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E-Sports in Finland: Current Status and Prospects for Development

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<p>The aim of this study is to outline the global growth of eSports (also known as electronic sports or competitive video gaming) and investigate the current situation of Finnish eSports. The research was carried out by researching current literature within the project domain which included existing literature, online databases, online publications and web pages.</p> <p>The eSports industry has enjoyed from phenomenal growth in all aspects of eSports; revenue, audience size, tournaments prize pools and the amount of tournaments. In just five years the industry has grown from under \$200 million revenue to \$1 billion revenue industry and the growth is expected to continue. Usually eSports sponsors have been the likes of gaming hardware manufacturers but nowadays it is not uncommon to see brands outside eSports industry sponsoring events, leagues or tournaments.</p> <p>As of today, eSports has audience size similar to traditional North American sports leagues, and eSports leagues are beginning to form around traditional sports leagues in collaboration with video game publishers. Traditional sports teams are either establishing their own teams or buying ones to compete in eSports.</p> <p>The Finnish eSports scene has taken steps towards professionalism in the last couple of years. The same trends are being seen in Finnish eSports; brands outside the industry sponsoring events, traditional sports teams establishing or collaborating teams and educational institutions starting to offer eSports as part of education. The international success of Finnish players and teams has greatly increased the visibility and awareness of eSports in Finland.</p>	
Keywords	Electronic sports, eSports, gaming, Finland

Contents

1	Introduction	1
2	Background	2
2.1	Definition of eSports	2
2.2	Different genres in eSports	3
2.2.1	Multiplayer Online Battle Arenas (MOBA)	3
2.2.2	First-Person Shooters (FPS)	4
2.2.3	Real Time Strategy (RTS)	5
2.2.4	Battle Royale	6
2.2.5	Other	7
2.3	History of eSports	9
3	Growth of eSports	11
3.1	Revenue growth of eSports	11
3.2	Growth of eSports betting	13
3.3	Growth of eSports audience	14
3.4	Growth of prize money in eSports	15
3.5	Growth of streaming	15
3.6	Growth of eSports in educational institutes	17
4	Potential of eSports	18
5	eSports in Finland	21
5.1	Federations	21
5.2	Tournaments, leagues and events	22
5.3	Professional players and teams	24
5.3.1	Players	24
5.3.2	Teams	24
5.4	Awareness	27
5.5	Visibility	27
5.5.1	ENCE phenomenon	29
6	Conclusion	30
6.1	Discussion	31
	References	32

List of figures and tables

Figure 1: eSports revenue growth (NewZoo, 2019)

Figure 2: eSports revenue streams (NewZoo, 2019)

Figure 3: eSports audience growth (NewZoo, 2019)

Figure 4: Twitch and YouTube Gaming have a larger audience than many entertainment platforms by SuperData (Goldman Sachs Global Investment Research, 2018)

Figure 5: The eSports audience is similar to the average of large professional sports leagues by Nielsen, CBS, ESPN (Goldman Sachs Global Investment Research, 2018)

Table 1: History of eSports (Wagner 2006; D.Devil 2011)

Table 2: History of eSports (Edwards 2013; Hope 2014)

List of abbreviations

LAN: Local Area Network

NBA: National Basketball League

NFL: National Football League

NHL: National Hockey League

MLB: Major League Baseball

MLS: Major League Soccer

1 Introduction

ESports (also known as electronic sports or competitive video gaming) has enjoyed substantial growth in the last years all over the world. The video gaming culture has flourished in Finland as it has been forerunner in technology and information technology. Yet, Finnish eSports scene has seemed to be lacking behind compared to Nordic countries such as Sweden and Denmark, not to mention the super powers of eSports; the United States, China and South-Korea. This research sees this as its statement of problem and aims to outline the global growth of eSports and as well as define its current state in Finland.

In order to accomplish this, the thesis researches the existing literature within the project domain. The literature is then evaluated and analysed in terms of the key research questions:

1. What is eSports?
2. What has happened in eSports in the last years?
3. How is eSports doing in Finland?

The first research question is answered in chapter 2 with a clear definition of eSports. As eSports cannot be classified similarly to traditional sports, it also contains definition of different genres purely viewed from the aspect of current eSports scene. Lastly, it will provide run through of eSports history with notable milestones that are reasons behind current state of eSports.

The second research question is answered in chapters 3 and 4. In just five years eSports has grown from under \$200 million industry to over \$1 billion industry with audience size comparable to large sports leagues in North America (NBA, NHL, MLB) but with audience that is much more global and younger. The growth can be seen in all fields regarding eSports, for example; revenue, audience, betting, the amount of tournaments and tournament's prize pools. As the sport is yet to mature, it has huge potential for investors, brands and sport franchises to broaden their portfolio.

The third research question is answered in chapter 5. The gaming scene has had strong presence in Finland and LAN parties have been arranged for years. There have been actors working on Finnish eSports for years and yet, Finnish eSports has not been able to rise to the elite of eSports countries. However, the scene has taken huge steps forward and towards professionalism in the past couple of years. The success of Finnish individuals and organisations in international tournaments have raised awareness and visibility of eSports in Finland.

The last chapter contains a conclusion of the thesis with a summary of main findings. In addition, there is a discussion section where the thesis author goes through the writing process as well as gives opinion on the future of eSports.

2 Background

2.1 Definition of eSports

ESports (also known as electronic sport or competitive video gaming) does not yet have universal definition. Wagner (2006) describes eSports as "an area of sport activities that includes sport activities in which people develop and train mental or physical abilities in the use of information and communication technologies". Yong (2010: 62) describes eSports as "a computer game played in professional competitions, especially when it is watched by fans and broadcast on the internet or on television" where as Heaven (2014: 17) defines eSports as an entertaining sport based upon individual or teams playing video games against each other for prize money and glory. The most recent, and perhaps the most precise definition has been introduced by Hamari & Sjöblom (2017: 2) - "a form of sports where the primary aspects of the sport are facilitated by electronic systems; the input of players and teams as well as the output of the eSports system are mediated by human-computer interfaces". Wagner's (2006) definition includes findings from both Yong (2010) and Heaven (2014). That being said, Hamari & Sjöblom (2017) refined Wagner's (2006) definition as it leaves too much interpretation such as "what sporting activities can be defined to be either an electronic sport or traditional sport" as well as Wagner's (2006) definition refers to "such large set of activities that even office-based software training could be included as a sport." (Hamari & Sjöblom, 2017: 4) Thus,

definition for eSports introduced by Hamari and Sjöblom in 2017 is deemed to be precise and usable for this thesis.

2.2 Different genres in eSports

ESports cannot be classified in a similar way as traditional sports such as football as all the games played can differ from each other in terms of genre. The most common genres are Multiplayer Online Battle Arenas (MOBA), First-Person Shooters (FPS), Real Time Strategy (RTS), battle royale games, collectible card games, sports games, fighting games and racing games.

2.2.1 Multiplayer Online Battle Arenas (MOBA)

In MOBA games there are two teams against each other with a goal to collectively as a team to destroy enemy's base to win (Dedoimedo, 2010), though some games have alternative ways to secure victory. The games are commonly played in 3vs3 or 5vs5 format.

