

Event marketing and PR for Grail Quest

Attracting and reaching audience in esports

Felix Kaukiainen

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Författare: Felix Kaukiainen

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Handledare: Camilla Ekman

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Abstrakt

Under de senaste åren har e-sport blivit ett allt mer diskuterat ämne i medier.

Tävlingsinriktat spelande (esport) håller på att formas till något bara få kunde tänka sig. E-sport (som förknippas med spelande) har också varit framgångsrikt på de olika fronterna i branschen. Den globala tillväxten inom e-sport och både nationell samt internationell framgång inom branschen har fått flera organisationer att investera i e-sport. Professionella sportorganisationer byggs upp på samma gång som tävlingar med allt större priser och synlighet väcker uppmärksamheten bland allmänheten. Dessutom har vissa skolor börjat stöda elever som vill rikta in sig på tävlingsinriktat spelande.

Grail Quest är ett esport och LAN evenemang som ordnades för första gången 2017 i Gatorade Arena i Åbo 2018 i Kuppis bollhall. Organisatörerna vill med hjälp av evenemanget lyfta fram e-sporten och tävlingsinriktat spelande (videospel) bland allmänheten och nå nya potentiella kunder.

Det huvudsakliga syftet med examensarbetet är att undersöka kundgruppen för att kartlägga en marknadsföringsstrategi åt följande Grail Quest -evenemanget som kommer att ordnas. I undersökningen ligger fokus på målgruppen e-sportentusiasiter. Arbetet går mer detaljerat in på hur man marknadsför evenemang. Det ser också på vad som krävs för att få ungdomar som tävlar i esport att bli intresserade att delta i ett e-sport och LAN-evenemang.

I undersökningens kvalitativa del jämförs fyra nordiska esports- och LAN evenemang. I den kvantitativa delen analyseras feedback från deltagare i Grail Quest 2018-evenemanget. I den kvalitativa undersökningens resultat kom DreamHack starkt fram som supernovan inom branschen. Enkäten som utfördes ha 84 svar och visade intresse för esports evenemang.

Språk: Engelska

Nyckelord: e-sport, evenemang, kundgrupp, marknadsföring

OPINNÄYTETYÖ

Tekijä: Felix Kaukiainen

Koulutus ja paikkakunta: Taloushallinto, Turku

Suuntautumisvaihtoehto/Syventävät opinnot: Markkinointi

Ohjaaja(t): Camilla Ekman

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Tiivistelmä

Viimeisten vuosien ajan olemme seuranneet e-urheilun (kilpapelaaamisen) huikeaa kasvua maailmanlaajuisesti. Vain harvat pystyivät aavistamaan tämän kasvun, jota on päästy seuraamaan myös Suomessa. Nopea kasvu on aktivoinut Suomalaiset kilpapelioorganisaatiot sekä tapahtumanjärjestäjät kehittämään liigoja sekä tapahtumia. Nämä muodostavat alustan jossa kilpapelaaamista harrastavat pelaajat voivat kehittyä ja edetä urallaan. Myös eri koulut ovat innostuneet tukemaan e-urheilun eri polkuja.

Grail Quest on e-urheilu- sekä LAN- pelitapahtuma, joka järjestettiin ensimmäisen kerran vuonna 2017 Turussa Gatorade Arenalla ja vuonna 2018 Kupittaaan Palloiluhallilla. Tapahtuman on tarkoitus tarjota ainutlaatuinen kokemus Turussa e-urheilun sekä pelaamisen ystäville. Tapahtumassa yhdistetään pelaamisen kaikki eri elementit syyslomaviikon päätteeksi. Opinnäytetyön pääasiallinen tarkoitus on tutkia e-urheilun kuluttajaryhmää laajasti sekä kehittää markkinointistrategia tuleville tapahtumille. Opinnäytetyö ei tule sisältämään täydellistä markkinointistrategiaa.

Opinnäytetyössä keskitytään pääsääntöisesti e-urheilun harrastajiin sekä tapahtumamarkkinointiin. Tarkoitus on selvittää mitä tapahtumalta vaaditaan, jotta se voi menestyä nuorten pelaajien keskuudessa. Opinnäytetyön tutkimus sisältää kvalitatiivinen sekä kvantitatiivisen osion. Kvalitatiivisessa tutkimuksessa verrataan neljän eri pohjoismaisen e-urheilu- ja LAN- tapahtuman ominaisuuksia. Kvalitatiivisen tutkimuksen lopputulos nostaa DreamHackin supernova –tapahtumaksi. Kvantitatiivisessa tutkimuksessa analysoidaan Grail Quest 2018 tapahtuman kävijäkyselyn vastauksia ja tehdään näistä yhteenveto. Kyselyyn saatiin 84 vastausta. Vastausten perusteella e-urheilun tapahtumille on kiinnostusta Turussa myös jatkossa.

Kieli: Englanti

Avainsanat: e-urheilu, tapahtuma, kohderyhmä, markkinointi

BACHELOR'S THESIS

Author: Felix Kaukiainen

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Abstract

The growth of esports has accelerated globally in the past years at a very fast pace. Only a few could imagine that the popularity of esports would be where it is today. This has activated the Finnish sports organisations and event organisers to start creating different leagues and event domestically. We have seen different educational institutes also show their interest in esports, providing different paths to study esports as a subject.

Grail Quest is a new esports and LAN festival which was held for the first time in Turku Gatorade Center in 2017 and it was held again in Kupittaaan Palloiluhalli in 2018. The purpose of the event is to provide a high unique esports and Lan experience in Turku, which combines the different elements of esports and gaming under one festival for one weekend in the end of the autumn break. The purpose is to examine the target audience of esports enthusiasts and develop a marketing strategy for the coming events. The thesis will not include a complete marketing strategy.

The question we want an answer to: what does it require to attract the young gamer demography to attend the esports and LAN events? This is done with a quantitative research and a qualitative research. Combining the findings in the theoretical part and the empirical part will provide insight for the marketing strategy. The quantitative research will consist of analysing the customer survey of Grail Quest 2018.. The qualitative research will be done by measuring differences in four Nordic esports and LAN events. The result of the qualitative study is that DreamHack is a clear supernova.

Language: English

Key words: esports, event, target audience, marketing

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Terminology

Because esports includes a whole lot of difficult terms for readers who are not familiar with the scene, the author has chosen to define some of the more common terms that are used in this thesis. This is to help the reader to understand the thesis better, and to give a clearer picture of the context that is being discussed.

ACADEMY TEAM – a team format that larger esports organisations have started to form in search of young, potential and talented players.

BYOC – short for Bring Your Own Computer. A typical format of a LAN where everyone brings their own PC's or gaming devices. a BYOC tournament often refers to an amateur tournament.

CS: GO – a first person shooter game developed by a game developer called “Valve”, one of the most popular esports titles around the world

DOTA2 – a real time strategy game developed by the same game developer “Valve”, one of, if not the most popular esports title

ESPORTS – competitive gaming at amateur or professional level (amateurs can be referred as lower division football teams)

ESPORTS ENTHUSIAST – the core audience with high involvement in esports.

FORTNITE – a Battle Royale game developed by Epic Games, the most famous game which has broken many records in revenue and player base.

FPS – first person shooter –a type of game mode, such as in CS: GO or Call of Duty series

GAMING – playing video games casually, not in a competitive setting

LAN – in the beginning of esports, the attendees brought their own computers in to large venues (such as schools, sporting facilities etc.) to play games in the Local Area Network. Today we see stadiums filled with thousands of people, watching the professionals compete *offline* against each other.

MAJOR – the most prestigious tournament in the game of CS: GO, hosted 2-3 times a year in different locations. This tournament is funded partially by Valve (game developer of CS: GO).

ONLINE LEAGUE – various games have implemented online leagues, either by a 3rd party organization or the game developer, to provide a platform where players can compete against each other. Leagues usually take 1-2 months per season and have different “skill levels”. There’s usually rewards in the end of a season for the winners, and a spot at a LAN event from the same league organizer.

PUBG – a Battle Royale game developed by Bluehole, one of the new esports titles

SKINS – in-game cosmetics with no real change of players powers or abilities, purchasable by micro-transactions

TWITCH – the most well-known platform for all esports and gaming related content. Anyone can start a twitch channel and begin their livestream directly from home, showing them play their games. Twitch is also used by many tournament and league organizers to provide live broadcasts with built studios, commentators and analysts. Twitch is one of the key factors that made esports this global and large as it is today.

YWN – Youth, Women and Netizens (strong influencers in the era of digitalization)

1 Introduction

The author is interested in esports and with many years of active participation in the amateur scene and later as a vivid follower of the professional scene around. The author is also a founder of an esports organisation, competing in amateur league and tournaments. The estimated online population today is roughly 4 billion people across the world. Only 1,6 billion of these know what esports is about, and less than 200 million are considered enthusiasts or fans of esports (Newzoo, 2018).

The increasing coverage in national and international media on esports and gaming is still on the rise, and has been for the last four to five years. This presents a good opportunity for stakeholders in esports to attract new fans or more occasional viewers to esports, by creating new and unique experiences for people to participate in.

Grail Quest is a Finnish esports event organizer operating in Turku, Finland. Grail Quest has been developing a concept of bringing the LAN experience together with the aspect of *esports* to gamers and esports enthusiasts to Turku. This thesis aim is to discover, enlighten and provide guidance for Grail Quest as an esports event in the future. Grail Quest has the potential of growing in different directions, for example as a meaningful international “circuit-event” or strengthen itself as a more local exhibition of esports and gaming.

1.1 Problem background

The last years Grail Quest didn't meet all of the expectations for ticket sales, which led to some questions and problems for the event organizers. Why didn't people want to come to visit or attend the event? Was it the lack of general interest in the event or did people not know it was going to be held? What are the main experiences that people would want from an event like Grail Quest, to purchase their ticket and attend the event? Last year's event included everything from LAN gaming and cosplay to esports. Hosting an event like Grail Quest is done with the help of volunteers, but includes heavy costs as the rent, prize pool, accommodations, catering and running costs such as marketing and IT services. These are usually partly covered with income from sponsors and partners, who're willing to pay a good amount of getting their brand involved with the event. Sponsor- and partnerships are sold in the form of advertising, since events are marketing opportunities for different brands.

The esports events highly depend on scoring larger viewership numbers and event attendances to attract the large brands and sponsors to the event. If an organized event does not meet the desired attendee and viewer numbers which were *promised* to the advertiser, it is hard to score any financial backing even if the event was a success in other terms.

1.2 Purpose

The purpose for this thesis is to develop alternative marketing and PR activities for the upcoming Grail Quest events (Critical Success Factors). This will be done by analysing the competition, comparing three of the Nordic event organizers to the last year's Grail Quest event. The author is developing a marketing strategy based on findings in the comparison and the results of the survey which will lead to increased attractiveness as an event.

