

COPENHAGEN BUSINESS SCHOOL  
MASTER THESIS

# VALUE IN THE GAMING INDUSTRY

KEY FACTORS IN THE SUCCESS OF THE  
GAAS MODEL

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## Abstract

This thesis investigates the Games as a Service business model and its relationship to the videogame industry through a subjectivist ontology and interpretive epistemology. Observation and qualitative interviews are at the centre of an inductive research approach. The study first identifies some success factors, revenue models and risk. These include but are not limited to; commodification of virtual worlds and user engagement, microtransactions and ethical and political concerns regarding randomisation mechanics akin to gambling found in some GaaS games. Subsequent to the identification of these factors, two industry leading organisations (Valve and Epic Games) and their flagship games (Counter-Strike and Fortnite) are explored and compared in detail, from a business and user engagement perspective. Subsequently, recommendations for further research directions are given.

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## 2 Introduction

Over the past two decades the videogame industry has seen strong sustained growth, to the extent that it has now surpassed both the music and movie industry in terms of revenue (IBISWorld, 2018) (Statista, 2019b). Much of this growth has been fuelled by the rise in mobile gaming and market expansion in Asia, particularly in China. However, the ways in which videogames are monetised has also drastically changed and contributed to this growth.

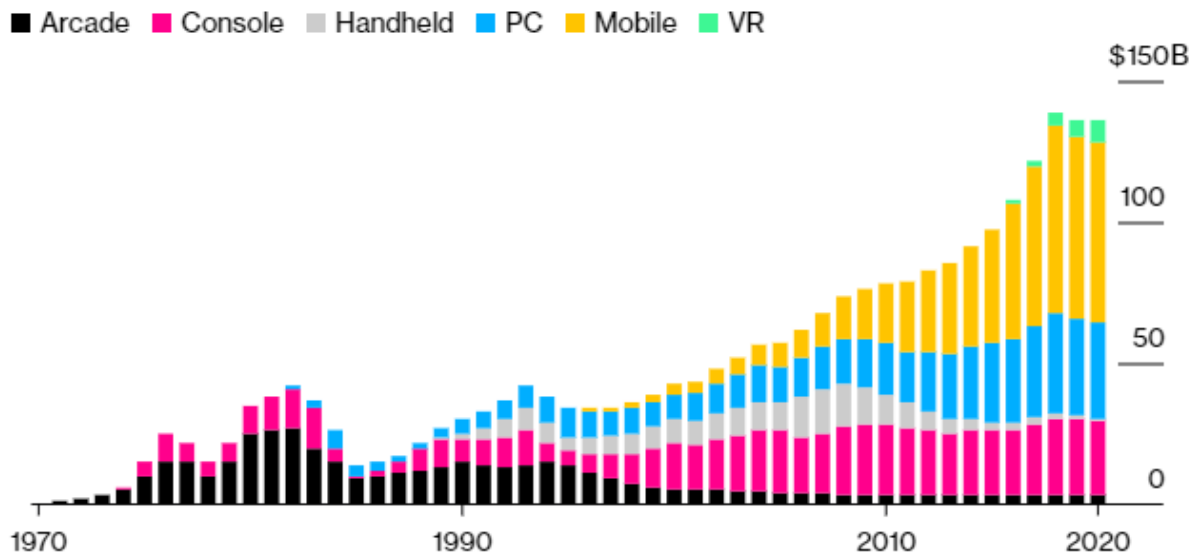


Figure 1: Global Videogame Revenue. (Nakamura, 2019)

In this thesis we investigate the business model responsible for these changes in monetisation; Games as a Service. Video games used to be bought as finished products, partly due to the fact that physical distribution dominated before the rise of highspeed internet connections. It was thus difficult and costly to provide updates or new content to consumers. As internet speed and connectivity has improved, digital distribution has accounts for most game sales, and gamers that purchase physical copies usually have an internet connected device, certainly in the case of multiplayer games. Thereby it has become feasible to create new content for a game after its release. This is quintessentially the modus operandi of Games as a Service; they continually evolve and expand their virtual worlds adding more content and monetising this content. Unlike GaaP, GaaS games can have multiple revenue streams, such as advertising, microtransactions and even an up-front purchase price. Given the accomplishments of GaaS games we ask the question: *'What are the key factors behind the success of the GaaS model?'* We quickly discovered that engagement and the monetisation of it were integral to the success. Thus, we posited two sub questions: *'How does GaaS foster sustained user engagement?'* and *'How does GaaS monetize engagement?'*

