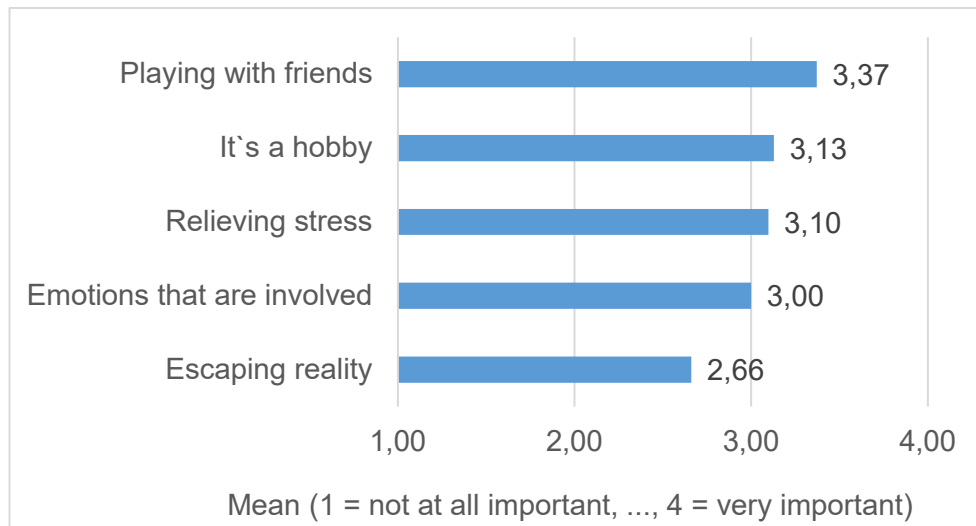


Figure 10. The meaning of gaming activity (n= 62).

Respondents highlighted that playing with friends is the most important factor when it comes to gaming activity (3.37). Factors such as gaming being a hobby or stress reliever had no significant differences. The smallest group were the respondents who answered gaming being as a method of escaping reality (2.66). (Figure 10.)

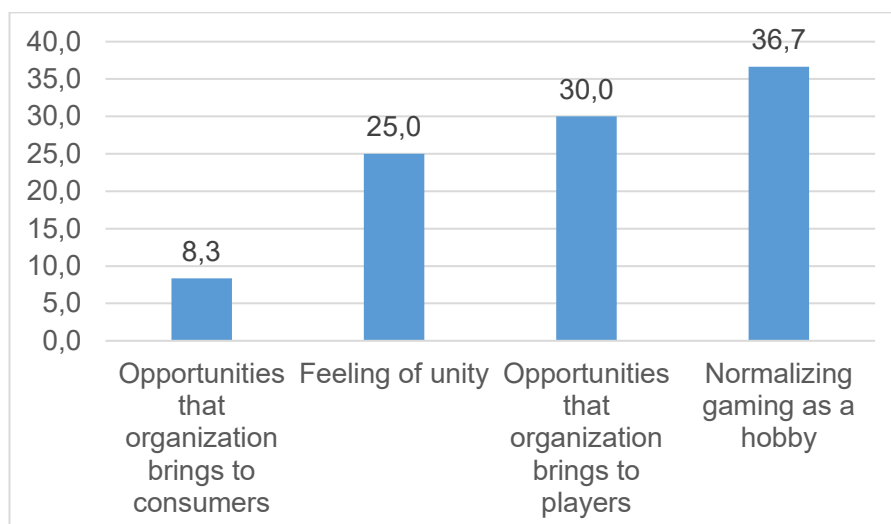


Figure 11. Most important factor for consumers (n= 62).

Figure 11 indicates the most important factor for consumers. Respondents indicated that the most significant factor when it comes to the importance of E-sport organizations was normalizing gaming as a hobby (36.7%). Opportunities that the organization brings to players and feeling of unity were also high in importance. However, opportunities that organization brings to consumers was not regarded being as important and was the smallest group (8.3%).