1.3 Limitations of the study

This thesis will not include a complete marketing strategy or communications plan for esports events. It is meant to be a suggestion which would improve the attractiveness of the marketing activities, aimed towards the esports demography. The author will focus on the general attributes of esports enthusiasts, which are the general focus points for the event organizers. Based on the findings throughout the study, the author will provide suggestions for different marketing and PR engagements, which should improve the attractiveness of the upcoming Grail Quest events.

2 What is esports?

As esports becomes a more general and acknowledged term in the various medias both domestic and internationally (Kauppalehti, 2018; GoldmanSachs, 2018), it is important to understand the concept of what electronic sports (later referred as *esports*) consists of.

In this thesis the author will discuss about the development of esports as a nascent industry, the different stakeholders within the scene (such as players, coaches, managers, sponsors and event organizers) and the customer segment (the target audience).

Esports is organized competitive gaming, which takes structural model from traditional sports such as basketball, football or ice hockey (S. Schmidt, 2015). Esports is categorized as any other sport in Germany (J. Speight, 2018) in all its righteousness, and is debated to be in the Olympic games 2024 (BBC, 2018). The real difference is between esports and

gaming which the mainstream can have a hard time to realize, because they are not familiar with the concept of esports. In esports you compete against other humans either individually or as a team, and to compete at the top level you put in thousands of hours in the game to master it. It is normal that the players train from 6-12 hours per day, at least four to five days a week. Understanding that every player can adapt this certain approach to the game, and by doing so they practically start training and developing themselves instead of “just playing around”. It is also proven that many people share interest for and want to develop and become amateur players for real teams who practice on weekly, or even daily basis, many hours a day (Goldman Sachs, 2018).

Spectacular game design combined with a studio production level broadcast and live events, which cover some of the most skilled players competing head to head for large prize pools and glory has certainly been proven to be entertaining (GoldmanSachs, 2018). Esports have grown under the many years of successful international scenes emerging with a self-sustaining eco-system, ranging across different levels from pro to amateur players and leagues or tournaments (such as ESL Pro League and ESEA Open League). Today, the estimated awareness of esports is approximately 1.6 billion people worldwide, which roughly 10 % consists of esports *enthusiasts* (Newzoo, 2018) and the rest is considered as occasional viewers or mainstream, who’ve heard or seen some form of competitive gaming. We can assume that there’s a general issue with the esports awareness of the said 1.6 billion, where a significant portion of people’s understanding of esports is very vague and they might confuse esports with regular gaming for example.

The reasons for this might be partly due to lack of knowledge and understanding of the concept, but also partly because of the similarities between esports and gaming (to many people, it is a videogame after all).

Educational institutions have started to look in to esports education (BAU, 2017) and different opportunities this space has to offer for future employment and development. Schools in Finland have also started to provide new opportunities from an educational perspective. Ahlman and Prakticum are some of the most known educational institutes who provide esports as a subsidiary subject. Kajaanin Ammattikorkeakoulu organises the Nordic Esports Academy, which is a summer camp for esports enthusiasts. The boot camp is organised together with as a collaboration between different esports organisations and is aimed towards the Nordic highschool students interested in esports (Seul, 2018).

Under the last decade we have shifted towards a more engaging and intensive market of esports with content being available live 24/7 for consumption, throughout different media channels such as Twitch, YouTube, ESPN and Reddit. A few years ago, professionals close to the scene (D. Shields, 2014, R. Lewis, 2014) were speculating about a huge oversaturation in the esports market. This was at the time that many new event organisations wanted to get their share of the market by hosting tournaments, which resulted in frequent tournaments which wore out the professionals and the viewers. Esports managed to survive and the scene has since then grown globally to a healthier and broader structured scene with the help of investments made by mainstream brands, franchise leagues (such as Overwatch League, Legends Championship League and E-LEAGUE) as well as new interesting games such as Fortnite and PUBG with more esports titles being constantly introduced specifically targeted at the mobile side of esports.

3 The esports eco-system and stakeholders

With the help of some key components, the author wants to break down the different sectors and operators which creates the ecosystem for esports. From the early days of video game industry, the game developers have been in the centre of expanding the ecosystem. World Cyber Games Challenge in 2000 was the first Olympics-like event seen in esports, with Samsung and Microsoft as main partners. The first WCG was held in South-Korea, with 174 players attending split across 17 countries, who came to play esports and compete against other people, who were considered talented in their respective games. This WCG circuit grew year by year, already in 2001 attracting over 400 participants from 37 countries. The WCG circuit got to an unfortunate end in 2011, when the CEO of the event would not cooperate anymore with stakeholders. Since then we have seen efforts from game developers who establish leagues and tournaments together with 3rd party organizations (DOTesports, 2018). The most engaged developers in esports are Blizzard, Valve, Riot and more lately with the rise of Playerunknowns Battlegrounds, Bluehole partnered up with known 3rd parties such as Twitch to bring esports events for players and fans to visit (Broadcasterroyale.com, 2018).

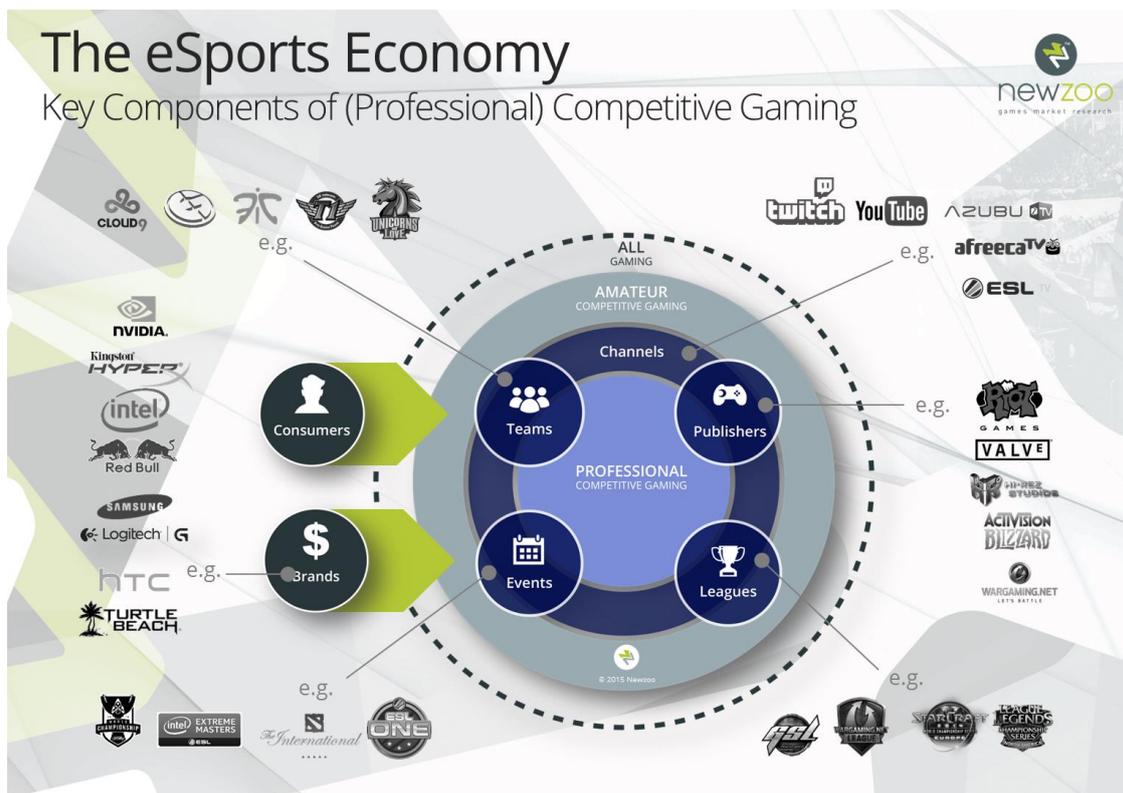


Figure 1. Key Components of the Ecosystem, (Newzoo, 2018)

In the beginning of 2011, Valve, a large US based game developer introduces a 1 million USD prize pool for *The Invitational -Dota 2* tournament. This was the largest prize money ever seen in the community of esports, even though it existed for quite some time. Players, teams and brands turned their heads towards this specific event which gained well deserved attention. The scene has since then developed in a fast pace, with a few game developers such as Blizzard, Riot and Valve leading the way by supporting events and leagues, which are built up around their specific game.

The players who are talented in the specific game form teams which aim to compete professionally in the leagues and events, that are implemented and organized by the developers or other third-party event organizers. These leagues and events are broadcasted live through different platforms such as Twitch and YouTube which attract hundreds of thousands, even millions of viewers online at its best. The larger events attract thousands of visitors at the venues where they are held at. Organizers such as ESL and Dreamhack run their own event-circuits, where every team has a chance to qualify to play at the event through an open qualifier, with a few of the top tier teams directly invited to the event.

This method is used to attract attention towards the events, but the largest portion of attention are the *majors*, which are developer backed events and the high point in any game (Dotesports, 2018).

3.1 Players and organisations

There are over 500 players around the world who've earned over 150 000,00 USD entirely in won prize money (Esportsearnings, 2018). The same data shows that over 60 people have won more than 1 million USD in prize money, for competing in esports tournaments. These 60 players are from all around the world, and almost everyone has been part of *The Invitational* (the Dota 2 event hosted by Valve). The large prize pools in tournaments attracts players and organizations to compete and achieve success in the various games. Players usually start competing in esports by participating in online leagues which are open for everyone. Practicing as individuals and developing as a team, they attend smaller local LAN's where they achieve victories and gain experience. The process of gaining the attention on the international market of players and securing a possible career with an international team is usually long and harsh. The players invest thousands of hours in to the game, with long days of official matches, including preparations by reviewing their opponents tactically for the best in-game results. If they do not perform on par with expectations set from their fans and management, the organisation might remove the player from the active roster, which can make the player seem "unattractive" for other organisations to pick up, even if there's a valid reason for their poor performance.

Today, the established professional esports organisations function in the same way as sports organisations do, which means that they provide players salary, equipment, legal help and time management for the players and teams. The teams have coaches and managers, who see that everything is in order and the players can focus solely on the work. Organisations are usually sponsored by one or few main sponsors, who provides their own peripherals or items in return of a strong and wide brand presence in the organisation. This hasn't always been the case though, but thanks to the development we have seen both players and organisations are more comfortable in their respective positions (GoldmanSachs, 2018).

Traditional sport teams have finally understood that they have an advantage of starting a subsidiary team in their choice of game (Ence, 2018). Just recently, the ePL which is a collaboration between Premier League and Fifa, was introduced for FIFA 19.

This has the potential to accelerate a further growth of moving traditional sport games in to esports titles, which would provide new events for fans to attend and for sport organisations to gain new fans and audience. The adaption of traditional sports in to esports is considered to be the next step for esports, in an interview by Ryan Nolan at GoldmanSachs podcast.