DotA 2 is stand-alone sequel for the WarCraft III custom map Defense of the Ancients: All-Stars. DotA 2 was developed and published by Valve Corporation in 2013. In 2015 Valve Corporation introduced DotA Major Championships tournaments, that were played in fall, winter and spring leading up to The International tournament in the summer, to improve the landscape of DotA 2 eSports. In 2017, Valve announced DotA Pro Circuit that significantly changed the format of the Major Championships tournaments. With this change Valve brought in third-party events that require a minimum prize pool of \$500 000, in addition to \$500 000 of Valve's sponsorship. The International, hosted by Valve, is the largest tournament in DotA 2 eSports. There are eighteen teams competing in The International; eight teams seeded based on the point acquired through DotA Major Championships, Minor Championships and other qualifying events throughout the year, and another ten teams from regional qualifiers. The International is known for its multi-million-dollar cash prize pool as it is mostly funded through crowd-funding via the Compendium sales. In 2015 the tournaments prize pool ended being over \$18 million and in 2018 it had grown to \$25.5 million. (eSportsearnings (a) & eSportsearnings (b), 2019)

League of Legends also known as LoL is similarly to DotA 2, inspired by WarCraft III custom map Defense of the Ancients: All-Stars. Developed and published by Riot Games in 2009, LoL is a direct competitor to DotA 2. League of Legends Championship Series (NALCS) was founded in 2013 and was rebranded to LCS in 2019. Riot Games owned eSports league works as a stepping stone for teams to compete in League of Legends World Championship tournament which is the largest LoL tournament and includes multi-million-dollar cash prize pool. Riot Games has taken different approach than Valve Corporation to create sustainable competitive eSports scene. Instead of raising prize pool of tournaments directly through crowdfunding they are providing LCS players with salary. As a result, League of Legends prize pools tend to be smaller albeit the substantial size of tournaments. In 2015 LoL 2015 World Championship had a prize pool of \$2.13 million and in 2018 World Championship it had grown to \$6.45 million. (eSportsearnings (c) & eSportsearnings (d), 2019)

2.2.2 First-Person Shooters (FPS)

In FPS games there are two teams against each other with a goal as a team to eliminate the enemy team to win, though some games have alternative ways to secure victory. The games are commonly played in 5vs5 or 6vs6 format.

Counter-Strike: Global Offensive is tactical first-person shooter developed by Valve Corporation and Hidden Path Entertainment. It was released in 2012, making it the fourth game in Counter-Strike franchise. (eSportsearnings (e), 2019) Counter-Strike: Global Offensive Major Championships were introduced in 2013. Valve Corporation sponsored tournament was hosted by DreamHack in Jönköping, Sweden with a prize pool of \$250,000. There were six teams that were directly invited, another six teams invited based on previous tournament results and the rest of the four teams came from direct qualifiers. ("2013 DreamHack", 2013) Since then, tournament format has changed couple of times. In its current stage, introduced in 2018, the Major tournaments involve 24 teams, where the top fourteen receive a direct invitation to next the Major tournament, whilst the rest of the spots are filled by teams that go through Minor tournament system where teams compete against other teams from their own region for the remaining spots. ("Winning is Everything", 2018) Valve received criticism for the lack of prize money in

the CS: GO Major tournaments as they also support DotA 2 which has multi-million-dollar cash prize pool in Major tournaments. In 2016, Valve announced increase in prize pool, offering one million prize pool for MLG Major Championship: Columbus as well as to all Major tournaments to come. However, the number of Major tournaments were reduced to two a year. (Lahti, 2016) The largest prize pools in CS: GO history have been in World Electronic Sports Games (WESG) in 2016 and in WESG 2017 Male series, offering a prize pool of \$1.5 million. (eSportsearnings (e), 2019)

Overwatch is a squad-based first-person shooter developed by Blizzard Entertainment. It was released in 2016 and several Overwatch eSports tournaments had been held even before the game's official release. (eSportsearnings (f), 2019) In the beginning of 2018, Blizzard Entertainment introduced The Overwatch League to professionalize Overwatch eSports. The first league season was played with twelve teams, with a buy-in of \$20 million for each team. The second league season expanded the number of teams to twenty, with a buy-in rumoured to be anywhere between \$35 to \$60 million. (Wolf, 2018) The Overwatch league is an international eSports league that consist of twenty city-based teams which are divided into Atlantic and Pacific regions. The 280-match regular season begins in February and concludes with postseason playoffs in the fall where eight teams will compete against each other for \$3.5 million prize pool. Overwatch League is titled as the world's premier eSports league as it aims to follow the model of traditional professional sports leagues with its city-based franchise teams, regular season play as well as guaranteed player salaries. (Overwatch League, 2019)

2.2.3 Real Time Strategy (RTS)

In RTS games there are generally two opposing players whose goal is generally to destroy enemy's base to win, though some games have alternative ways to secure victory.

StarCraft II is a military science fiction real-time strategy game developed and released in 2010 by Blizzard Entertainment. In 2012 Blizzard Entertainment introduced the StarCraft II World Championship Series (WCS). The league format has gone through major changes almost every year since its beginning but as of 2019 it is separated into three distinct regions around the world: the WCS Circuit which has four separate tournaments (Winter, Spring, Summer and Fall), the Global StarCraft League (GSL) with

three seasons of play along with two tournaments for Korean region and Global which includes two events – IEM Katowice and GSL vs. The World. (Blizzard, 2019) During the season WCS points are awarded to each region from tournaments and WCS-partnered events. The top 16 players with the most points qualify for the Global Finals. The base prize pool is \$500k but as of 2017 Blizzard introduced crowdfunding in the form of War Chest system that allowed players to purchase cosmetic items in-game with 25% of revenue from purchases going into the prize pool. The WCS 2017 and 2018 Global Finals had a total prize pool of \$700k. The best StarCraft II players are predominantly Korean players, 18 of top 25 earners are Korean. (eSportsearnings (g), 2019)

2.2.4 Battle Royale

In battle royale the games are played between a large number of individual players, pairs of two players or a number of small squads (typically 3-5 players). The video game genre blends together survival, exploration and scavenging elements in order to be the last man (or team) standing. Battle royale games have become a cultural phenomenon with breaking gaming industry records in terms of players and viewing hours.

Fortnite is a third-person online action game developed by Epic Games and People Can Fly. Originally it was launched as Fortnite: Save the World co-op sandbox survival game in July of 2017 but in September 2017, a separate version of the game Fortnite Battle Royale was released. In March of 2018 Epic Games announced they will enter the eSports scene by providing \$100 million to fund the prize pool of 2018-2019 season. (Fortnite, 2018) One of the first professional eSports competition using Fortnite was the Fortnite Pro-Am event in June of 2018. The event featured 50 celebrities paired with 50 top streaming players competing for prize pool of \$3 million. (Feldman, 2018) In the middle of 2018 Epic Games announced the start of Summer Skirmish series which lasted for eight weeks with each week being in different format. The series offered \$8 million to winners throughout the series. The second series called the Fall Skirmish started on September of 2018, offering \$10 million to winners. In February of 2019 Epic Games announced they will be offering another \$100 million for the prize pool of 2019 as well as introducing the first Fortnite World Cup which will take place in late July of 2019. The Fortnite World Cup Finals has \$30 million prize pool which makes it the highest paying single eSports tournament of all times. (Fortnite, 2019) In 2018 Fortnite had the most live non-esports hours watched on Twitch and Youtube, accounting twice as many hours as

League of Legends which was second on the list with 816m hours watched. (NewZoo 2019: 29) In February 2019 Fortnite made two new records by breaking total players count of 250 million and concurrent players of 10.8 million. (Bailey, 2019) Study done by Goldman Sachs in 2018 believes that Fortnite will have "The Moneymaker effect" on eSports. In 2003, Chris Moneymaker, an amateur poker player qualified through online satellite tournament to World Series of Poker main event, eventually winning the title and \$2.5 million. After his victory the WSOP prize money increased exponentially, reaching \$12 million in 2006. The study believes that Moneymaker elevated poker's profile as a sport and the "anyone can win" mentality played a key part in poker becoming mainstream. The Fortnite World Cup already offers a significant amount of prize money but in addition the World Cup is available for everyone through weekly qualifiers. (Goldman Sachs, 2018: 19)

PLAYERUNKNOWN'S BATTLEGROUNDS (PUBG) is a 100-player battle royale game developed and published by PUBG Corporation in 2017. PUBG is a direct competitor to Fortnite Battle Royale. The Game Awards recognized PUBG as the 'Best Multiplayer Game' award in 2017. (Alexander, 2017) In 2018 PUBG Corporation hosted its first major PUBG eSports tournament. PUBG Global Invitational Berlin 2018 included 20 top professional teams from around the world to compete for \$2 million prize pool. The prize pool was divided to two categories: First Person Perspective (FPP) and Third Person Perspective (TPP) with both category's winner taking \$430k of the prize pool. (eSportsearnings (h), 2019) In 2019 PUBG Corporation introduced the PUBG Global eSports league which has six regional pro leagues (North-America, Europe, Korea, Japan, China and Chinese Taipei) as well as three pro circuits. (Southeast Asia, Latin America and Oceania) The top talent from every region will come together in the fall for the PUBG Global Championship. (PUBGeSports, 2019)

2.2.5 Other

Collectible card games are strategic card games where players play with designed sets of playing cards. The most known CCG is Heartstone developed and published by Blizzard Entertainment in 2014.