We decided that we wanted to focus primarily on the traditional videogame industry, that is the console and PC based segments, as these have been around for decades, which would allow us to study their change from GaaP to GaaS. We divided the analysis into two major components, firstly a holistic macro view to identify success factors, revenue models and potential risks to this success. To further understand these factors and answer the two sub question, we then analyse and compare the two leading GaaS ecosystems, in the form of Valve and Epic Games.

## 2.1 Motivation

When we formed as a thesis group, we all had one thing in common; an extensive interest in videogames and the videogame industry. We all participate in the gaming community in various roles. One of us currently works in the industry, and as such have some insight knowledge. Over our substantial time in the gaming community we have observed the intense and at times toxic passion and engagement that this community produces. Perhaps one of the most negative but also illustrative manifestations of this deepfelt passion came to light when a small indie developer announced that they would be publishing their games exclusively on one distribution platform. An understandable choice given the guaranteed income that was offered by doing so. However, this moved prompted extensive expressions of dissatisfaction. Perhaps unwittingly, the developer had inserted themselves into a large and almost ideological battle between a gaming community invested in and used to one digital distribution platform and a new entrant forcing its way into the market using significant financial expenditure to undercut the incumbent and lure developers away from it. Marketing managers in more conventional industries can only dream of this kind of customer loyalty exhibited in the established gaming community. Returning to our unfortunate developer. They were taken a bit aback by the opposition to exclusivity announcement; after all the new platform was free to download and use, so it only represented a very minor inconvenience. The developer decided to employ humour to diffuse the situation. Suggesting that all this passion was much better spent on something that really mattered, such as climate change or political activism. After all, this was just a game, nothing more than light-hearted fun and entertainment. Needless to say, this did not go down well and rather added fuel to the fire. The response from certain parts of the community escalated to threats of violence against the developer. Fortunately, to the best of our knowledge no actual acts of violence were committed and reportedly the developer's game has fared well on the new platform. The point of this anecdote is not to claim that gaming is of the same importance as climate change or any of the other great challenges of our time nor that it should in anyway be considered so. Rather it serves to illustrate the levels of emotional investment that is associated with videogames. For many of the more dedicated gamers they represent an escape and from the challenges and mundanities associated with everyday life. Anything perceived to be threatening this refuge is vehemently attacked.

Together with the passion for games we have also observed a change in how games are being marketed and monetised. The success of casual free-to-play games on the mobile platform has bled into the more dedicated mediums of consoles and PCs. As revenue from mobile games have skyrocketed, it is easy to overlook how revenue from the PC platform has gone from being stagnant for nearly two decades, until it suddenly started to pick up and expand around 2010. This seemed to coincide with the wider videogame industry's paradigm shift

from Games as a Product, to Games as a Service. The latter now seems to be omnipresent. Intrigued by the intense passion we experienced in the gaming community and the observation of ever-increasing revenue, we decided to take the opportunity to write our thesis within this domain to further our understanding of it.

## 2.2 Research question

When considering the videogame industry as a topic for our thesis, we were intrigued by its strong sustained growth over the last two decades. We then made two key observations: Gaming has become mainstream and most games are no longer sold as a product, but rather as a service. The former observation was evident from the extensive coverage of videogames by mainstream media, not as a lonely vice to blame for real world violence, but as a valid social entertainment medium in its own right. The observation of games being services was apparent when observing the most popular games of our time: Fortnite, Clash of Clans and Counter-Strike are all so called free-to play games, they require no upfront purchase, but instead relies on extra purchases or commodifying players attention and data to create revenue. These games do not come and go as many previous games did, but instead feeds their own popularity through constantly updating and reinventing themselves. Captivated by this, we decided to investigate this phenomenon, known as 'Games as a Service'. Our overarching research question became the following:

- What are the key factors behind the success of the GaaS model?