3.2 Leagues and events

Major game developers Blizzard, Riot and Valve have their own leagues and events. These leagues are like football leagues. For example, they consist of different divisions with the highest tier division functioning as the “premium league” of the game. Valve’s game Counter Strike is one of the most popular games in Europe and North America together with Dota 2 and League of Legends. There are plenty of online leagues open for both casual, amateur and professional players. These leagues have scheduled matches and small rewards for victories such as in-game consumables, skins or pure money. The leagues are played on a span of a few months’ time, which are broadcasted live by the players themselves (Twitch.tv, 2018) or from studios to different broadcasting platforms such as Facebook, Twitch or YouTube. The largest leagues with semi-professional or professional players usually end their season with large prize pooled LAN events, hosted by the third-party organizer such as ESL or by the game developers themselves (Liquipedia, 2018). Just recently, Aftonbladet introduced Svenska Elitserien, a new national CS: GO league for Swedish players. The prize pool for the league is 1 million crowns and will be streamed through Sportbladet (Aftonbladet, 2018). Esports has adapted to a more global scene during these last years, with the ASEAN continent being the addition to mainstream events circuit through their own qualifiers (ESL, 2017).

3.2.1 Events in Finland

Gaming festivals or LAN parties have been around in Finland since the mid 90’s (Assembly, 2018). The most well-known is Assembly Party, which is a LAN party hosted by a non-profit organisation located in Helsinki. Assembly Party has over 200 volunteers, who’ve been organizing events since 1992 in Finland. The quality of Finnish events is yet to meet on par with international levels, partly due to lack of financial backing and interest in esports. We have seen Assembly combining LAN events with esports by introducing larger prize pools at the Assembly Winter 2010 (Liquipedia, 2018). Assembly Summer 2018 hosted a Finnish Championship series, together with their main partners ASUS Rog, Red Bull and

Telia with a combined prize pool of 15,000€ split across three different games (CS: GO, HS and SC2).

Last year we saw Grail Quest announce their entry as a LAN and esports event organizer, by hosting an esports and LAN -party at Turku Halli (known as Gatorade Center). There were several professional players attending, with live broadcasts on Twitch. This year they've pooled together the largest prize pool in Finland, with 20,000€ split between CS: GO, Overwatch, Hearthstone and many more. The event is directed at gamers but for esports fans as well. With a professional tournament in CS: GO, they hosted an open qualifier for amateur teams to contest the Finnish top organisations Havu and SuperJymy who were directly invited to the event (GrailQuest, 2018).

In Finland, we have developed a community of gaming enthusiasts. With the domestic success of ENCE (#1 Finnish esports team in CS: GO and StarCraft) we have seen Finnish fans actively showing their support towards the Finnish organisation who compete internationally.

This boosts the viewership numbers in Finnish tournaments as well, due to other organisations following in ENCE's footsteps. Because of this trend, we can slowly move out from the LAN-type of events where the participation is gamer-more focused to a trend where its more viewership focused as in a football or a hockey game.

3.3 Sponsors and media

George Woo, who's the world wide event marketer at Intel gives insight in why leagues and events are appealing for major brands to invest in: "Gaming enthusiasts are web-savvy people who know exactly how to avoid traditional marketing, do not watch TV, use ad block in their web browser and consume their entertainment almost entirely on-demand" (Newzoo, 2017). The emerging market of the tech-savvy young people is an intriguing opportunity for brands and manufacturers of peripherals. In the recent years, we have witnessed more traditional brands who approach the esports space with direct investments in organisations or as main partners at events around the world (Business Insider, 2018). Great case examples for these are Visa (SK Gaming), RedBull (Team OG, Tempo Storm, Assembly), and Audi (Astralis). The investment opportunities for traditional companies comes with the growth of esports viewership globally. Twitch reports show that the viewing numbers have increased year-on year with a strong 13-17%, with over 50% of viewership coming from Asia (GoldmanSachs, 2018).

Twitch and YouTube offer a new possibility implement content marketing towards a very specific and hard to reach -type of target group. Content marketing can often be linked with customer interaction, which provides a more successful approach in reaching your target audience and engaging them with your marketing activities (Kotler, 2017). An example of content marketing in the Twitch platform would be the CS: GO Major tournaments, who have built in a system which focuses on the viewers of the tournament from home. You link your game account together with your Twitch account (the provider of the broadcast) and your eligible to receive in game- drops just by watching the tournament from home. This engages viewers in spending hours by their monitors, cheering for their favourite streamers and teams, and at the same time viewing ads from different sponsors during all this time (Twitch, 2018) and eventually engage themselves to participate in a sponsored giveaway.

3.4 Customer segment

There are three main categories in the esports audience: the esports enthusiasts, the occasional viewer and the informed mainstream (Newzoo, 2018). The difference between them in consumer behaviour is quite significant, which makes it important to define them in a way that gives a rightful image of the demography. The esports enthusiast is considered to be a player of a game, competing in amateur or semi-pro online competitive gaming leagues and tournaments. These people are highly engaged in the esports community through the gameplay, social media platforms and attendance at live events as spectators or players. They are also more likely to generate extra revenue than any occasional viewer (Newzoo, 2018). The usual extra revenue that any esports enthusiast generates comes usually from the following sources: fan merchandise, event tickets, special in-game items (such as skins or event-passes) and direct donations through Twitch to their favourite entertainment channels.

The generic esports enthusiast is between 18-24 tech savvy student or worker with a middle-class background (Newzoo 2018). The last category is the informed, who are people who in general have heard or read about esports in the news or from family. They don't really know what the big picture is about, but some of them might become interested. The report provided by Newzoo shows a great overview of the demography across world and in comparison, to the occasional viewer. It is estimated that the total audience is roughly 215 million people (2018) which consists of over 165 million enthusiasts who account 76% of the total viewer base.

4 Literature review

Esports is still a nascent industry and many years from being stabilized and organized (A. Zarrabi, H. Jerkrot). Franchises are being built around events and leagues. Large stakeholders are in talks to create large event circuits, for separate esports titles such as Intel did with the ESL Intel Extreme Master for CS: GO. This would bring certain stability and regularity to the industry, but also limitations in entering the market as a new company. At this stage, we still see a free and open market for new organisations to find their foothold in. The author wants to review literature which is focusing on how event marketing is done with the help of digital and content marketing and what are the most important parts of the customer experience for them to be satisfied.

A lot has changed in the way we interact with people, authorities and companies. With the rise of internet and powerful technology, the consumer (Kotler, 2017) has enabled itself to be a voice which should be recognized. Over 90% of the media interactions today happens through a screen. The amount of information that's made available today is vast and has helped the consumers to be able to make better decisions, based on their needs and desires by researching facts instead of just having the information available what's said in the advertisement or the company website. The "shift of power" is not really a bad thing for companies either if they manage to adapt to the new age, where tech savvy diginatives awaits for them to be provided with exciting new experiences and responsible governance (Kotler, 2017).

4.1 Digital Marketing

The hyper connected millennials are a large part of the esports enthusiast demography. Marketers benefit from today's connectivity with the possibility of influencing through the different social media platforms. Being transparent in your communication will build up trust with your brand (König, 2012) which is increasingly important in today's market. Kottler suggests that the offline and online marketing activities should be combined and will be essential to provide the target audience a seamless experience of different touchpoints for the consumer to make a purchase decision.

The purchase decision is then made based on three key factors which influence the decision;

- Marketing Communication (TV, Internet, PR)
- Friends & Family
- Personal preference based on experience and knowledge

The outcome of these key factors is that people are highly dependent on other people's opinions in most cases. Marketing through influencing has become a huge factor for many industries, including esports. The YWN (youth, women and netizens) are the largest population of the digital era. There are over 1,8 billion of young people ranging from 10-24 (which is the highest in history) around the world and they're going to be a significant buying force in the coming years.

These three segments (YWN) combined have the highest overall influence of *advocacy* (positive word of mouth). They are the customers that marketers should focus on in the early stages through influential marketing, even if it is not yet profitable (Kotler, 2018). According to Endeavor, word of mouth is the least expensive and most efficient way to gain brand advocacy (Endeavor, 2018). Women are proven to be highly active in brand advocacy and is also considered to information collectors by their nature. The women are primarily in charge of a household's economy in many developing countries. They do a lot of researching and evaluating different alternatives. Also, they're often mothers, which makes them protective and interested in their family. They listen to children's opinions and care for their interests. Kotler also suggests that this factor is not yet used to its full potential, and we will most likely see a change in marketing communications towards females especially in the esports industry. The importance of YWN is clearer when linking each segment in the big picture, why they are so influential in the digital era. The youth are usually leading their seniors by setting off new trends. What type of movies, sports and technology is good, instead of following their elders' culture. This provides an excellent opportunity to convert sales leads in to possible purchases of event tickets (Kotler, 2017).

Grail Quest has taken advantage of this channel by reaching towards the more uninformed elders of the youth by targeting messages in the more traditional media such as local newspapers and the radio. The Grail Quest event is also organized on the weekend of the autumn break, which provides families the opportunity to try out something new together, that is an interest factor of the youth (Schöneman, 2018).

The netizens who're the savviest online population have built their own platforms, constructed and dedicated for sharing information and discussing opinions (Reddit for example). They're very determined to speak freely, expressing their opinions and tend to rate, comment and share posts frequently. This is the reason *why* YWN has a big influence on the mainstream, and which is also the reason why marketers should pay attention especially to them, when constructing new marketing engagements in the digital era (Kotler, 2017).

4.2 Event marketing

Definition of an event is a one-time or once-a-year type of occasion, with a limited duration which brings visitors or attendees together for different purposes such as experience, leisure or even learning. For established and reoccurring events, the event marketing is based on building a relationship between the attendee and the organisation. It usually takes a long time to build the connection and it is considered tough to establish. Depending on the purpose of the event, there's a possibility to develop and promote events without making a large investment in building the customer relations, if the purpose isn't to make it a continuous series of returning events (Pasanen, Taskinen & Mikkonen, 2009).

Event marketing is simply split up for three phases:

1. Pre-event marketing – this is the first part when you reveal your event and try to raise awareness through different channels which hopefully leads the targeted audience to purchase a ticket

Pre-event marketing can be done with blog posts, social media posts, collaborations with partners (admission ticket lottery and other competitions), invite influencers to the event (Kotler, 2017).

2. Event launch – It is close to the event, you have people are attending on your Facebook page and flyers set up around the city.

Event launch marketing can be made by writing press and PR releases which you send out, inviting journalists to accredit the event or even make a pre-event coverage. Social media posts frequent should be multiple from the pre-event stage and more significant early bird ticket sales campaign should be set up together with a special reveal of the event (a guest, unique hands-on activity etc.) by setting up Facebook and Instagram ads (preferably video).

3. Post event marketing – the dust has settled at the venue of an event, people continue with their daily lives and you should make sure that the attendees will be reminded in small and tasty portions that they were a part of your event.

Correct after-sales promotion is important in order to make a stylish exit. It can best be done through social media channels, posting a thank you for the attendees with selected pictures or even an after-movie. Customer surveys are also a normal way to contact the attendee after the event, asking for feedback.