Sports games are simulations of traditional sports. The most known sports game series are FIFA Football, NHL series and Madden NFL released by EA Sports and NBA 2K released by 2K Sports. In addition, a vehicular soccer video game Rocket League developed and published by Psyonix has succeeded well in the field of eSports.

Fighting games are games where players controls an on-screen character and engages in close combat with an opponent. The most known fighting game series are Tekken by Namco Bandai Games, Street Fighter by Capcom, Mortal Kombat by Warner Bros. Interactive Entertainment and Super Smash Bros. by Nintendo

Racing games are games where player either in the first-person or third-person perspective partakes in a racing competition with any type of land, water, air or space vehicles. Racing games can be divided into sub-categories: arcade-style racing games, racing simulators and kart racing games. The most known racing game series are Forza Motorsport, F1, Gran Turismo, iRacing and Need for Speed. (eSportsearnings (i), 2019)

2.3 History of eSports

<p>Wagner (2006):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Release of the game Doom by GT Interactive in 1993 • Release of the game Warcraft by Blizzard Entertainment in 1994 • Release of the game Quake by id Software in 1996 • The emergence of gaming leagues such as Cyberathlete Professional League (CPL) in 1997 • The CPL: FRAG Event in 1997 • Release of the game StarCraft by Blizzard Entertainment in 1998 • Release of the game Counter Strike by Valve in 1999 	<p>D. Devil (2011):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Red Annihilation tournament for the game Quake in 1997 • Emergence of CPL in 1997 • CPL: Razer tournament with prize pool of \$100.000 in 2000 • World Cyber Games (WCB) tournament in South Korea with prize pool of \$200.000 in 2000 • Emergence of Turtle Entertainment in 2000 • The dot.com bubble setbacks eSports in 2001 • Emergence of MLG, bringing professional leagues to America in 2002 • Fighting game tournament EVO in 2002 • SK Gaming, one of the first gaming communities, is created in 2003 • Electronic Sports World Cup (ESWC) in 2003 • The World eSports Games born in 2005 • MLG secures \$35 million in venture capital funding, making it one of the biggest leagues in eSports in 2006 • Emergence of Intel Extreme Masters in 2006 • International eSport Federation founded in 2008 • GOM TV announces Global StarCraft II League in South Korea in 2010 • Games League of Legends and DOTA make their mark in professional gaming with two of the most viewed championship seen in eSport history in 2011
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Table 1 History of eSports (Wagner 2006; D.Devil 2011)

<p>Edwards (2013):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Space Invaders tournament held in 1980 • Red Annihilation tournament for the game Quake in 1997 • Emergence of Cyberathlete Professional League in 1997 • The CPL: FRAG Event in 1997 • Release of the game StarCraft in 1998 • Launch of World Cyber Games and Electronic Sports World Cup in 2000 • Emergence of MLG in 2002 	<p>Hope (2014):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Space Invaders tournament held in 1980 by Atari • Starcade TV program in the middle of 1980's which ran for approximately 3 years • Creation of Internet Relay Chat (IRC) in 1988 by Jarkko Oikarinen • Release of the game Doom in 1993 • Release of the game Doom II in 1994 which included Dial Up Wide Area Network Gaming Operation (DWANGO) • World Cyber Games (WCG) events in 2000 and 2001 • Emergence of gaming organisation Major League Gaming (MLG) in 2002 • Emergence of gaming organisation Intel Extreme Masters (IEM) in 2006 • Creation of steaming service Justin.tv in 2007 (later called Twitch.tv)
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Table 2 History of eSports (Edwards 2013; Hope 2014)

ESports beginning can be traced back to Space Invaders tournament held in 1980. (Edwards 2013; Hope 2014: 87-88) The tournament has been titled as the establisher of electronic arcading as a major hobby as the tournament was sponsored by Atari and drew over 10000 contestants with a grand prize of a new Asteroids cocktail machine. (Smith, 2013) The second milestone for eSports is related to game releases as Doom was released in 1993 and Quake in 1996 (Wagner 2006; Hope 2014). In addition, the Red Annihilation tournament for Quake held in 1997 was one of the first nationwide video game competitions held in the United States. The tournament had approximately 1900 online contestants who were narrowed down to 16 offline finalists with a grand prize of

1987 Ferrari 328 GTS cabriolet. (D.Devil 2011; Edwards 2013) In the late 1990's and early 2000's eSports started to take more steps towards professionalism. The emergence of Cyberathlete Professional League (CPL) in 1997, World Cyber Games (WCG) and Electronic World Cup in 2000 (Wagner 2006; Edwards 2013; Hope 2014) made way for gaming organisations such as Major League Gaming (MLG) in 2002 and Intel Extreme Masters (IEM) in 2006 that are nowadays trendsetters in eSports. (D.Devil 2011; Edwards 2013; Hope 2014)

3 Growth of eSports

3.1 Revenue growth of eSports

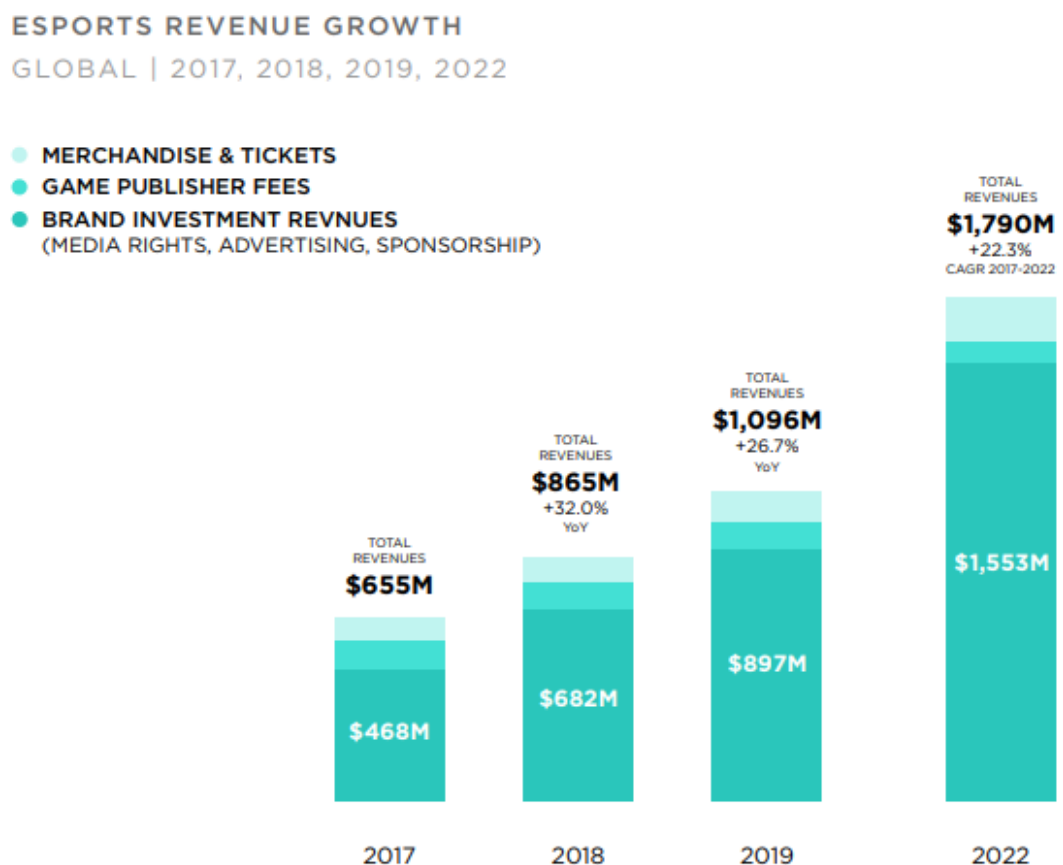


Figure 1 eSports revenue growth (NewZoo, 2019)

According to a leading global provider of games and eSports analytics, NewZoo, the revenue of eSports was \$655 million in 2017, \$865 million in 2018 and will hit the

landmark of exceeding billion-dollar global revenue in 2019. In 2022 the total revenue of eSports is estimated to be nearly \$1.8 billion.