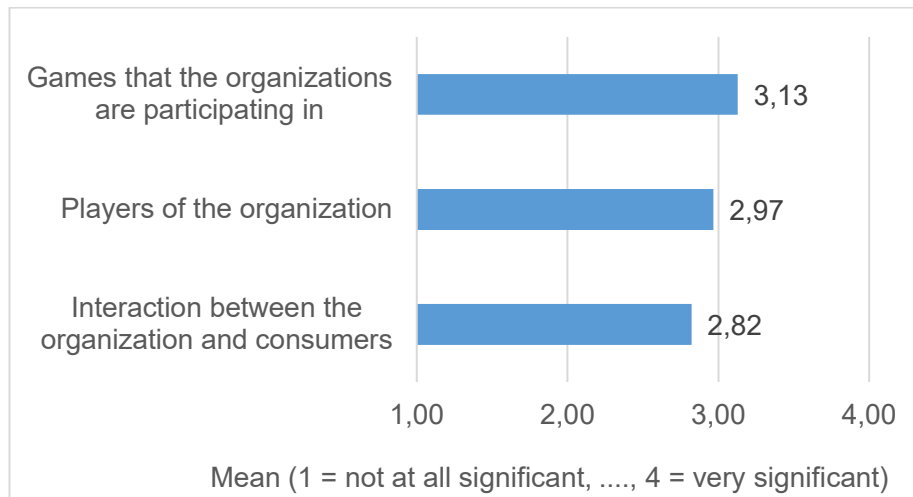


Figure 12. Significance of different factors (n= 62).

The highest group from the significance factors was games that organizations are participating in (3.13). Players of the organization was very close behind (2.97) and had a great significance for the consumers. The smallest group was the interaction between the organization and consumers, but it remained quite high in comparison with the other groups (2.82). (Figure 12.)

Table 5. Perception of E-sports environment

	Frequency	Percent
1.00	1	1,6
3.00	2	3,3
4.00	5	8,2
5.00	9	14,8
6.00	6	9,8
7.00	14	23,0
8.00	17	27,9
9.00	4	6,6
10.00	3	4,9
Total	61	100,0

Table 5 demonstrates the perception of E-sports environment. The average of the scale from the respondents was 6.68, but this figure alone does not tell in detail what the consumers thought about the E-sports environment, thus a deeper analysis was conducted. 27.9% of the respondents answered 8 on a scale of 1-10 and therefore consider the environment relatively good. Only 1.6% of the participants thought that the environment is bad and responded with 1 from the scale.

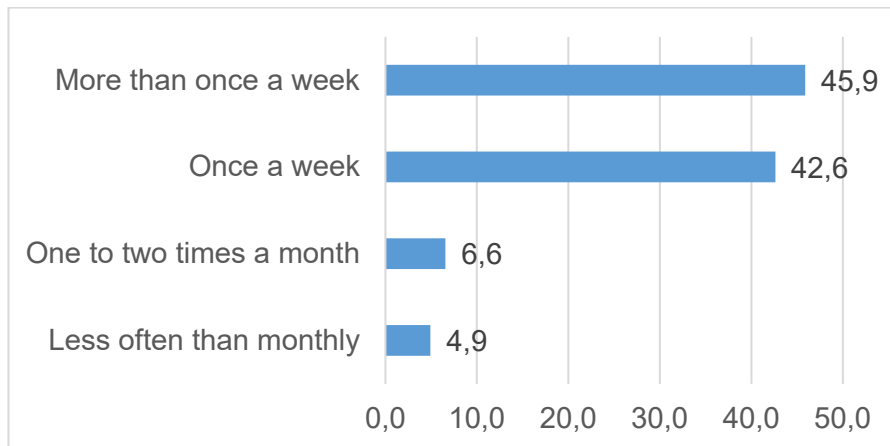


Figure 13. Preferences for organizational content frequencies (n= 62).

Most of the respondents answered that they want to see content from an organization more than once a week (45.9%). However, almost the same number of respondents answered that they prefer to see content only once a week (42.6%). Only 4.9% of the participants answered that they would want to see content less often than monthly (4.9%). (Figure 13.)