(Brandwatch, 2017, Eventbrite, 2016)

4.2.1 Marketing events as sport tourism

Sport tourism is a large industry and a relevant topic in event marketing. Sports tourism is considered to be the experience of traveling to a destination to engage or view sport related activities, at the specific sport events (S. Ross, 2001). In the 1996 World Cup in the US and the Olympic Games were a major sport tourism attraction, estimating over 50 million foreign tourists, who were estimated to spend 100 billion USD in the US. Just youth sport tourism alone is estimated to be an industry of over 15 billion USD in 2016 (JumpSix Marketing, 2016). The industry has the potential to double within the coming years (Wintergreen Research, 2016), and esports might play a significant role in this transformation.

Esports is following the same trend of sport tourism, with events hosted worldwide to attract foreign tourists to attend to these events. The global revenue of the esports industry was 655 million USD in 2017, with 9% coming from ticket revenue from live events (Newzoo, 2018). There's no clear study of how much esports enthusiasts spend during their stay, but we can expect that the tech savvy millennials spending behaviour is similar to other sport tourism, because of their high engagement in the sport itself. They are likely to buy club shirts along with other merchandise or peripherals associated with computer gaming e.g. mechanical keyboards, mouse's or headsets (Newzoo, 2018).

4.2.2 Segmentation of event attendees

Milner, Jago and Deery (2003) tried to find a common pattern for general event attendees, which they would build a demographic profile around to help organizers acknowledge their audience. Comparing several factors such as age, origin, marital status and sex led to the conclusion that the people not attending events are most likely old, retired, widowed or have no children.

Their findings also suggest that leisure activities and interests, such as sports, music or art, would be directly related to a person's way of living and his or her socioeconomic status, instead of the person's stage of life (Gyimóthy, 2009) (Scott, 1996).

The framework behind leisure activity involvement refers to persons interest in gaining something valuable from the leisure activity, such as skills, knowledge or experience (Stebbins, 1997). The C-P-A-P model reinvented by Yodins (1997) is directed towards sporting events and more specifically to segment the activity and behaviour of the attendees of sporting events. The segmentation of C-P-A-P model is divided in **commodity** agents (manufacturers, promoters, sponsors), **professionals** (athletes, coaches, managers) and the **amateur/public** viewers or attendees of the event).

The C-P-A-P model also implements a deeper segmentation to the amateur/public segment, dividing it further in to sub-groups which helps defining the difference between an active and a passive observer and their involvement in the activity of the event (Stebbins, 1979).

Results from the study of Canadian Nordic World Ski Championships by Johnston and Twynam (2006) shows that the knowledge and engagement of the sport from an active observer (sport tourist) is significantly higher than a passive observer (in this case, a local resident seeking for a leisure experience). For an occasional viewer of esports, choosing to attend an event would most likely be a mixture of social experience and leisure time in your hometown, in contrast from the perspective of an esports enthusiast, who is attending the event for the experience, most likely as sport tourism. The enthusiast is also more likely to be present for other motives such as learning by watching and developing he's personal skill in the game than the occasional observer.

4.3 Triggering a supernova

Organizing a successful event is hard. It takes a lot of time to build up the required infrastructure, stakeholder relations, marketing strategy and the program itself, which are some of the critical success factors that makes an event successful. The digital tools today do help the event marketers greatly, with the possibility to build hype around events by creating stories and footage of the event even before it is held. This method can be used when trying to to attract the target audience with tailored messages and ads in their Instagram feed. Unfortunately, it does require a lot more than just great marketing to have a successful event (Fridh, Jansson & Melander, 2014).

There's a model which a group of Swedish professionals came up with by studying hundreds of events, trying to find a clear pattern for the very successful events which they would refer as "supernovas". After finally finding the pattern of key factors which were proven to be utterly important in successful events, they named it as the *supernovamodel*.

The definition of a supernova is a reoccurring event (not mega-events such as the Olympics etc.) and has four criteria's to be considered as a supernova. The first criteria is the volume of the event. True supernovas attract most visitors to its event and is largest within its own type. The second one is the format, which defines the time, length and location of the event (supernovas are reoccurring). The third factor is the trademark, which should be the strongest and most recognizable within its own category. The fourth are the effects of organising the event, which are measured in monetization, publicity and regional development (Fridh, Jansson & Melander, 2014).

4.3.1 The supernovamodel

This model is simple but fascinating, because every successful event has something unique to offer that gives it the last extra mile which causes the triggering of the supernova. The model consists of five key factors:

A. Individual, Organisation and Vision

Events are created by individuals with special skills, for other individuals. The individuals attending must interact with each other to make the supernova work. How can you plan and execute a supernova in its best way to make it work and even develop it further? How does an internal agreement of the event's purpose happen and how do the organizers communicate it correctly?

B. Insight in creating value

The organizers of the events understand their target audience. They know what the needs and desires of the attendees are. Having this insight helps you attract the audience year after year and provide them with their desired experience.

C. Experience

Supernovas have more visitors than the competitors. They are unique events which provide a meaningful and unforgettable experience, which makes it memorable for the attendee and worth the visit.

D. Word of mouth (spreading the word like a virus)

Marketing is very costly and is required for the success of an event. Word of mouth is proven to be the most efficient way to spread the message. The attendees will tell their friends that *they'll have to come next time!* which is something that the uniqueness of supernovas delivers.

E. Power for growth

It is exhausting to grow and it is also easy to feel satisfied when reaching set limits. There's always a higher peak to reach, something you could strive for. This requires a lot of power and ability to channel the power in to growth year on year. The supernovas have the desire to reach for growth year on year quality wise or quantity wise.

It is important to understand your target audience, so that you can create unique and perfect experiences, which the attendees actually want to experience again, and bring their friends as well. As the first step in the supernovamodel indicates, the successful events have deep insight in their target audience. The insights consist of age, origin and sex, but also much more detailed information about their consuming behaviour, interests and values (Fridh, Jansson & Melander, 2014).

The supernovamodel includes six core elements that are important to consider when planning an event. These elements provide the perfect experience for an attendee:

- the format of the event, it should be designed to be as fitting as possible (time, place, length of the event)
- the content of the event needs to fit with the expectations of the attendees - esports fans should be able to view esports
- the uniqueness of the event and experience should beat the expectations of the attendees to be successful
- the visitors of the event should be a part of the target audience group. Having esports enthusiasts share a great tournament with each other will provide a much more unique and unforgettable experience than a venue of people unfamiliar with esports

- the preparations of the event, both from the event attendees as well as the competitors and the event organizers
- the services at the event should be of high quality. This means short queues, easy information, helpful staff, clean facilities and tasty food and beverages (Fridh, Jansson & Melander, 2014)

4.4 Touchpoints for triggering a supernova

“As goods and services become commoditized, the customer experience that companies create will matter the most” – Pine II & Gilmore

The touchpoints are the moments of interaction between the customer and the service provider. These are crucial moments that usually are the **make or break** at an event or general purchasing decision. Developing a concept which serves the target audience in each possible touchpoint requires a lot of data, which for example can consist of feedback collected from attendees at an event. For the organiser to be able to develop and innovate new alternative touchpoints to enhance the customer path, they can take advantage of tools and theory frameworks (Kotler, 2017 Zephiora, 2017) available, which helps mapping out the different touchpoints of the customer experience journey. This is something that Walt Disney has done well with their amusement parks around the world. They’re considered to be an important influencer in driving the experience industry forward. Walt Disney have understood what it takes when it comes to listening to their customers and creating personalized experiences, such as the MyMagic+. With their remarkable innovations, other event organizers can learn how to successfully satisfy their audiences with implementing tailored touchpoints to the customers experience journey (Zephiora, 2017).

Considering what different touchpoints occur during an event, it is important to note that there’s already been a handful of different touchpoints *before* the event attendee has reached the event. The first touchpoint is when the customer hears about the event, after that decides to google it, go through website navigation and eventually purchases the ticket. The customer receives a confirmation email about their purchase, including a thank you note with some of the essential information. There’re already five different touchpoints taking place within just a few moments. Other touchpoints to be noted are transport to the event, accommodation, navigation to the entrance, security, registration and seating, freebies, other attendees, activities at the event, information about activities and general condition of the facilities (Weemss, 2017).

The Customer Experience Curve functions as a framework that provides you a better understanding of the critical moments that any user has with their experience at an event or exhibition. The event organizers have endless amounts of small details to plan for a perfect customer experience to occur at the event. Unfortunately, sometimes things happen which are out of your control, but planning to perfection will help avoiding many mistakes as possible, which could harm the customer journey at an event.

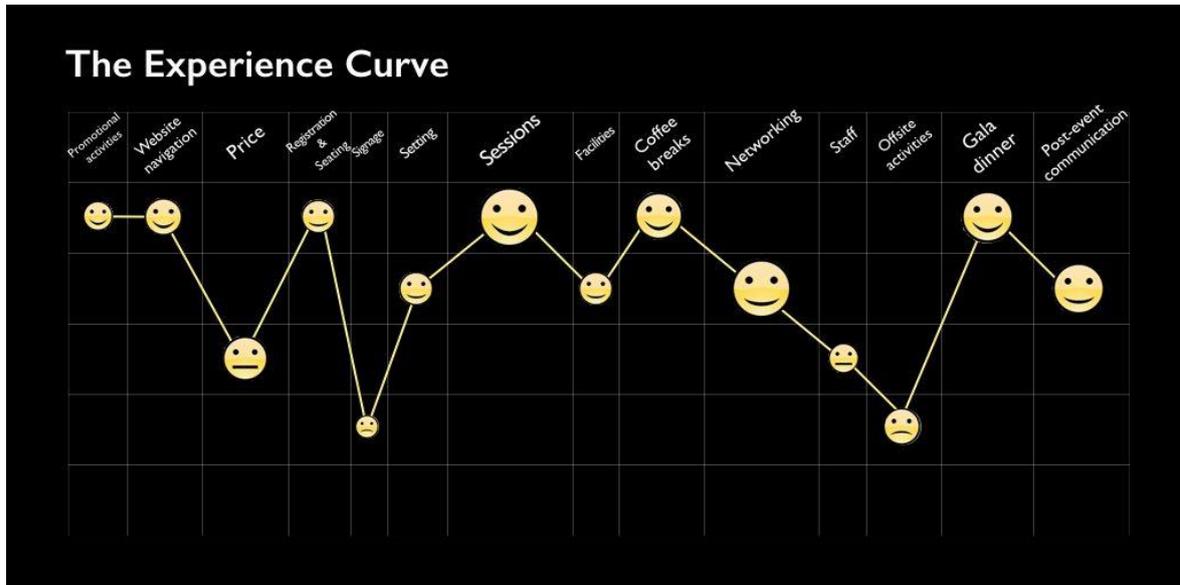


Figure 2. Touchpoints at an event and the level of service that the customer was encountered (Mycustomer.com, 2016)

A cheap and very powerful way of attracting new attendees to an event is by making the attendees who've already attended your event extremely satisfied and surprised by providing a WOW -moment during the event. They will share their experience and details about the different encounters and activities that they participated in (Andersson, Getz, Reider Mykletun, 2012) with their friends and family.