ESPORTS REVENUE STREAMS GLOBAL | 2019

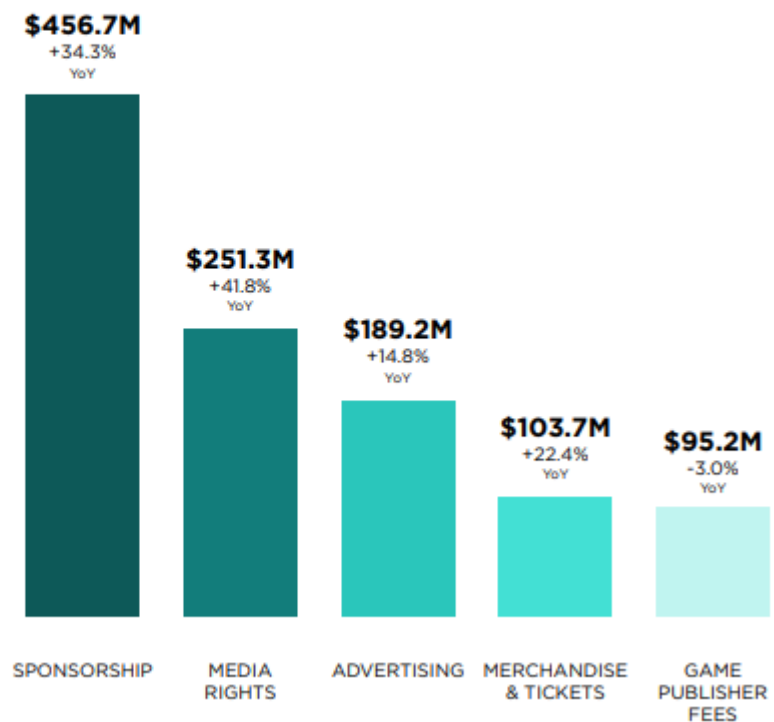


Figure 2 eSports revenue streams (NewZoo, 2019)

The majority of revenue comes from brand investment revenues such as sponsorship, media rights and advertising. (NewZoo 2019: 25) Another games & interactive media intelligence, SuperData, estimated eSports revenue to be \$1.5 billion in 2017, \$1.6 billion in 2018, \$1.8 billion in 2019, \$1.9 billion in 2020, \$2.1 billion in 2021 and \$2.3 billion in 2022. (SuperData, 2017) The differences can be explained due to SuperData including betting and prize pool of tournaments as revenue of eSports where as NewZoo's revenue growth excludes betting as these two industries are separated. Goldman Sachs Global Investment Research forecasts media rights to take over sponsorship between the years 2020-2022 as dominating revenue stream whilst majorly increasing overall eSports revenue growth. Their estimates of total revenue are \$1.59 billion in 2020, \$2.17 billion in 2021 and \$2.96 billion in 2022. (Goldman Sachs, 2018:14)

3.2 Growth of eSports betting

According to NewZoo in 2017, betting on eSports is likely to mirror traditional sports and become bigger industry than sport itself. "As an example, the NFL generated \$13 billion last year, but betting and fantasy leagues around the NFL games are supposed to have made north of \$50 billion". (Wood, 2017)

According to leading eSports betting operator, Pinnacle, the growth has accelerated. They took their first eSports bet in January of 2010 and reached 5 millionth bet in February of 2017. They expect the 10 millionth bet to come on January of 2018. (Wood, 2017) Research done by Eilers & Krejcik Gaming in 2018 expects eSports betting market to reach \$6.7 billion in 2018 and possibly reach up to \$13 billion in 2020. The projection came before the federal on sports betting in the United States was repealed. (Butler, 2018; Todorov, 2018) The repeal allows states to opt into legalizing betting for certain sports, including eSports. (NewZoo 2019: 19) Esports betting falls into two main categories: cash betting and skin betting. Skins are virtual items used within the video games to change the look of player's weapon, equipment or avatar. Skins are traded via betting sites and used as virtual casino tokens. Even though skin betting has been more popular of these two, cash betting is estimated to take over as the market matures. Skin betting suffers from controversies and legal challenges as adolescent have been able to bet with skins. (Gordon, 2018; Todorov, 2018)

3.3 Growth of eSports audience

ESPORTS AUDIENCE GROWTH GLOBAL | 2017, 2018, 2019, 2022

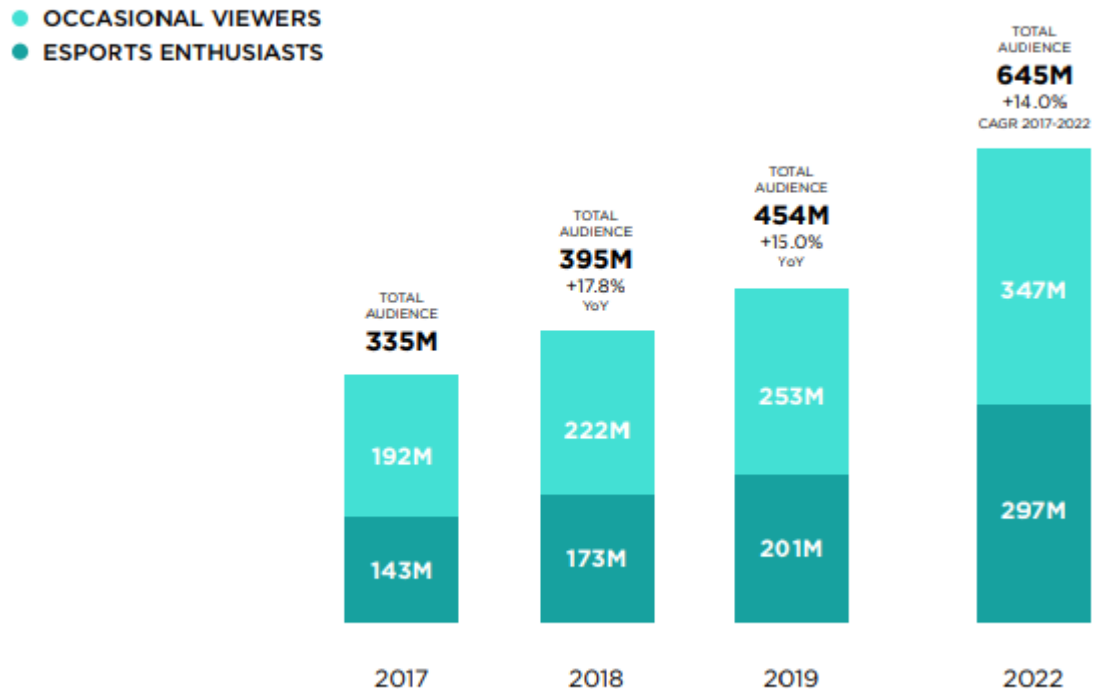


Figure 3 eSports audience growth (NewZoo, 2019)

eSports audience has grown similarly as eSports revenue. In 2017 the audience was 335 million, 395 million in 2018, 454 million in 2019 and estimated to be 645 million in 2022. The viewers are divided into two categories: occasional viewers and eSports enthusiasts. Occasional viewers are viewers that watch professional eSports content less than once a month whereas enthusiasts are people who watch professional eSports content more than once a month. (NewZoo 2019: 23) Asia-Pacific accounts for 57 % of eSports enthusiasts in 2019, even though eSports penetration has reached only 5 % in the region. China with its largest gamer base in the world will continue contributing the most to eSports revenue growth as well as audience growth. (NewZoo 2019: 23) "Asia is considered to be the leading indicator of what is to come in Western markets, as markets like China and Korea already outpace North America in some measures of technological change like smartphone penetration." (Goldman Sachs, 2018: 5)

In 2017 the majority of eSports audience were aged between 25-34 and 70% men. (Bathurst, 2017) Another research done in 2017 in order to find out why do people watch eSports showed that majority of eSports viewers are males between 16-30 years old. (Hamari & Sjöblom, 2017: 14)

The amount of unique viewers of eSports tournaments have grown as well. In 2013 League of Legends World Championship was able to gather 32 million unique viewers. The 30 million mark has been since broken in 6 events; LoL World Championship in 2015 and 2016, Intel Extreme Katowice and DreamHack Masters Malmö in 2016, Intel Extreme Katowice in 2017 and LoL Mid-Season Invitational in 2018. League of Legends Mid-Season Invitational 2018 recorded 60 million unique viewers making it the most watched eSports event in the world. (Statista (a), 2019) The largest number of attendees recorded in a single eSports event has been in IEM Katowice 2017 with its 173,000 spectators. (Takanashi, 2017)

3.4 Growth of prize money in eSports

The major event prize money development has taken huge leaps in recent years. In 2013 the amount of price money was \$16.6 million combined; in 2014 it rose to nearly \$35 million, in 2015 to \$75 million, in 2016 to \$96.3 million, in 2017 to \$121 million and in 2018 with a significant increase to \$150.8m. The largest prize pool was awarded by The International tournament in 2018 with a record of \$25.5 million due to allowing consumer contributions for the prize pool. (NewZoo 2019: 11; Statista (b), 2019)

3.5 Growth of streaming

Streaming services and the development of technology have allowed the growth of eSports. The major of the content is free whether it is broadcasting a major event from fully booked arena or an individual player streaming their performance in game.