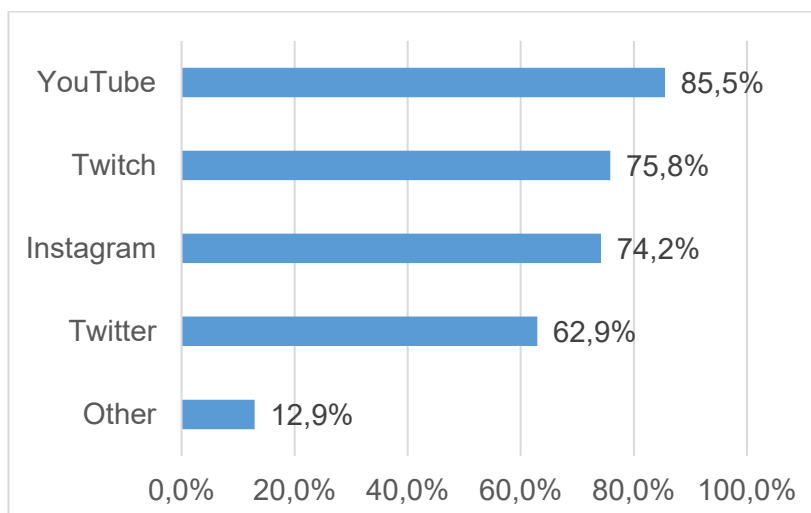


Figure 14. Platforms that are being used (n= 62).

Figure 14 shows platforms that are being used. Most of the respondents highlighted that YouTube was their most-used platform (85.5%). Twitch and Instagram were quite popular and had no significant difference in preferences. A small number of respondents answered the other as their channel (12.9%). Channels that were mentioned in the survey included TikTok, Facebook, Discord, Rushmode, Snapchat. Multiple channels were mentioned, but none of the platforms stood out.

Table 6. Perception of organizational advertisement efforts

	Frequency	Percent
1.00	1	1,6
2.00	2	3,3
3.00	2	3,3
4.00	3	4,9
5.00	14	23,0
6.00	9	14,8
7.00	14	23,0
8.00	11	18,0
9.00	3	4,9
10.00	2	3,3
Total	61	100,0

The average of the scale from the respondents was 6.23, but this figure was not satisfactory by itself when a detailed analysis of the consumer's perception about organizational advertisement efforts was needed. Therefore, analysis of the response frequencies was also utilized. The same number of participants answered 5 and 7 on a scale of 1-10 (23%). This indicates the biggest perception from the advertisement is either neutral or above average. The smallest group was the respondents who answered with the lowest grade of 1 from the scale (1.6%). Perception of organizational advertisement efforts is demonstrated in table 6.

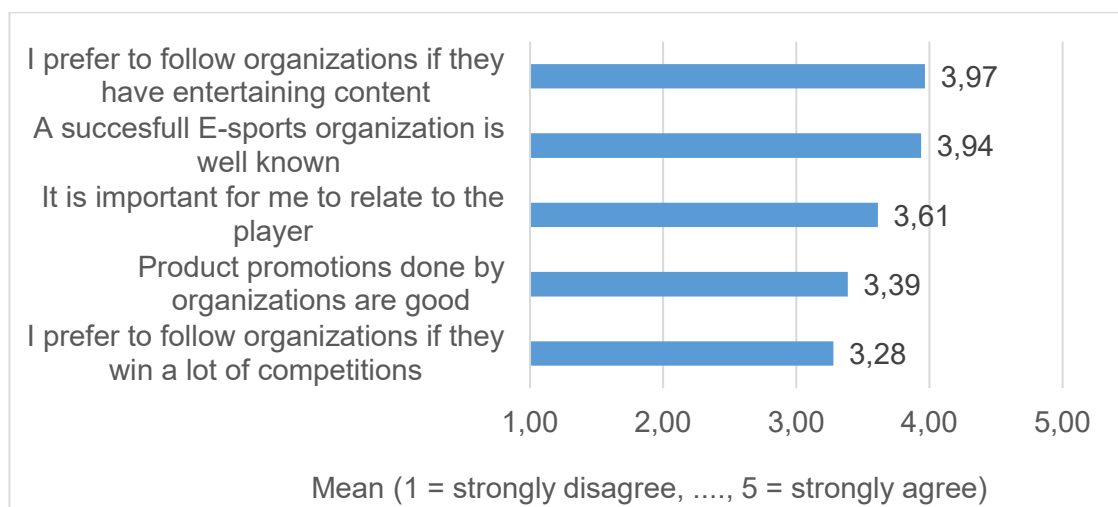


Figure 15. Perception of given statements (n= 62)

The highest group from the given statements was following organizations if they have entertaining content (3.97). However, a successful E-sports organization is well known was following closely behind (3.94). The smallest group from the measured statements was preferring to follow an organization if they win a lot of competitions (3.28). (Figure 15.)