Supernovas offer new and exciting possibilities for the event attendees to enjoy and to remember and share the experience with their friends. Esports events are certainly capable of providing new completely new experiences for many people, because of the nascent industry and the mystery that lies behind how people are competing professionally in videogames over millions of euros to be won as a prize. There is still little knowledge about the behavior between the different esports customer segments and what attributes they share in general. This lack of data might be a problem when designing an acknowledging many of still hidden touchpoints, which could change the way these events are organized.

The nature of esports events offer interesting possibilities for completely new touchpoints to be implemented with new technology such as VR. Imagine being able to spectate a game live from within the game, by accessing a pair of VR glasses and a connection to the game server.



Figure 3. The customer journey (touchpoints and experience)

Touchpoints at an esports event can be for example:

- transportation to the venue (easy public access with train, buss or by car, walking, cycling, venue parking lot)
- ticket exchange queue (attendees, security personal, exchange personal)
- venue facilities (tournament/competition area, restaurants, toilets, lounge, opening hours)
- venue personal (information point, security, waitresses, stage hosts, players, event management, volunteers, guests, press-interviews etc.)
- venue activities (easy to find/program, type of queues - long/short, informative or not, fun or not, child friendly/age restrictions, competitions, previews, on-demand entertainment, WiFi, keynotes, merchandise/ boutiques, exhibitions, promoters, cosplay)
- social media activations during and after (pictures, posts, reviews, videos, gameplay, competitions, feedback survey)

Being very thorough about mapping the touchpoints will certainly benefit the customer in he's experiences at the event.

5 Methodology

The author chose to compare four similar events with each other, to get an understanding of how much these events are alike and what is the reason for some events being more successful than the others. Dreamhack is one of the five supernovas in Sweden and is the most successful LAN party event with a huge focus on esports (Dreamhack, 2018).

To develop a marketing plan for Grail Quest 2019, the author created a customer feedback survey which was designed to provide an understanding of how the attendees heard about the event, what tickets they purchased and what type of activities they participated in. The survey got a total of 84 answers and the author had to shut down the survey after a couple of days, due to the timing of the event. The author will point out a few of the key findings in the survey and discuss them. With the help of the case studies and the survey, the author will introduce a re-imagined marketing plan for Grail Quest's future events. A lean canvas is being introduced as a part of the methodology presented as a tool.

5.1 Case studies

Dreamhack is the world's largest LAN event and one of the oldest and strongest esports brands (tournament organizers). It is also noted in the book "Att tända en supernova" as one of the five Swedish supernovas. The people going to LANs have been categorized as "nerds" or "anti-socials" who sit on their computer for a long time (Fridh, Jansson & Melander, 2014). This has changed due to the nature and behaviour of *Generation X* and the *Millennials* (Kotler, 2017), with the rise of gaming and esports.

Today, Dreamhack is a world leading esports and LAN party -event (largest in the world) which hosts over 10 different events around the globe, with 250 000 visitors' and 90 million+ viewers online (Dreamhack, 2017). The huge success is notably thanks to engaged volunteers, exceptional organizing and management of the event. Dreamhack has been significantly successful in satisfying their stakeholders both internally and externally, attracting new visitors and competitors to the events each year.

The author has decided to do a qualitative case study on three of the well-known LAN events taking place in the Nordics and compare them to Grail Quest (as a brand new event in the same category), to get a comparison between the events. This comparison should give a better picture of what the events are about, what they lack and what they are successful in, but also what different elements suggest the event is or will be a supernova. All of the events

that were compared took place in 2017. They have since then developed further, for example Assembly partnering up with Telia as the main sponsor of the event (after Telia buying the Assmebly Organizing) and Copenhagen games that is creating an esports event including EDU -tournaments, which are school and student-oriented tournaments (where a large portion of their target group lies at). Grail Quest in the other hand changed its venue and increased its prize pool to be the largest one seen in the Finnish CS: GO scene (at the time).

We are filling out the A,B,C,D and E of the Supernovamodel in order to find out what aspects does the events have, how they differ from each other and how the aspects meet with the needs and expectations of the event attendees.

5.1.1 Assembly Summer 2017

A: Assembly is the largest LAN, esport and demoparty in Finland. With a large variety of different activities taking place on separate days, the event is aimed at people interested in gaming, esports, demos, cosplay, streaming, seminars and introduction of the latest technologies available. It is organised by enthusiast for enthusiasts. The event has its roots to the early 1990's when the event was organized in Kauniainen by a group of friends. The organisers wanted to gather a group of friends and show off their skills in programming, making music and playing games. The main sponsors of the event were Jimms, Asus ROG and Mad Croc.

B: Assembly offers Finnish gamers and esports enthusiasts the possibility to watch the best of Finnish counter strike as well as some international teams competing for a decent prize pool and the largest LAN party in Finland, with a lot of other activites taking place during the event. The format of esports varies from year to year on what games are being played, and which teams attend. This also affects the target audience, but Assembly aims to host the yearly Finnish Counter Strike Championship, which attracts the real enthusiasts of the scene to visit. The international teams have tended to avoid attending Assembly, because of the small size of the tournament and lack of perks (such as providing travel costs, accommodation). Some of the Assembly's have been esports heavy, with invited international teams who were provided with these perks. The prize pool, which is partially financed by the sponsors was a total of 75 000€ in 2017. With many smaller prizes in amateur (BYOC) tournaments, Assembly aimed to attract gamers to attend the LAN with their own teams for the possibility to compete in the tournaments and win the prizes.

C: The format of Assembly is the same as for Dreamhack, meaning that the event is organised two times a year (Assembly, 2018). It consists of a program with the same format from year to year, with small adjustments and additions. The venue has been the same since 2014 and kept its focus as a LAN party with esports and the demokomp scene also being represented. It has been a unique event in Finland, attracting over 8000 visitors (Digitoday, 2017) to the event across four days, it also provides sponsors a great exhibition opportunity to reach their target groups (Asus ROG, Mad Croc, Jimms).

D: The attendees of the event were doubling yearly right after the first events were held. This led to the moving of the events to Helsingin Jäähalli, and later on to Hartwall Arena. The word of mouth factor is significant here. The event has many esports titles being played which require a team of 5 players. The event organiser tries to attract last year visitors to come again and to convince their team to attend of the amateur tournaments. If one esports enthusiast is convinced to attend the event and shares it with he's friends (most esports games are played in teams of 5 people), it can boost potential ticket sales by five times per tournament slot. Assembly is active on social media, which functions as their primary communications channel. They have accounts across platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Twitch and YouTube. Their various social media channels give an insight into how the events looks like, with photos from the last year's events. On Facebook they've a running video header showing footage from the venue, including arcade games, people enjoying themselves, a large hall filled with computers and a lot of screens flashing. On their Twitter you see information about tickets which are for sale for the 2019 Winter Assembly. There is also information about the upcoming Counter Strike tournament at the GameXpo 2018, which is a separate event from the Assembly 2019. The aftermovie can be found on their YouTube, including footage from the venue, players, winning moments of tournaments, exhibitions, people spending their leisure time at the venue and cosplay (Assembly Summer 2018 Aftermovie). The homepage of Assembly looks good and is informing about the Winter Assembly 2019 that takes place approximately in 3 (Assembly, 2018). The Instagram and twitter accounts are quite active with engagements around the year (not only during the events).

E: The continuous development and improvement of the Assembly events have made it to a popular brand among the Finnish gaming and esports scene. It is known to host the largest and well-organized LAN parties, combined with interesting esports tournaments for visitors to watch. The timing of the Assembly events (summer and winter holidays) provides the possibility for the organisers not to overlap with mandatory school, which is a major issue for the younger target audience.

5.1.2 DreamHack

A: Twenty years ago Dreamhack was nothing but a small gathering of close friends in the basement of a school in Malung, Sweden. The organisers gathered a group of friends, who brought their PC's to a basement where they showed off their skills in programming, graphics and music. It quickly evolved to a yearly meeting in the school cafeteria and developed further which led to the transition to Elmia in Jönköping by 2001. The move from Malung to Jönköping doubled the number of event attendees and was a great success. The main sponsors of the event were Astro, Asus, Corsair, COMhem, ELMIA, Monster Energy Drink, SVT, Tetra Pak, Webhallen and Zowie.

B: Dreamhack offers the experience to visit the world's biggest LAN party. Dreamhack is known to be the first CS: GO Major tournament back in 2013, with a 250,000 USD prize pool which was the largest ever in CS: GO at that time. This of course was huge news for every esports enthusiast and is remembered to be a legendary event with two of the Swedish top teams Fnatic and NiP battling it out in a Best of three -series (Liquipedia, 2018). In 2017 Dreamhack hosted a large international tournament called DH Astro Open, with a 100,000 USD prize pool which was aimed towards the top teams in the scene, but this was not a Major tournament. Dreamhack offers its visitors various activities throughout the event, including professional tournaments in esports titles, amateur tournaments, competitions, innovative technology, streamers, the world largest cosplay competition, music and live performances, exhibitions (Dreamhack, 2017).

C: The original format of Dreamhack is that the event is organised twice a year, winter and summer. The format of the event has been so hugely successful that they have developed the concept and exported it to other countries as well, totalling 11 events and over 250 000 visitors across these events. Dreamhack has managed to create the perfect customer experience at Dreamhack. This has been possible with skilled management, a strong vision and dedicated volunteers.

D: The large growth of Dreamhack events can be tied to the rise of social media, streaming platforms as well as great timing. The event attendees tend to create and spread content from the events through their various channels of social media. This gives the event free visibility and if the content goes viral, it's even greater exposure without any resources invested. We can again implement the importance of word of mouth factor, due to the number of amateur tournaments taking place in Dreamhack (explained in 7.1.1). The website of Dreamhack has an elegant and simple layout with a nice video loop of the LAN party in the background and provides a list of upcoming Dreamhack events worldwide. There are thousands of monitors and lights flashing, creating a very cool atmosphere. On their YouTube there's a trailer of the 2018 Winter Dreamhack which is produced as a trailer for a movie or series (high quality). The Instagram and Twitter accounts are very active with high-quality content (edited and designed graphics).

E: Dreamhack has reached the *Supernova* -status and is included in the book "Att tända en Supernova", and means that it is the most successful event of its type. The power of growth is truly present in their concept with events in Asia, Europe and North America, all attracting esports enthusiasts and gamers to visit the venues and participate in an epic experience filled with action, celebrities (streamers, esports professionals) and high-quality broadcast with visuals.

5.1.3 Copenhagen Games

A: The largest LAN party in Denmark is the Copenhagen Games, which are organised by SLAP, a Danish esports event organisation. SLAP has been organizing SLAP LIVE as 3 annual events since 2001 but rebranded itself to Copenhagen Games in 2010 with the goal to be the largest esports event in Denmark. The idea is to focus solely on esports as well as BYOC LAN tournaments for event attendees.