Twitch is world's leading social video platform and community for video game culture. Originally started as spin-off of Justin.tv (created in 2007) in 2011 with a focus on video game livestreaming, it was bought by Amazon in 2014 with \$970 million. (Kim, 2014) Statistics show that in Q1 2019, Twitch had on average 1,286,000 concurrent viewers

and 4.5 million streamers monthly. Compared to 2018 there were on average 1,070,000 concurrent viewers over the year and 3.4 million streamers every month in average. (TwitchTracker, 2019) In 2016 Twitch introduced microtransactions through the use of the websites new currency called Bits which allows the viewers to tip a broadcaster. In addition, Twitch Prime was introduced which allowed users with Amazon Prime to subscribe directly to streamers, increasing revenue for those broadcasting. Twitch Prime is branded as one of Twitch's more prestigious offerings, offering free games and in-game loot to subscribers every month. Originally Twitch Prime allowed subscribers to watch streams advertisement-free but as of 2018, watching ad-free stream requires Twitch Turbo subscription in addition to Twitch Prime. In 2018 Twitch Turbo costed \$8.99 a month and Twitch Prime costed \$10.99 a month. Twitch has exclusive rights to broadcast the Overwatch League as well as The NBA 2K League. In addition, tournament organizer DreamHack renewed its partnership with Twitch. (Alexander 2018; Brathwaite, 2018) Fast Company's The World's 50 Most Innovative Companies 2019 listing ranked Twitch on 10th place. (FastCompany, 2019)

YouTube Gaming works similarly to Twitch. One of the key features of YouTube gaming is its ability to rewind during a live broadcast which allows users to replay portions of a stream and to watch the instantly instead of waiting for video on-demands release. YouTube gaming has exclusive rights to broadcast FACEIT's Esports Championship Series ECS. (Brathwaite, 2018) FACEIT is the leading independent competitive gaming platform for online multiplayer PvP gamers with more than eight million users and a total of twelve million online gaming sessions each month. (FACEIT, 2019)

In addition to Twitch and YouTube gaming, there are various other streaming platforms such as Microsoft-owned Mixer with exclusive right to broadcast SMITE Pro League and SMITE Console Series and FaceBook Gaming with exclusive broadcast rights for ESL Pro League and ESL One series, Paladins Premier League, H1Z1 Pro League and Gfinity Elite Series. (Brathwaite, 2018)

Most of the streaming in the West is done through the platforms mentioned above. Chinese streaming platforms hold a large portion viewership's in the Asian markets.

Huya is Chinese streaming platform founded in 2014. It was able to raise \$180 million in its U.S initial public offering in May 2018 after Tencent, the Chinese tech giant, had

invested in Huya in March 2018 with \$461.1 million. (Brathwaite, 2018) Huya holds Chinese streaming rights to World Electronic Sports Games and in 2019 they announced a partnership with ESL. (Chen, 2019) Huya surpassed the landmark of 100 million monthly active users in January of 2019. (Cai, 2019)

Douyu TV is another Chinese streaming platform founded in 2013. In March 2018, Tencent invested \$632 million in Douyu TV. Similarly to Huya, Douyu TV is planning to do U.S initial public offering looking to raise anywhere between \$600 million to \$700 million. (Murray, 2018) Douyu TV reported having 300 million monthly active users in 2018, (Zhang, 2018) however when comparing these two Chinese streaming platforms, it is worth pointing out that gaming is only one part of Douyu TV's broader livestreamed entertainment offering. (Brathwaite, 2018)

In addition to Huya and Douyu TV, there are various other streaming platforms such as NetEase CC which is run by NetEase as well as ZhanQi TV. Both platforms are currently Chinese broadcast partners for the Overwatch League. (Brathwaite, 2018)

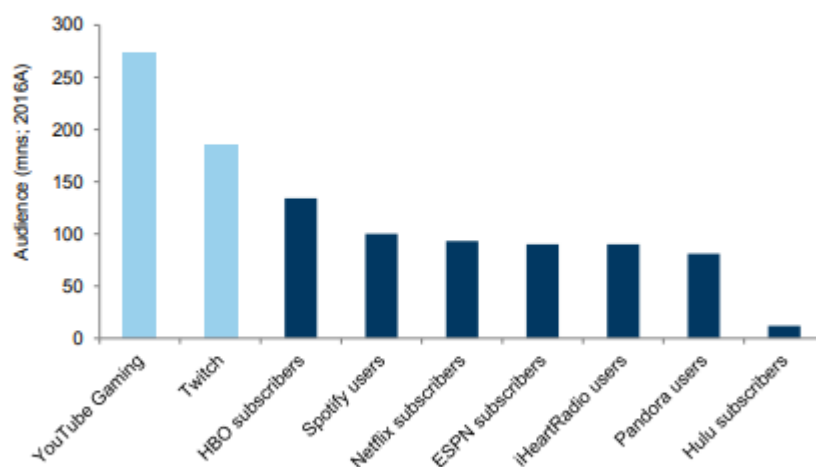
3.6 Growth of eSports in educational institutes

The growing popularity of gaming has caused young students to drop out of school in order to achieve their dream to be professional gamers. Educational institutions are beginning to realize the importance of cultivating eSports programs and are offering scholarships for eSports. (Mathur, 2017) Varsity collegiate eSports began in 2014 when Robert Morris University in Illinois announced a scholarship-sponsored League of Legends team. In July of 2016 there were only seven colleges and universities in the US that had varsity eSports program. By 2018 there were 63 institutions and as of 2019 there are around 125 varsity eSports programs with a national governing body known as the National Association of Collegiate Esports, which was formed in 2016. (Morrison 2018; Gamedesigning 2019)

4 Potential of eSports

As shown in figures 1, 2 and 3, eSports has taken huge steps forward during the past couple years and there is still plenty of room for growth. The eSports audience is similar to the average large professional sports leagues, however, unlike the existing pro sports, the eSports audience is young, digital and global. More than half of viewers are in Asia, 79% of viewers are under 35 years old, and online video sites like Twitch and YouTube have a larger audience for gaming alone than HBO, Netflix and ESPN combined. While traditional pro sports leagues are mostly watched through traditional media like TV, nearly all of the eSports audience is online. In many cases pro sports leagues may need to shift their business models toward online distribution from TV to reach younger and international demographics. eSports is already reaching this audience through previously mentioned platforms: Twitch and YouTube Gaming, among others in the West and with Douyu TV and Huya, among others in China. (Goldman Sachs, 2018: 7)

Exhibit 2: Twitch and YouTube Gaming have a larger audience than many entertainment platforms



Source: SuperData, Goldman Sachs Global Investment Research

Figure 4 Twitch and YouTube Gaming have a larger audience than many entertainment platforms by SuperData (Goldman Sachs Global Investment Research, 2018)

Exhibit 3: The eSports audience is similar to the average of large professional sports leagues

Audience size by sports league (2017A)



Source: Nielsen, CBS, ESPN, Goldman Sachs Global Investment Research

Figure 5 The eSports audience is similar to the average of large professional sports leagues by Nielsen, CBS, ESPN (Goldman Sachs Global Investment Research, 2018)