Table 7. Themes identified from open-question

Themes	Frequencies	Quotes
Importance of adequate organizational content	10	<i>“Create good content focused on the players, involving the community in content.”</i>  <i>“Entertaining content and interesting players are more important than successfully winning games.”</i>
Advantages for the players	6	<i>“Fair and respectable toward their players.”</i>  <i>“That people get recognition and at the same time they can put food on their family’s plate with just doing what they love.”</i>
The success of the organization	5	<i>“Need to be trustworthy and known.”</i>  <i>“Good brand equity.”</i>
Expectations of the industry growth	3	<i>“It’s a growing industry with an underrated future. My expectations are optimistic when it comes to any E-sports organization’s future success.”</i>  <i>“It’ll be growing to a huge business platform in 5-10 years from now.”</i>

When respondents were instructed for submitting a reply to their expectations towards an E-sport organization by using their own words, there were 33 respondents of 62 participants. Two of the responses were non-viable since they were left blank, and the question was not understood. Therefore, these replies were disregarded in the analysis and only 31 replies were considered important.

Multiple themes were identified from the responses. Replies were analysed and grouped into separate themes based on the answers indicated from the open-ended question that was provided. Themes included advantages for the players, the importance of adequate organizational content, expectations of the industry growth and success of the organization. Identified themes and given quotes are displayed in table 7. Minor themes were also detected, and they involve factors such as the increase of female players, consumer consideration, entertainment, sportsmanship, unity, and knowledge were all mentioned.

## 5 Conclusions

This chapter evaluates the methods and key findings of the thesis. The author reviews the key findings, recommendations, elements for further research, feedback from the commissioned company and in addition reflects the learning process of the research.

### 5.1 Key Findings

The goal of this research was to develop Myst1s Gaming brand based on consumer preferences. For accomplishing this goal, four sub-questions were produced, and these sub-questions provided a guide for the research.

**The first sub-question** was to distinguish the factors that influence the selection process of an E-sports company. In the focus group interaction between the organizations and the players, games that the organizations are participating in and players of the organization, were identified as important themes regarding the basis of selection. Results of the survey indicated that the most significant element for the basis of selection was the games that organizations are participating in. However, the other two factors that rose from the focus group were considered almost as significant and therefore with this research, the other elements can't be disregarded. In the focus group, certain themes were also raised regarding the significance of organization which included new opportunities for players, normalizing the concept of gaming as a hobby, new opportunities for consumers and a feeling of unity. Based on the survey, the most important factor for consumers was normalizing gaming as a hobby (36.7%). Closely behind followed new opportunities that the organization bring to players (30%) and a feeling of unity (25%). The least important factor was opportunities that the organization brings to consumer (8.3%).

**The second sub-question** was to identify different aspects that are important for the industry consumers. Themes such as aroused emotions, hobby, stress reliever, playing together and escaping reality were identified in regards to the meaning of gaming activity. Survey results indicated that playing with friends was the most important factor when it comes to the meaning of gaming. Nevertheless, hobby and stress reliever followed closely behind, and these elements were considered significant as well. The least important element for consumers was escaping reality. In the focus group themes were raised in the discussion about the E-sport industry and based on these themes, certain statements were created for the survey. Statements of the survey included I prefer to follow organizations if they have entertaining content, a successful E-sport organization is well known, it is important for me to relate to the player, product promotions done by organizations are good and I prefer to follow organizations if they win a lot of competitions. Survey results

indicated that entertaining content is the most significant factor for consumers. Although successful E-sport organization is well known received nearly the same score in the survey and therefore must be regarded in the research. I prefer to follow organizations if they win a lot of competitions that was the least important from the mentioned statements.

**The third sub-question** was to seek information about the perception of consumers concerning the organizational advertisement. In the focus group discussion, themes such as being beneficial for organizations, dislike and negative consequences were recognized about marketing efforts. Scale measurement conducted in the survey from the perception of organizational marketing efforts displayed an average of 6.23 on a scale of 1-10. This indicates that most consumers consider marketing efforts satisfactory. Survey results also indicated how often consumers want to see content from organizations. The highest group responded more than once a week (45.9%). Once a week was relatively similar in comparison and received 42.6% from the replies. The smallest group was less often than monthly (4.9%). During the focus group discussion, certain themes were identified as the platforms that were being used and these platforms included YouTube, Twitch, Instagram, Twitter and other. Based on the survey, the most important platform for consumers was YouTube (85.5%). Twitch (75.8%) and Instagram (74.2%) followed closely. In addition, 12.9% of respondents selected other as their platform and therefore this was the least important platform.