B: The value creation of Copenhagen Games is focused on providing aspiring teams a platform to compete against some of the best teams nationally and internationally. It attracts a large portion of esports enthusiasts in the area. Copenhagen Games has been acknowledged as an event in the global esports circuit and in 2017 it had a tournament with a 53 000€ prize pool and large international teams were invited to the event. Inviting professional teams gave purpose to the esports enthusiasts hungering to see international teams compete on Danish ground, for a significant prize pool (in Denmark).

C: The SLAP Live was originally organised as three separate annual events since 2001, but changed its format in 2010 when the re-branding to Copenhagen Games took place. They arrange the tournament once a year in the original venue of Øksnehallen in Copenhagen. The organisers decided to add another esports title - League of Legends as a tournament in the 2017 of Copenhagen Games.

D: Copenhagen games which focus solely on LAN and esports, attracts a certain target audience to the event (esports enthusiast). The amateur esports enthusiasts are most likely to attend the BYOC LAN tournaments (amateur tournaments) and the non-BYOC tournament qualifiers. Copenhagen Games rely on tickets sales from the BYOC LAN tickets, which teams that want to attend the tournaments need to purchase (same as in 6.1.1 D).

The website of Copenhagen Games is not on par with Assembly or Dreamhack, it looks like it is outdated and effortless. The website has a banner which rotates news, such as the announcement of the new venue for the next event and the winners of the 2018 games. They lack a YouTube channel and are quite inactive on their social medias in general, compared to Assembly and Dreamhack in the earlier case analysis. The spreading of the event through social medias doesn't seem to have worked, and it seems that the organisers have been a bit effortless to create content.

E: The potential growth that Copenhagen Games was seen during the re-branding of SLAP Live to an esports event known as Copenhagen Games. The event is organised by a passionate crew consisting mostly of volunteers who share the same ambitions, to host the largest esports event in Denmark. Unfortunately, Copenhagen Games has lost its throne in Denmark, due to the introduction of BLAST Pro series which is solely an esports event (without LAN tournaments) which has taken place in Copenhagen. This has led to Copenhagen Games taking a new direction towards educational institutes by creating an EDU- circuit, which introduces esports for pure school teams to attend.

5.1.4 Grail Quest

A: Grail Quest is the first event of its kind in Turku area and offers a large-scale LAN party with esports and an exhibition venue for game-, technology- and esports enthusiasts. The organisers who are developing a platform for esports tournaments saw the potential of bringing esports to Turku, and to make it big. The Grail Quest was organized for the first time in the Gatorade Arena, Turku back in the fall of 2017. The main sponsors of the event were City of Turku, Jimms PC, ED Energy Drink, Elisa Viihde

B: Grail Quest brought a handful of eSM (Finnish Electronic Sports Championship) tournaments in various esports titles such as Dota 2, League of Legends and Overwatch to Turku, with a vision to introduce esports to a largest public and to attract gamers to attend a brand-new LAN party with a rich program of activities to do besides just gaming.

C: Entering a new market is usually difficult and it takes time to get everything set up correctly. There's numerous of matters that will be unthought of, regardless of how good the planning and execution is. The Grail Quest 2017 was not a huge success in terms of attendance or hype around the event, but gave great insight to things that require improvement for future events. The organisers used the valuable experience gained from hosting the 2017 event and brought major improvements to the 2018 Grail Quest. The format changed a bit from 2017 to the 2018 Grail Quest, with only 1 eSM tournament but a rather large focus on a couple of big esports tournament (CS: GO) and few good quality of BYOC-tournaments, which attracts the amateur esports enthusiasts to attend the event with their teams and bring a larger group of LAN gamers (possible esports-enthusiasts who will also participate in viewing some of the professional tournaments).

D: The event in 2017 was held as an esports event and a LAN party, with a goal to bring esports to a new audience. It was partly the lack of marketing and delays in the schedule which led to the lack of awareness amongst the desired target group (Niklas von Schöneman, 2018). With that said, only a slim portion of the potential target group was reached. The social media channels of Grail Quest are active after the event as well, with various updates from the last year's event, something that is currently happening in esports, their sponsors or the gaming industry in general. The twitter account is also active, with similar updates as seen on Instagram.

E: Having established its foothold in Turku, it may have the capability to build a strong relation with the local esports enthusiasts, gather a strong and engaged group of volunteers for future events and bring in new collaborations with local brands to bring an amazing experience in the upcoming Grail Quest. Continuous development of the whole concept is vital for its success.

5.2 Comparison

The events compared are quite similar to each other in terms of context. This was of course done on purpose, in order to discover the *differences* which actually does separate the successful key factors from the less successful factors. Having an event running for almost twenty years will by nature be more established than a brand-new event hosted for the first time. But regardless of the similarities, there are some aspects in these events which are the deal breakers.

The comparison of the events was made with the available information found from reliable sources, such as the events websites, articles about the events found in other studies and finally by discussing the questions with the management of the event organisers (Assembly and Grail Quest). The aim of the comparison is to give the reader an understanding regarding some of the differences in the events size, both in prize pool and event attendance.



Figure 4. Results of the comparison

Nordic Lan Events	Assembly 2017 Summer	Dreamhack 2017 Summer	Copenhagen Games 2017	Grail Quest 2017
Social medias	facebook, instagram twitter, twitch, youtube	facebook, instagram, twitter, twitch, youtube	facebook, twitch instagram, twitter,	facebook, instagram, twitter, twitch
Followers	41390	836626	68796	1574
Location	Helsinki	Jonkoping	Copenhagen	Turku
Attendees	8000	14 000	6600	1664
Ticket types	LAN (byoc), day pass, event pass, VIP, children, large groups, guests	LAN (BYOC), express, +20 normal, +premium, event pass, day pass	PRO, LAN (BYOC), event pass, Under 14, Under 11	event pass, day pass, VIP, LAN (BYOC)
Tournaments	CS: GO, OW, SC2, HS, LoL, Rocket League, Quake, R6, SIM Racing	HS, Smash Bros, SC2, HOTS, Street Fighter V, Tekken, Rocket League, CSGO, OW, LoL, Quake	CS: GO, TF2, LoL	CS: GO, Dota2, FIFA, Tekken 7, NHL
Sponsors	Jimms, Asus ROG, Mad Croc	COM HEM, Monster Energy, Tetra Pak, ELMIA, SVT, Webhallen, Astro	City of Copenhagen, Wonderful Copenhagen, Wao, Esports.dk	City of Turku, Jimms, StarSquad, ED, Veikkaus, Elisa, Samsung
Prizepool	75 000 €	123 500 €	53 000 €	14300€
Vision	Catalyst to Finnish game industry, with 200+ volunteers	World's largest digital festival with a LAN core, today a gathering for esport & knowledge	Denmarks flagship esport event, with passionate volunteers	Grand event for every gamer, combining LAN with esport, new tech and exhibitions
Description	Largest LAN event in Finland, largest esport tournaments in Finland, many tournaments	Largest LAN event in the world, largest esport tournament in the Nordics (DH Astro Open)	Largest esport event in Denmark, significant for CS- scene	First major event in Turku, focus on LAN gaming and eSM esport tournaments
Experience	Assembly provides the biggest LAN and esport experience in Finland	DreamHack is the largest LAN and esports festival, as a unique experience	The largest LAN and esport event in Denmark	Unique event in Turku, not the largest in Finland
Word of mouth	Assembly is known to be a great event amongst people, and has good reputation in general	Being the world largest LAN party and esports event gives you a competitive advantage that is hard to match	A Nordic event popular amongst amateur and semi- pro players is known and being well-spoken	Being vulnerable to the first impressions and without much to show after just 1 event, attractiveness can still be hyped up
Power for growth	Re-occurring event which has delivered pleasant experiences for attendees	Re-occurring event which has managed to grow in a huge year-on-year basis, attracting large sponsors	Re-occurring event which has attracted esports enthusiasts in denmark	Very high potential of growing out to a grand event or exhibition/LAN event

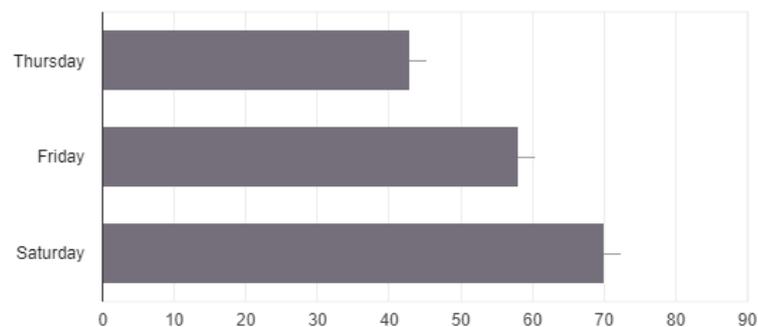
5.3 Customer Survey of Grail Quest 2018

The survey was designed to give insight into understanding of the target audience of esports events. The author wanted to know what type of tickets the attendees purchased, which days did the attendees visited the event, what experience the attendees enjoyed the most, which marketing channels reached the target audience the most and if the experience was satisfying enough to attend the event again. The information will provide solutions to the marketing strategy of next year's Grail Quest. It will help to bring a more enhanced customer experience in the activities which clearly had a high demand which should be a clear goal for the event organizers (Kotler, 2017).

The survey was sent to the event attendees after Grail Quest 2018 per email and was also promoted through social media channels with a direct link (as well as with a link on the homepage of Grail Quest). The survey was up and running for 4 days and gathered 84 answers, after that it had to be shut down in order for the author to have them included in the thesis. The survey was constructed with the help of Google Forms and analysed through the default tools, which enable you to assemble the results in modern and clear graphs that are easy to understand.

What days did you visit Grail Quest?

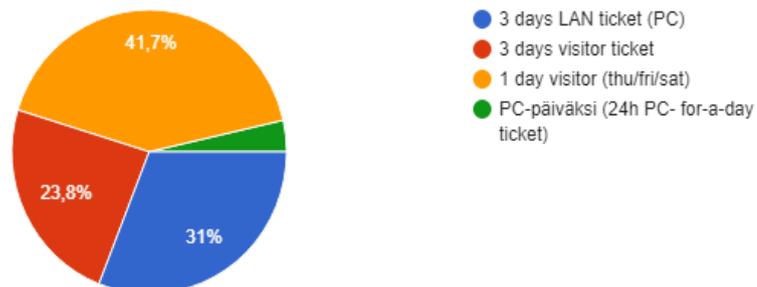
84 vastausta



Graph 1. The main day attracted most of event attendees (Saturday)

What type of ticket did you have?