Mentions of traditional sports teams such as Paris Saint-Germain, Philadelphia 76ers, Ajax Football, New England Patriots, Manchester City, FC Schalke, West Ham and Colorado Avalanche can be seen in the field of eSports. In 2016 Philadelphia 76ers became the first North American professional sports team to own an eSports team by acquiring Team Dignitas and Apex Gaming for a total sum in the range of \$5-10 million. As an example, the salaries of the best European and American LoL players range from \$500k to \$800k a year while the best CS: GO players cash in between \$200k and \$300k a year. For comparison, the smallest payroll in Ligue 2, French professional football's second highest division, is roughly \$3.5 million. (Szekeres, 2018)

Many of the traditional sports teams that have invested time, money and other resources into eSports are those where simulation games of those sports are popular. Dutch football clubs Ajax and PSV Eindhoven have both signed individual FIFA player and a full squad of FIFA eSports pros. FC Schalke, Wolfsburg and Manchester City have also involved in FIFA eSports in varying degrees among other football clubs. In 2018, the English Premier League launched ePremier League in collaboration with Electronic Arts. (Premier League, 2018) Likewise, the NBA 2K League, which is an eSports initiative for

professional players of the basketball sim, has 21 NBA teams on board. (888sport, 2018) Major League Soccer established the eMLS league in 2018, the NHL is partnered with FACEIT to operate the 2018 Gaming World Championships, The NFL sponsors the Madden Club Championship major series and MLB is estimated to join eSports scene in 2019. (Strickland, 2019)

In 2017 the NFL announced that in partnership with EA it planned to air exclusive broadcasts of the EA Sports Madden NFL 18 Championship and the Madden NFL 18 Ultimate League on a number of Disney networks. The league ran from February 2nd, 2018 until the start of the NFL draft on April 28th. As a result, 2018's draft achieved record-breaking viewership with 20% year-to-year growth compared to 2017, averaging 5.5 million viewers. While there might have been other factors contributing to the amount of viewers, like controversy around top draft picks, eSports likely played a part. (Goldman Sachs 2018: 17)

Traditionally, eSports events have been sponsored by the likes of gaming hardware manufacturing companies and technology companies, like Razer Inc., Hyper or Intel Corporation. For the past couple of years eSports scene has seen the involvement of mainstream brands, mainly because of the growth of infrastructure around leagues and teams. For example, sponsors for the League of Legends League include Geico, State Farm, Nissan, Axe and Coca-Cola, while the Overwatch League is sponsored by Toyota, Sour Patch Kids, Intel and T-Mobile. (Goldman Sachs 2018: 14) ESports has yet to mature so its sponsorship costs are favourable when compared to sports with similar viewing figures. The rate on investment for brands is huge as the industry has a fan base that is willing to spend hours at venues and online while providing plenty of opportunities for brands to engage with them. (Sugarman, 2017) In addition, there are plenty of opportunities around team sponsorships, player endorsements and event sponsorships as well as traditional broadcast and digital media properties. (Linqzil, 2017)

Potentially, eSports could make its way to Olympic Games even though the study conducted by Nielsen (2017) shows that only 28% of eSports fans thinks it should be an Olympic sport. ESports already fulfils the criteria for athleticism applied to other sports accepted by the International Olympic Committee. (Stafford, 2016) The problem with certain eSports genres is that they fight against values of IOC, as Thomas Bach, the president of IOC stated 9th of August in 2017: "We want to promote non-discrimination,

non-violence, and peace among people which doesn't match with video games as they are about violence, explosions and killing." Later on, Bach stated that sports games and racing games could be potentially seen in the Olympics. (Myers, 2017) The Paris Olympic bid committee co-president Tony Estanguet told in 2017 that eSports could be a medal event at the 2024 Paris Olympic Games. (Carpenter, 2017) ESports has taken steps forward in Asia as it is announced to be a medal event at 2022 Asian Games (Graham, 2017)

5 eSports in Finland

Finland is one of the three biggest game developer countries in Europe. 2017 was the year of maturation for the Finnish game industry. The listing of four Finnish gaming companies into the stock exchange was a major milestone for the industry and 2017 was the third consecutive year when the turnover of the industry surpassed €2 billion. Remedy, Rovio and Supercell among other companies play important part of Finland's success in the Finnish gaming industry. Strong public support towards the industry as well as the game programs offerings by several educational institutions have played important part in its growth. (Neogames, 2017)

The gaming scene in Finland has started to take steps forward ever since the first Assembly demoscene and gaming event was held in 1992. From 2007 onwards, it has been arranged twice a year; at Winter Assembly gaming is seen as priority and Summer Assembly continues the traditional Assembly legacy as a demoscene. As of 2018 the party has been held for 26 consecutive years. (Assembly, 2019)

5.1 Federations

The Finnish Esports Federation (SEUL) was established in December 2010 to work as the umbrella organisation for Finnish competitive electronic gaming. Its mission is to improve and promote electronic sports in Finland as well as promote eSports as a hobby and as a respectable sport. SEUL is a member of International e-Sports Federation. SEUL receives yearly grants given out by the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture for youth programs. (SEUL (a), 2019) The federation has received grants for six years in

a row: €60000 in 2013 and 2014, €68000 in 2015, €83000 in 2016 and 2017, €90000 in 2018.

Suomen Kilpapelaamisen Liitto SKL (The Finnish Competitive Gaming Federation) was established in June 2018. Its mission is to improve operating conditions of eSports, to support players that are aiming to be professional gamers, bring the opportunities of eSports available for Finnish enterprises as well as raise the appreciation of sports entertainment. SKL was founded by the leading competitive gaming organisations in Finland: ENCE, HAVU Gaming and Helsinki Reds, all of which were previously part of SEUL. (SKL, 2019) The former CEO of ENCE Petri Hämälä commented shortly on the subject that SEUL had not brought any added value for the organisation and it would be time to move on, however cooperation will continue between the two federations. (Hartikainen (a), 2018)

5.2 Tournaments, leagues and events

The Finnish eSports Championships has been arranged since 2016. It is executed by SEUL with aim to find nationally the most talented players in competitive games, increase the visibility of eSports in Finland and to create basis for sustainable competition. Every Finnish citizen can participate in the tournament by acquiring specific player license. Every player with the license will be registered to 'Suomisport' player database which is a system provided by the Finnish Olympic Committee. (ESM, 2019) In 2017 eSports became one of the sports in the Finnish Championships for students. (SEUL, 2017)

Finnish eSports League (FEL) has been arranging leagues and live events for competitive gaming since 2016. Over the years they have payed tens of thousands of euros worth of prize money for players. Mainly FEL has hosted games for CS: GO with two different leagues: the main CS league and CS challenger league. In 2019 FEL announced they will expand their production to Overwatch, in addition to starting co-operation with telecommunication, ICT and online service company Elisa. With the co-operation the main CS league will be streamed two times a week on Elisa Viihde streaming service and Elisa Viihde Twitch channel. (FEL (a), 2019) The main partners of FEL include brands such as Kotipizza, Honor and Challengermode. (FEL (b), 2019)

Telia eSports Series is a league established in 2019 by mobile network operator Telia in co-operation with Assembly. It aims to increase visibility for people outside current eSports fanbase and create basis for growth of Finnish competitive gaming by providing opportunity for casual gamers to measure their skills levels against nations best players. For professional teams it offers the possibility to advance into bigger international tournaments. The games played in Telia eSports Series are CS: GO and mobile game Arena of Valor. The league has media partnership with Finnish commercial television station MTV3 which will broadcast games on their Sub channel on prime-time of Friday evenings. (Nikkilä 2019; Telia 2019)

By far the most important Finnish eSports event is the Assembly even though it is not focused on gaming only. Since 2014, Assembly has been held in Helsinki Expo and Convention Centre. Assembly Summer 2018 had 3280 computer seats and was expected to attract 9000 visitors over the four days. (Hartikainen (b) 2018; Lanit 2019)

Lantrek is an annual online-gaming event held in Pirkanmaa region. It was first held in 2001 with approximately 20 participants. Lantrek 2018 had 1322 computer seats and the event was able to attract over 6000 people to Tampere Exhibition and Sports Centre. (Lantrek, 2018; Lanit 2019)