## **5.2 Recommendations for Myst1s Gaming**

**The fourth sub-question** was to give recommendations based on the results of the research. Myst1s Gaming should analyse what games they are participating in now and if these games are enough or should they increase the games that they are participating in based on the popularity of the game. In addition, the company should compare different contents from organizations and determine if their content is adequate in terms of frequencies and different platforms. Consideration about modifying their channels based on the popularity of platforms could be another focus point for Myst1s Gaming.

## **5.3 Further Research**

The distribution of gender was not presented in this research. The effect of demographic factors could be investigated in further detail and determine if for example gender, age or nationality have any significance in the perception of respondent's results. The utilization of in-depth interviews could be also considered to further validate the discoveries made in

the focus group and survey results. Interviews would also give a deeper understanding of the themes that were identified in this research.

Since the most important factor for the selection process of consumers was the games that organizations are participating in, there is a need for investigating the most popular games in the field of E-sports. Analysis of different games and their revenues, potential that they provide for different organizations and different consumer segments in the gaming industry could be considered.

Considering that entertaining content was the most significant aspect for consumers, demand for researching a variety of content from different successful organizations is there. Different organizational contents, communication and reaction of the fan base should be utilized in further research. In addition, an investigation of various platforms and their content frequencies in the E-sport industry could be included. Highlighting how to best advantage researched platforms.

#### **5.4 Feedback from the commissioned company**

Results were presented to the commissioned company and feedback was requested from the CEO of Myst1s Gaming, Henri Ilvonen. The obtained feedback was: *“This research was beneficial for Myst1sx Gaming. Previously all the organization decisions have been based on our personal interest and feelings rather than relying on organizational strategy. This research provided information for different factors when creating a strategy for our company and evolve our operation from a small start-up to a bigger organization. Especially the given recommendations for our company were useful and we plan on utilizing them in the future.”*

#### **5.5 Reflection on learning**

The thesis taught a lot of new skills about conducting a study. The author chose mixed-method and had the opportunity to learn the steps involved in both qualitative and quantitative study. Finding the right sources, referencing, and rephrasing academic text were all part of the acquired skills during the writing process of the theoretical framework.

Moving forward to conducting the research, the author learned how to manage a focus group discussion and analyse the information based on the literature provided. In addition, the author gained skills on how to analyse information from qualitative findings and utilize

these discoveries for the creation of a survey. The steps involved in the creation of a survey included learning how to formulate a questionnaire using the Webropol program. Other skills that were obtained during the research included learning how to analyse the survey results by using the SPSS program.

The author also improved in aspects such as time management skills, scheduling different parts of the research, and communication skills. Communication skills were especially important because the commissioned company needed to be up to date in every part of the study. The author also recognized some challenges that took place during the research. The biggest challenge was learning how to work from home and not having the possibility to work in any public spaces such as cafeterias, libraries, or schools. The author had to modify some of the previous working methods and learn how to work successfully from home.

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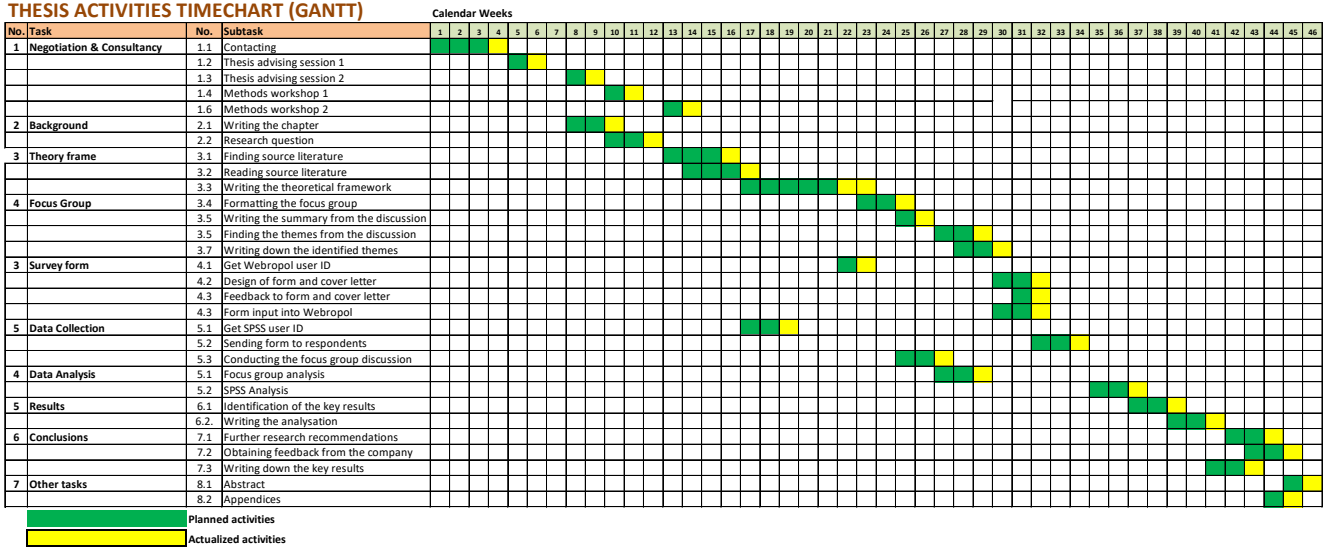
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# Attachment 1. Gant Chart