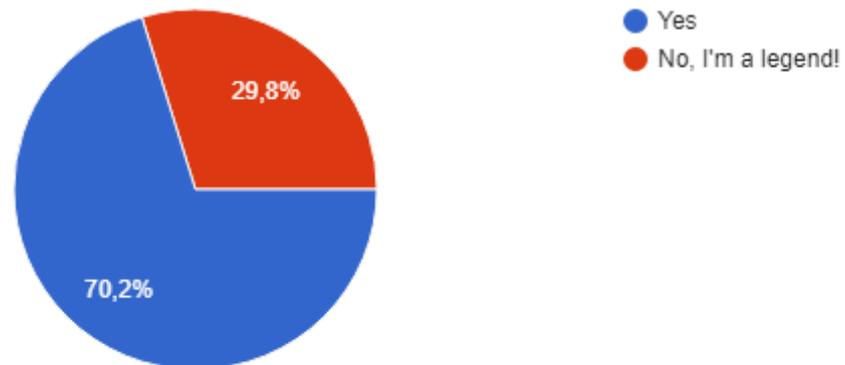
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Graph 2. Most people had a 1-day ticket

Was this your first Grail Quest?

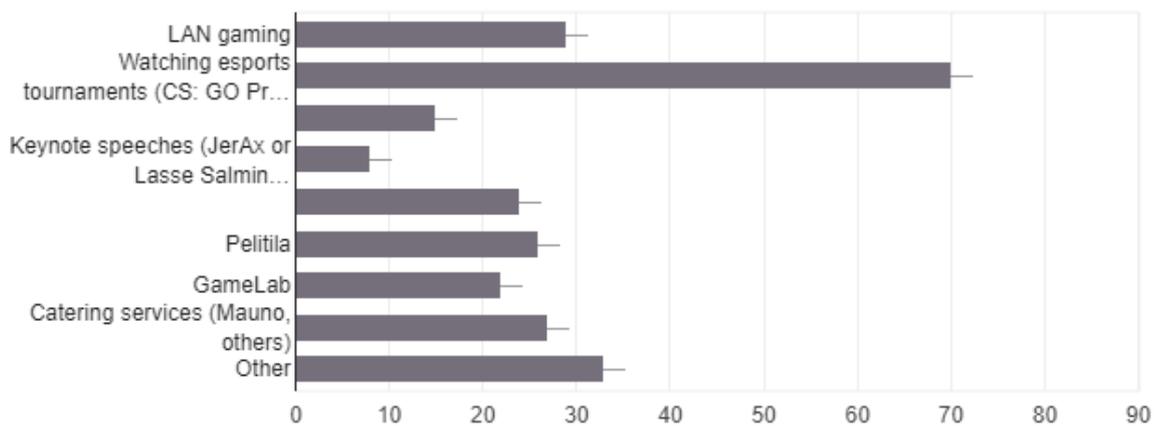
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Graph 3. The majority of attendees were visiting for the first time

What activities did you participate in?

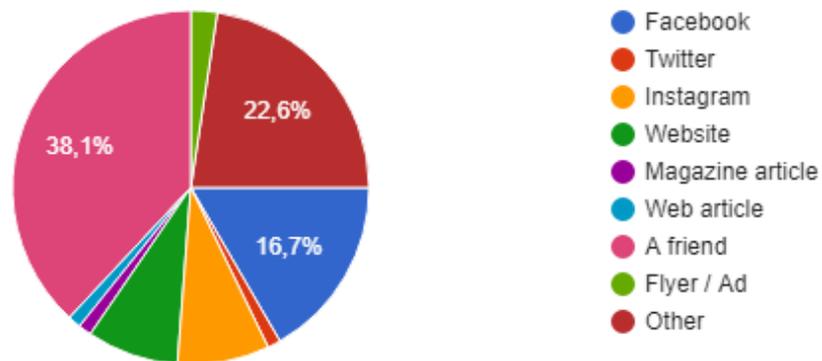
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Graph 4. Understanding your target audiences' expectations at an event is a key factor to deliver a unique experience and provide a satisfying customer journey.

Where did you hear about Grail Quest

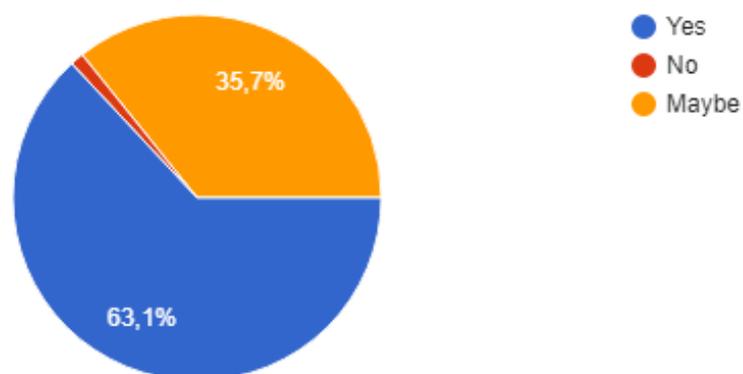
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Graph 5. Measurement of reach through different channels helps the planning of marketing communications for upcoming events.

Will you attend Grail Quest again?

84 vastausta



Graph 6. A high conversion rate means that event attendees might bring their friends with them, for the next event. The most important tool for marketing is word of mouth and brand advocacy.

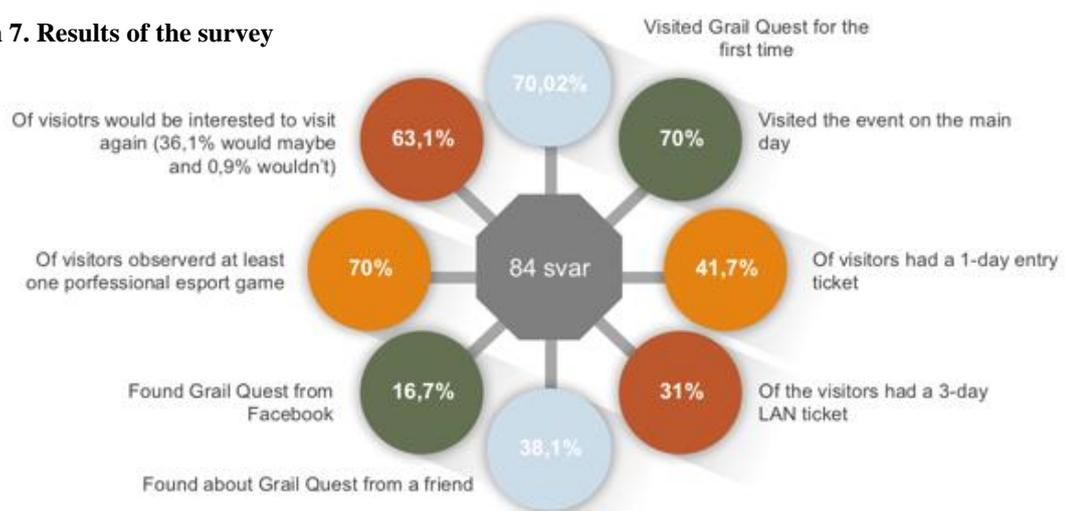
5.4 Analysis of the survey

The results from the survey gives insight from what type of tickets they purchased to how satisfied they were with the activities at the venue. The first graph indicates that most attendees were first timers. *Graph 2* gives us a spread between different ticket types purchased by the attendees. Most of the attendees (~42%) purchased a 1-day admission ticket. A large portion of attendees were also 3-day LAN (BYOC) gamers or amateur esports athletes (participation in a BYOC tournament). The connection between the *Graph 1* and the *Graph 2* can be established by thinking that many of the first-time visitors wanted to purchase a 1-day admission ticket in order to “try out” the event from pure curiosity or successful marketing. The third graph shows that the general perception of the event agenda was marketed successfully, with most event attendees visiting at least on Saturday.

According to the fourth graph over a third of the event attendees heard about this event from a friend. This proves the power that lies behind word of mouth -marketing or advocating. This finding is truly an important one to be discovered and confirmed by the respondents. In the fifth graph we can gain insight in to which of the different activities were the most popular among the respondents.

A clear winner amongst the activities at Grail Quest was the participation in viewing esports tournaments on the main stage such as the grand CS: GO tournament, Overwatch tournament and the Finnish championship of Tekken 7. The results of *Graph 1*, *Graph 2* and *Graph 5* draw a clear red line, suggesting that there was in fact interest in purchasing a 1-day admission ticket to the event, in order to discover and view esports in the city of Turku. I think this is one of the most important and interesting key findings from the survey. With the help of analysing the survey we can re-imagine the marketing plan. The marketing plan will be a tool which will help to reach out to the target audience and establish the awareness of the event.

Graph 7. Results of the survey



6 Suggested marketing strategy for Grail Quest

Having a business model for a company is important. Depending on how the business model is constructed, it can include a marketing plan but sometimes it can be a separate document as well. Having a simple one pager as a document that shows what is the unique value proposition that the company offers is preferred as a basic go-to tool for any marketing strategy that is going to be constructed. (Parment, 2015).

The author is not familiar with the current marketing strategy or business model of Grail Quest. Information presented is something that he has gathered by working together with the employees and management. The author has gained some insight in to their specific customer segment and certain issues with the cost-structure. The author has decided to create a Lean Canvas model, which is a modern tool for constructing a visual plan for everyone in a project group to understand, including the business's most crucial key factors for success. The Lean Canvas will be constructed around the findings of the case studies in 6.1 about four esports and LAN events, as well as on the results gathered from the survey.



Figure 5. Lean Canvas för Grail Quest.

Visioning a lean canvas will be the first part of the marketing strategy for Grail Quest. The second part will be the content planning and development and the last will focus on lead conversion of reached target audience.

The constructed Lean Canvas is just a tool to work with for the upcoming events and should be developed further together with the event organisers. Its purpose is to serve as a “sticky board” with some of the key factors that cannot be forgotten about. To be able to succeed, the company must learn about its identity and its values. What does it lack of? How does the company build a stronger competence and free new resources? (Parment, 2015)

6.1 Marketing strategy

Grail Quest offers a modern esports and LAN environment for esports enthusiasts as observers and active participants at the event. Events in general are not meant to be isolated, they are meant to serve as platforms in a complex value chain, which in this case is the esports audience (Hjalager, 2009). The location of the event will be very crucial in order to succeed. The venue of the event shall be chosen to serve its purpose, providing modern and good facilities both for professionals and amateur gamers, in order for them to perform at their best level. The venue should also be covered in Grail Quest themed banners making its presence visible for people passing by.

Grail Quest offers gamers a high tier esports event with loads of interesting activities to see and do but most importantly, a place where you can meet with likeminded people who share the same value and interests as you do.