Vectorama is an annual online-gaming event held in Oulu that was first held in 2000. Between the years 2014-2019 the event has taken place in Oulu's ice rink due to offering excellent circumstances. In 2017 there were 908 computer seats and 650 visitors during the event. The computer seats for Vectorama 2019 was sold out in three days. (Vectorama, 2019)

Insomnia is an annual online-gaming event held in Pori. Its beginning can be traced back to 2002. Insomnia XX held in 2018 had 637 computer seats. (Lanit 2019)

Grail Quest was first held in 2017. Behind the event are Grail Group and Starsquad Events. Instead of being a traditional LAN event Grail Quest wants to offer visitors full spectrum of gaming with Finnish Championship competitions, demonstrations, fairs and pallet programs as well as offering visitors PC and console area to use. (Grail Quest, 2019)

Arctic Invitational will be the first large eSports event with large prize pool held in Finland. It takes place at Hartwall Arena, Helsinki in September 2019. Four teams will be competing in CS: GO for the grand prize of €60k with prize pool altogether being €100k. Three internationally successful teams will be invited to the tournament and the 4th will come through Finnish qualifier. The three-part qualifiers will start at Lantrek and Vectorama LANs. The event is a result of collaboration between Elisa Viihde and Starsquad Event. (Professeur (a), 2019)

5.3 Professional players and teams

5.3.1 Players

According to statistics collected by Unibet in 2017 there are 820 professional gamers in Finland. In comparison, there are 1598 in Sweden, 826 in Denmark and 481 in Norway. (Unibet, 2017) However, statistics collected by eSportsearnings.com shows that Finland has 1271 gamers that have earned money by competing in eSports. Finland is placed on 10th place in the Highest Earnings By Country listing with a little above \$15 million in prize money whereas Sweden is ranked 4th with 2239 players and \$30.7 million in prize money, Denmark 5th with 1272 players and \$26 million in prize money and Norway 23rd with 707 players and \$3.6 million in prize money. The three highest earning Finnish eSports professionals are DotA 2 players Lasse "MATUMBAMAN" Urpalainen, Jesse "JerAx" Vainikka and Topias "Topson" Taavitsainen. Urpalainen won The International 2017 with his team, granting him nearly \$2.2 million. Vainikka and Taavitsainen won The International 2018 with their team, granting them both nearly \$2.25 million. (eSportsearnings (j), 2019)

5.3.2 Teams

Originally launched in 2013, ENCE eSports' aim was to bring professionalism to Finnish eSports landscape. Behind ENCE eSports are some of the retired Finnish professional Counter-Strike players; Joona "natu" Leppänen, Tomi "lurppis" Kovanen and Juha "aNGeldusT" Kurppa as well as Petri Hämälä and Pekka Aakko who is also the founder of Assembly. In March of 2018 ENCE eSports started partnership with Finnish hockey

club Lahden Pelicans and month later ENCE eSports renamed itself as ENCE. ENCE currently competes in four games: CS: GO, Starcraft 2, PUBG and Heartstone.

In 2016 ENCE became the first Finnish professional eSports team as established Counter-Strike: Global Offensive team which was formed only by professional Finnish eSports players; Juho "juhob" Lampinen, Mikko "xartE" Välimaa, Miikka "suNny" Kemppe, Tom "stonde" Glad and Aleksi "allu" Jalli. At the end of 2016, none of the named players were playing in ENCE eSports. (Hiilinen, 2016) However, in March 2018 ENCE announced signing Aleksi "allu" Jalli with 2-year long contract and in April of 2018 they revealed rest of the current line-up with signings of: Aleksi "Aleksib" Virolainen, Jere "sergej" Salo, Jani "Aerial" Jussila and Sami "xseven" Laasanen. In August 2018 ENCE signed Slaava "Twista" Räsänen as head coach who has played a crucial part in the team's success. (Liquipedia (a), 2019) In under a year ENCE was able to become one of the best CS: GO teams in the world, placing 4th in the rankings as of April 2019. (HLTV, 2019)

In 2016 ENCE signed StarCraft II player Joonas "Serral" Sotala. Sotala started his competitive career already in 2012 but in 2018 he became one of the most dominating players in StarCraft II's history by winning every non-Korean Major tournament. On top of that, he became the first non-Korean player to win WCS Global Finals 2018, thus ending almost 20-year dominance of Korean players in WCS. (Liquipedia (b), 2019)

In March of 2019 ENCE signed Finnish line-up for PUBG to compete in PUBG Europe League 2019. Phase 1 ended in April of 2019 which ENCE won in dominant fashion. (Salminen, 2019)

HAVU Gaming was established in 2017 by Lasse Salminen, Taneli "disTUBED" Veikkola and Janne "Kuppi" Kuparinen. Currently HAVU is competing in CS: GO, Fortnite, FIFA and Heartstone. HAVU is mostly known for its CS: GO team that has been dominating the Finnish CS: GO for the past couple years. (Liquipedia (c), 2019) As of April 2019, HAVU Gaming is ranked 43rd on HLTV's list of best CS: GO teams in the world. (HLTV, 2019) In February of 2019 HAVU Gaming announced partnership with lifestyle-clothing brand Billebeino. (HAVU, 2019)

Helsinki Reds was established in 2016. It is owned by Oy HIFK Hockey Ab, which also operates the professional ice hockey club IFK Helsinki. Originally, Helsinki Reds joined the eSports by founding a team that competes in Overwatch. As of 2019, Helsinki REDS compete in Heartstone, Tekken 7 and Fortnite. In March of 2019 Helsinki REDS announced CS: GO roster. (HREDS, 2019)

SuperJymy was established in 2017 by Finnish baseball team Sotkamon Jymy by signing Finnish CS: GO team VITALIS. In 2019 SuperJymy rebranded its CS: GO team to SuperJymy Gaming. Since its beginning SuperJymy Gaming has only competed in CS: GO. (Liquipedia, (d) 2019)

PATA eSports was founded in 2017 when Finnish ice hockey team Porin Ässät started co-operating with Finnish Overwatch team Reakt. As of 2019, PATA competes in CS: GO. (PATA, 2019)

SJK eSports was established in 2017 by Finnish football team Seinäjoen Jalkapallokerho. SJK was the first Finnish sports organisation to establish an eSports team that competes under the same colours and logo as the main team. In 2019 SJK eSports announced they will start co-operation with Evolution Arena gaming house to implement eSports programs for youth. As of 2019 SJK eSports competes in FIFA and NHL. (SJK, 2019)

JS Hercules eSports was established by in 2017 by Finnish football team JS Hercules. They are doing digital youth work and focus on life management by improving necessary skills with the idea that eSports belongs to everyone. JS Hercules eSports arranges events, camps, leagues, education and training in the field of eSports. (Hercules, 2019)

Trailblazers was established by Finnish baseball team Imatran Palloveikot in collaboration with Lappeenranta-Lahti University of Technology in 2018. Trailblazers aim to compete in eSports in the future. In addition, Imatran Palloveikot organize club activities to bring eSports closer to children and youth. Club activities received €30000 of funding from city of Imatra for facilities and device acquisition. (Hannus 2018; Nyman 2018)

Nyyrikki eSports was established in 2017 to support individuals to fulfil their careers. As of 2019, Nyyrikki has 14 staff members working in their organisation and they are competing in Overwatch with two teams, League of Legends with two teams and in Fortnite. (Nyyrikki, 2019)

5.4 Awareness

The awareness of eSports has not been studied that much in Finland. Niki Hintikka & Henry Kolehmainen conducted a research on the awareness of eSports in Finland in 2017. They were able to survey 460 people with a gender distribution of 55% male and 45% female. All though the survey found out that 73% of all respondents were aware of eSports, the results cannot be generalized for all age classes as 72 % of the respondents were aged between 16-18 and the amount of over 30-year-olds was only 3 %. (Hintikka & Kolehmainen, 2017: 21-23) However, studies by Hamari & Sjöblom (2017) and Hintikka & Kolehmainen (2017) do have similar findings as Hamari & Sjöblom suggested in their study that eSports is being watched mostly by males between 16-30 years old. A study done by Patrik Ruponen in 2018 about the level of awareness of esports in corporate life in Finland showed that eSports as a concept was relatively familiar to the representatives of corporate life. However, the results showed that the participants did not value eSports markets that much, even though recognizing it as a growing market. The majority of respondents were aged between 31-60. (Ruponen, 2018 : 19, 30)

5.5 Visibility

In 2014 YLE, a Finnish public service broadcasting company, was the first company to broadcast a live eSports event in Finland. They showed the final match of Counter-Strike: Global Offensive played at the Assembly on their TV2 channel. (Ojalehto, 2014) Since then YLE has been the trendsetter of eSports in Finland by reporting about news regarding Finnish players and events. YLE has own section for eSports on their website and their streaming service YLE Areena is filled with videos, recordings and interviews regarding all fields of eSports. (YLE Areena (a), 2019) Other Finnish news agencies have followed YLE's example and have started to report about eSports. Ilta-Sanomat has been reporting very comprehensively in their own eSports section about related news. (IS, 2019) Mentions of eSports has also been seen in Helsingin Sanomat and Iltalehti.