## THESIS ACTIVITIES TIMECHART (GANTT)



## Attachment 2. Survey questions

### E-sports organizations and influencing factors for consumer selection

The topic of this survey is E-sports organizations and different elements that influence the selection process of the consumer. Results of the questionnaire is utilized in my thesis work at Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences.

It will take about 5-10 minutes of your time and the questionnaire is completely anonymous.

Thank you!

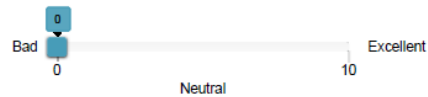
#### 1. How familiar are you with E-sports organizations?

- Not at all familiar
- Somewhat familiar
- Very familiar

#### 2. Which of the following is the most important factor for you?

- Opportunities that organization brings to players
- Opportunities that organization brings to consumers
- Normalizing gaming as a hobby
- Feeling of unity

#### 3. What do you think of E-sports environment?



#### 4. How important reasons are the following when it comes to the activity of gaming?

	Not at all important	Somewhat important	Important	Very important
Emotions that are involved	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It's a hobby	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Escaping reality	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Relieving stress	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Playing with friends	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

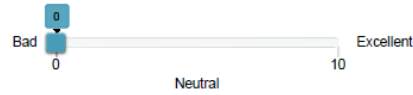
#### 5. How significant is the role of factors below when selecting an E-sports organization?

	Not at all significant	Somewhat significant	Significant	Very significant
Interaction between the organization and consumers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Games that the organizations are participating in	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Players of the organization	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

#### 6. How often do you want to see content from an organization in social media?

- More than once a week
- Once a week
- One to two times a month
- Less often than monthly

**7. How would you assess E-sports organizations marketing and advertisement efforts?**



**8. Which of these platforms are you using? (you can choose multiple)**

- Twitch
- YouTube
- Instagram
- Twitter
- Other

**9. What do you think of these statements?**

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly Agree
Product promotions done by organizations are good	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A successful E-sports organization is well known	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I prefer to follow organizations if they have entertaining content	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I prefer to follow organizations if they win a lot of competitions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It is important for me to relate to the player	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**10. What are your expectations towards an E-sport organization?**


**11. Gender**

- Female
- Male
- Prefer not to specify

**12. Age group**

- 16-20
- 21-25
- 26-30
- 31-35
- 36-40
- 41-45
- 46-50
- 51 or older

### Attachment 3. Focus group questions



# Focus Group

Asrin Shahsawari

## Question 1

- Can you tell us about your experiences of E-sports organizations?

## Question 2

- Could you describe briefly what they mean to you/what significance they have for you?

## Question 3

- Describe with one word what comes to your mind from the word “gaming”?

## Question 4

- What criteria's do you have for selecting an E-sports organization to follow?

## Question 5

- Does it add value that the organization is well known and why?

## Question 6

- How important is the role of emotions when talking about your selection process for E-sports organizations?

## Question 7

- Promotions and advertisement done by organizations are....?

## Question 8

Is the organizations social media activity important?

## Question 9

Do you follow any organizations online and if so, which platforms are you using?

## Question 10

- How important is the player of the organization to you?

## Concluding

- Is there anything else that we did not discuss about yet, but should be included?