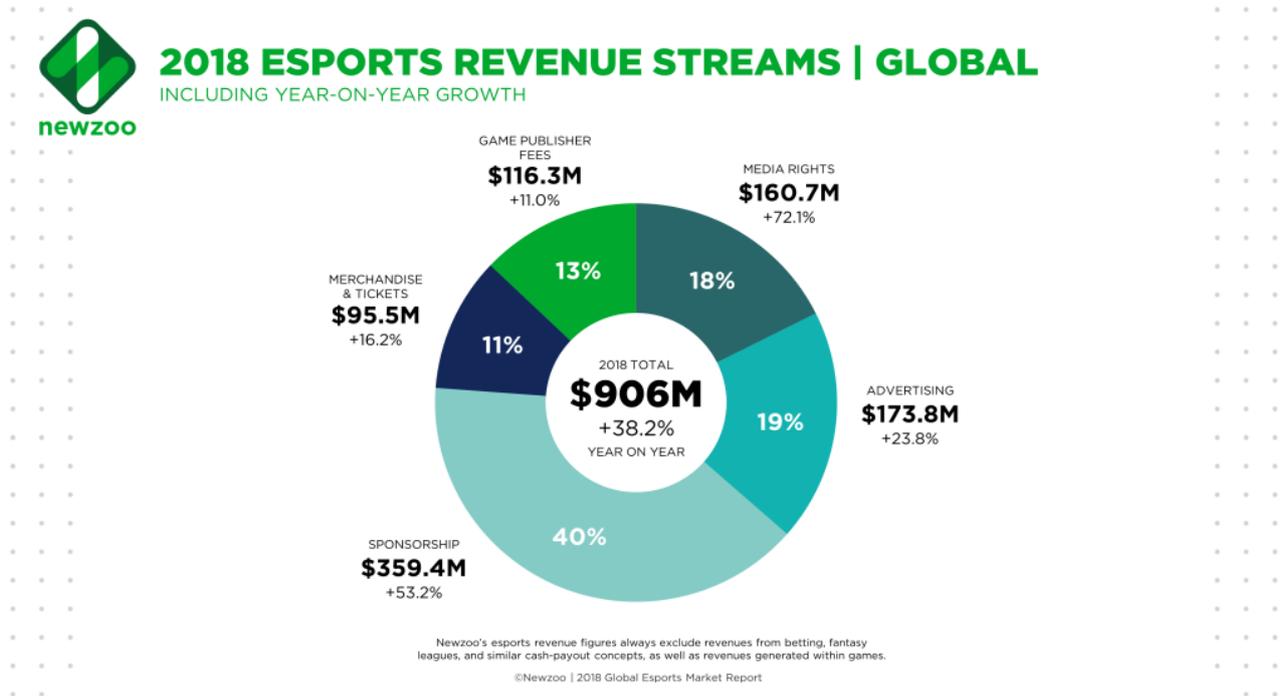
Unique experiences for the audience at Grail Quest:

- A first-hand introduction in to esports and a LAN party (gaming). Fascinating new technology, exciting on-site program (streamers, contests, demos, keynote speeches)
- A chance for people in the industry to organise gatherings or meet-ups to discuss the current and the future
- A perfect way for school children and parents with their families to spend their autumn holidays
- Amateur and semi-professional tournaments for esports enthusiasts

The goal of the marketing should be to reach out to the largest target group, which consists of gamers and esports enthusiasts. To convince them to attend the event and to bring their friends and family with them for alternative ways to spend their leisure time will be done by building an interesting concept, which serves the attendees as well who are rather unfamiliar with esports and LAN gaming. Since sport tourism is one of the largest forms of tourism (S. Ross, 2001) there will most likely develop a market for esports tourism in Finland. Sport tourism already exists around the world, with total revenue of 11% in esports is estimated to be generated from ticket sales to events in 2018 (Graph 7). The theoretical background behind sport and leisure travel is that tourists usually require that multiple of the decision makers needs are to be satisfied, when planning a trip to an event. Grail Quest need to convince for the individual or family that it is worth to travel and spending significant amount of money to visit Turku and the event itself (Getz, Andersson, 2009).

For example, the esports event organiser E-League creates narrative stories about the player's hometowns to strengthen the sentimental connection of the spectator (Taco Player Profile, 2018). This type of content is a great emotional channel to pursue a narrative style of esports stories to tell for the audience. Building a link between esports and City of Turku offers further possibilities to strengthen the brand of Grail Quest and attract audience from other cities, as well as from abroad to visit the event and the City of Turku. The value creation of Grail Quest as an event is like any other event hosted in a city. Grail Quest as an event engages and attracts visitors to take part in leisure activities, and this includes booking accommodation, visiting restaurants and other services within the city. It has become more or less a standard procedure that organisers work close with cultural municipal work groups when planning events (Hjalager, 2009) which can be the next step for Grail Quest to grow further.

City of Turku offers esports enthusiasts plenty of other complementary activities during a visit to the event itself. With a beautiful city crowned by the Aurajoki and its broad selection of restaurants, there is great hotels and AirBNB's for guests to stay at after visiting the venue which makes Turku as an appealing city to visit even from abroad from a general perspective. Establishing successful cooperation between the event organisers and the City of Turku will increase the events attractiveness by gaining good reputation from the attendees (Hjalager 2009).



Graph 2. The estimated year on year growth is 906 million USD in 2018 (Newzoo, 2018)

6.2 Content planning and distribution

Focusing on delivering good content will continue to be one of the most important tools that brands can use in order to create a connection between the brand and the customer (P. Kotler, 2017). Sports are known to have celebrated legends, such as Maradona, Räckönen, Nykänen etc. with fascinating stories evolving around them which can be tied to the sports club or other sport brands. Grail Quest should focus on this aspect by creating unique, quality stories around esports and gaming, as seen done by Dreamhack (Win again, 2015). Contacting international influencers to promote the event through their social media channels in collaboration with partners or sponsors offer interesting new PR activities.

The LAN party environment gives excellent scenery for production of a very different documentary or series, which should be spread through the various social networks and by well-known influencers. A dedicated documentary and film crew would have to work together with attending teams, sponsors and the City of Turku to create and film a teaser video of the upcoming event, as well as prepare a dedicated after movie, which can be used in after sales promotion together with exclusive content release and collaborations with brands. Coming up with new ideas is great but also using existing concepts such as player profiles or after movies will help a lot with releasing quality content.

6.3 Lead conversion

Today's customers relay on their friends and family the most, as mentioned earlier in chapter 4.1 Digital Marketing (P. Kotler, 2017). Being great at communicating to your target audience, with consistency and clear messages builds up the customers loyalty and interest towards your company. From an event organiser's perspective, someone on Facebook noticed your event in their feed, one of their friends has shared the event, and decides to view what the event is about. Customer journey begins from here and plays a big factor in the conversion of this very potential lead. Having a clear understanding of the touchpoints the customer is encountering (as mentioned in 4.4) will result to the potential customers end up purchasing the ticket. This would require designing the event page to be as attractive as possible with a modern custom header, clean and informative description with details of the dates, times, the venue itself as well as a *direct link* for ticket purchase and the event website (which should be re-designed completely since it is very outdated). From that moment, the journey continues on all the way to after sales promotion, and by providing desired quality content to the target audience, combined well thought and convenient touchpoints (as introduced in 4.4) which enhance the customer journey, you will receive a satisfied esports enthusiasts who are very likely to return the next year with all of their teammates and friends. Doing this will boost the ticket sales and attract more audience, which makes the event more interesting for investors!

7 Critical review and discussion

The author is satisfied with the work behind this bachelor's thesis. The workflow has been consistent and persistent throughout the writing of the thesis. The author regrets the problem with our mutual timetable, that caused a delay for the starting point of the thesis. This was due to having a hard time to figure out the big picture around this thesis, both internally and externally (from the client's perspective). The plan at first was to make a marketing plan for the Grail Quest 2018 event, but with the timeline being too short and other factors not making it possible, meant that the nature and purpose of the thesis changed from the original plan in spring of 2018 to a different approach in the fall of 2018. The work behind the thesis was enjoyable, and hopefully the outcome of the research, comparison and the findings will be noted. The survey that only got 84 answers should have been up for a longer period of time in order to attain more answers, which would've given a more reliable result. Choice of subject from the author's point of view, the subject of esports is and will continue to be significant due to the emerging market, which is proven to have a high year on year increase

in both viewership and awareness. It has logical explanations behind it, suggesting that it is not in fact a bubble or overhype. This is mostly thanks to digitalization, globalization and the increasing connectivity of our society, which plays a key role in the modern daily life. Content becomes more important part the marketing strategy of any company. By creating interesting content, you generate impressions. The current market value and actual realization of invested capital is still to be confirmed in the further future, when the market has matured. The global revenue in esports is increasing with over 38% in 2018 (Newzoo, 2018), which is explained with large investments from brands and private investors and is most likely to slow down after the industry starts to regulate and become a mature and stable market. Grail Quest as an event has the potential to grow further together with the esports ecosystem blooming in Turku as well. More people being aware of esports means more potential esports enthusiasts. With the help of developing the Grail Quest concept further, it will attract new and old audience for future events. Merging to an international circuit of events such as the ECS, EPL or PGL (all stand for different event or league organizations) could be an interesting direction to take, in order to attract big teams, big sponsors and big audience and take the event to a completely new level.

7.1 Future research

The future of Grail Quest is looking bright as the scene in Finland continues to develop with new Finnish online communities grow and schools are starting to get more involved with esports. It would be interesting to do a study on how interested students are in general of having esports as a part of the education (subject free to add or combine with information technology as an extension). This would bring value to the different actors in this scene, giving the possibility to develop new business models.

7.2 Conclusion

Writing this thesis was a great way to apply the authors knowledge of the esports market and get support as well as some sort of confirmation to the author's own beliefs from different theoretical resources. The esports enthusiastic perspective of the author should be noted, as he is a founder of an esports organisation and strives to expand the esports scene in Finland. Together with research, development and new collaborations, Finland will grow stronger and get acknowledgement of having some of the best esports organisations, events and players in the world.

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Appendices

Customer feedback survey (1/1)

Thank you for visiting Grail Quest 2018!!

We need your HELP! Please answer this questionnaire in order to make the Grail Quest events even more amazing in the future! We're only asking for the sake of improving the event and for us to meet your expectations!

By answering our questionnaire, you're a part of our lottery where the winner receives a Blizzcon Virtual Ticket (drafted 31.10.2018) or 6 months of the "Pelaaja" -gaming magazine (drafted 11.11.2018)! Be sure to enter your details correctly.

* Required

Full name and email address *

Your answer

Where did you hear about Grail Quest

- Facebook
 - Twitter
 - Instagram
 - Website
 - Magazine article
 - Web article
 - A friend
 - Flyer / Ad
 - Other
-

Was this your first Grail Quest? *

- Yes
- No, I'm a legend!

What days did you visit Grail Quest? *

- Thursday
- Friday
- Saturday

What type of ticket did you have? *

- 3 days LAN ticket (PC)
- 3 days visitor ticket
- 1 day visitor (thu/fri/sat)
- PC-päiväksi (24h PC- for-a-day ticket)

What type of ticket did you have? *

- 3 days LAN ticket (PC)
- 3 days visitor ticket
- 1 day visitor (thu/fri/sat)
- PC-päiväksi (24h PC- for-a-day ticket)

What activities did you participate in? *

- LAN gaming
- Watching esports tournaments (CS: GO Pro, Overwatch, Tekken 7 et c.)
- Attended BYOC tournaments (Fortnite, Overwatch etc.)
- Keynote speeches (JerAx or Lasse Salminen from Havu)
- visited Rockstar Streambox (meeting streamers)
- Pelitila
- GameLab
- Catering services (Mauno, others)
- Other