In November of 2016, the Finnish Olympic Committee accepted the Finnish eSports Federation as an associate member. (Brautigam, 2016) In addition, the Finnish Central Tax Board has announced that they consider eSports competitors to be athletes (Naumov, 2017) and Finnish military grants athlete status to eSports as of 2017, allowing the athletes extra time off from compulsory military service. (YLE, 2017)

Lasse "MATUMBAMAN" Urpalainen won the International tournament in 2017 with his team, granting him nearly \$2.2 million. His performance in the tournament's final match was a candidate for the most rousing sports moment of 2018 in Finland. His nomination was also the first time eSports was nominated in the Finnish Sports Gala. (Vähämäki, 2017) Topias "Topson" Taavitsainen won the International tournament with his team in 2018, granting him nearly \$2.25 million. He was nominated in the Finnish Sports Gala 2019 in the breakthrough category. Joonas "Serral" Sotala was nominated in the most rousing sports moment category after making StarCraft II history. (Hartikainen (c), 2018) The success of Jesse "JerAx" Vainikka and Taavitsainen in 2018 was noted by the President of Finland as both were invited to the Independence Day Reception in 2018. (IS, 2018)

According to SEUL, as of 2019 there are 14 educational institutes in Finland offering educational programs that involve eSports in some way. Only two of them are offered by university of applied sciences (KAMK and JAMK) both of which offer program that focuses on the business aspect of eSports instead of gaming. The rest of the offered programs are either college level studies or second-degree educations. (SEUL (b), 2019) In addition, there is a possibility of hobby in at least 15 cities, most of them being in youth community centres. Official gaming rooms can be found in Kajaani, Seinäjoki and Helsinki. (SEUL (c), 2019) The most recent gaming room, Shelter Gameroom, opened its doors in March of 2019. It is in Helsinki and is the largest eSports gaming room in Finland, offering equipment and facilities for up to 70 players at the same time. (Leppälä, 2019)

According to research company Sponsor Insight eSports has taken over the first place as most popular sports in Finland among men aged between 18-29. The first place was formerly held by ice hockey which is the most popular sport in Finland if the whole population is accounted for. The study suggests that there are approximately 400k- 450k

people interested in eSports in Finland, which only 15% of are women. (Hartikainen (a), 2019)

5.5.1 ENCE phenomenon

The success of ENCE has created eSports phenomenon in Finland. The rise to being one of the world's best CS: GO teams in a year gathered a lot of attention in the Finnish media. YLE Areena released a documentary Docstop: Inside ENCE in January 2019 which follows the everyday life of the players and their journey to grand stages. As of April 2019, the documentary has been watched almost 90k times on YLE Areena and almost 650k times on YouTube with English subtitles. (YLE Areena (b), 2019) In addition, ENCE has their own YouTube channel ENCE TV which has Behind The Scenes- series. Even though the channel has been originally created in 2013, the majority of its almost 1.8 million views are from Behind The Scenes- series which started on January of 2019. (ENCE TV, 2019)

ENCE was able to get into the grand finals in the Intel Extreme Master Katowice 2019 against all expectations. The grand final was played against Danish CS: GO giant Astralis. ENCE placed second in the tournament. According to Veikkaus Oy, a Finnish national betting agency, the success of ENCE broke all the previous betting records of eSports on Veikkaus and the grand final was the most played wager on that day. It was played twice as much as second and third wagers which were Premier League game Everton versus Liverpool and KHL playoff game Dynamo Moscow versus Jokerit. Finnish telecommunications company, DNA Oyj, reported that during the finals two of their previous data transfer records were broken. The traffic record outside the DNA network was just over 900 gigabits per second, the previous being 853 gigabits per second. The mobile networks new traffic record ended up being 430 gigabits per second, the previous being 380 gigabits per second. YLE Areena reported that there were over 200k concurrent viewers watching the final on their platform. The four days lasting playoffs of IEM Katowice were watched approximately 400k times on YLE Areena. (Hartikainen (b), 2019) According to ESC, the grand final peaked on nearly 1.2 million concurrent viewers, however it did not count YLE Areena. (ECS, 2019) It is also worth pointing out that the number of Finnish viewers is likely to be higher than 200k as some of the Finnish viewers used other streaming services to watch the grand final.

During ENCE's Major run a Finnish duo created a cheering song for ENCE. EZ4ENCE by The Verkkars achieved almost 2.5 million views in Youtube and 2.2 million listening times in Spotify in less than two months. Later on, the song was added to CS: GO as a music kit to celebrate ENCE's second-place finish at the IEM Katowice Major. (Professeur (b), 2019) ENCE is the only team that has a personalised music kit in CS: GO.

6 Conclusion

The aim of this study was to outline the global growth of eSports and investigate the current situation of Finnish eSports. The secondary data was obtained from existing literature, web pages, online databases and online publications.

Esports (also known as electronic sports) is "a form of sports where the primary aspects of the sport are facilitated by electronic systems; the input of players and teams as well as the output of the eSports system are mediated by human-computer interfaces" (Hamari & Sjöblom, 2017) The beginning of eSports can be traced back to Space Invaders tournament held in 1980.

Multiplayer Online Battle Arena (MOBA) games have been dominating the eSports scene in terms of awarding prize money. However, this is likely to change due to Battle royale games such as Fortnite entering the eSports scene with massive investments to tournament prize pools in 2018-2019.

The eSports industry has grown in every aspect during 2010's. Most of the revenue growth during past couple of years has come from sponsorships and media rights. The interest in eSports has been noticed by global brands and nowadays it is not unnormal to see brands outside the industry sponsoring eSports events, leagues or tournaments. As the industry keeps growing it is likely that media rights overwhelm sponsorships as the main source of revenue. Streaming has been a major factor to the growth of eSports as the most popular streaming services already possess larger audience than many entertainment platforms.

The Finnish eSports scene has been getting more professionalised just as the global eSports scene. The same trends are starting to show in Finland; traditional sports organisations establishing their own teams or investing in teams, brands outside the industry investing in the scene and educational institutes starting to offer studies combined to either gaming or business aspects of eSports. The recent international success of Finnish eSports individuals as well as Finnish organisation ENCE have majorly increased the visibility of the scene.

6.1 Discussion

The Bachelor's thesis writing process started already in the end of 2017 on a compulsory course where preliminary literature review was made. Already by then it was clear that the main subject will be electronic sports. However, there were some uncertainties whether to focus on the marketing side of eSports or looking in to the eSports scene in Finland. In 2017 Lasse Urpalainen had won The International 2017 with his team, there was a vague discussion of hosting a grand eSports event in Finland, some new eSports organisations were established, and some were disbanded. At that time the research was left waiting till graduation came more topical.

Luckily, the Finnish eSports year 2018-2019 was marvellous and the success has continued in 2019 which made the final choice of subject rather easy. The scene has started to acquire strong public support and a lot will be happening during 2019 in the Finnish scene.

The writing process has been extremely pleasant due to topic choice. I am pleased with the result as it gives comprehensive view of eSports and its state in Finland.

As an eSports enthusiast I truly believe that year 2019 will be the best year for Finnish eSports. I also believe that eSports will grow as predicted, becoming more professional as the scene grows. With growth it will become more viable career choice for gamers as well as actors around eSports. Hopefully we will see more Finnish success stories in the future.

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