We then thought to seek out the answer to this question, looking at technological, social, psychological, and business factors that could point us in the right direction. While this thesis, for readability and presentations sake, has been represented as a linear process, it has not been so for our research. Instead we have iteratively revised and updated our mental model as new information has come to light, shaping and altering our understanding. This also applies to our research question. Along the way, we discovered some of the answers to our main questions; Keeping users engaged and monetizing their engagement was critical to the success of GaaS. Reflecting on this we decided to add two sub-research questions to address and elaborate on this finding:

- How does GaaS foster sustained user engagement?
- How does GaaS monetize engagement?

## 3 Literature Review

### 3.1 Concepts

#### 3.1.1 Engagement

Engagement and the concept of engagement appears in a broad spectrum of academic domains (Bouvier, Lavoué, & Sehaba, 2014), such as marketing, education, informatics, psychology, sociology, media studies, computer science and others. As such, there is no clear delineation of what engagement is: *“Engagement remains a confusing concept that encompasses several notions and depends on a large number of technical and human interrelated factors.”* (Bouvier et al., 2014, p. 493).

When consulting a dictionary, several definitions relating to engagement are available. **Engagement** is *“emotional involvement or commitment”* and *“the act of engaging: the state of being engaged”* (Merriam-Webster, n.d.-d). The latter quote begs the question of the definition for Engaging and Engaged. **Engaging** is simply stated as *“tending to draw favourable attention or interest”* (Merriam-Webster, n.d.-e), while **Engaged** has multiple definitions, of which 1: *“involved in activity”* and 3: *“greatly interested”* (Merriam-Webster, n.d.-c) seems relevant for our purposes (as opposed to those relating to marriage or warfare). Finally, definition 5b: *“to induce to participate”* (Merriam-Webster, n.d.-b) of **Engage** also seems relevant.

The prefix and focal point of engagement varies according to the principal role of the engaged subject within a domain and context. In computer science, particularly within HCI, the engaged subject is a user. Hence engagement is centred on a user perspective and referred to as user engagement (Peters, Castellano, & de Freitas, 2009). Within marketing the subject of engagement is framed as a consumer or a customer, and the discussion in this domain hence centres on consumer engagement and customer engagement respectively (Dessart, Veloutsou, & Morgan-Thomas, 2016; Vivek, Beatty, Dalela, & Morgan, 2014). Beyond the subject of engagement, there is also the object of engagement and the medium through which it occurs. In marketing the object of engagement is often a brand and the medium a type of new media, such as social media for example (Arikan, 2018). And of course, these aren't static nor clearly delineated roles either. A user can both be the subject and object of engagement such as when studying a user engaging with other users. Likewise, a videogame can both be the object of engagement and the medium of engagement. An example of the latter could be customer engagement with brands through videogaming (Högberg, Ramberg, Gustafsson, & Wästlund, 2019). What is important to note is that applicability and transferability of the conceptualisation of engagement in one context has not been clearly established (Dessart et al., 2016, p. 2)

Given the context sensitivity of engagement, overarching formulations of engagement risk being too simplistic(H. O'Brien & Cairns, 2016, p. 91). Despite this, some useful definitions with more general applicability have emerged. One such is by Bouvier et al. who focused on engagement in the context of digital games but proposed a definition that can apply to a wider range of mediated technologies: *"we consider engagement as the willingness to have emotions, affect, and thoughts directed toward and aroused by the mediated activity in order to achieve a specific objective.[...] "this definition of engagement can be applied to most mediated (technological and social) activities"* (2014, pp. 496, 497).

When assessing definitions or models for engagement, principles for evaluating concepts are useful. Grounded in the work of Wim J. van der Steen(1993) O'Brien and Cairns investigated the concept of user engagement in terms of Clarity, Scope, and Meaning(2016, p. 3). **Clarity** means identifying the unit and level of analysis. Is engagement being viewed from a macro or a micro level? What is the unit of analysis? Specific content, a system or a user? Or is it a larger social context?

**Scope** deals with boundaries: Is the engagement discussed affective, behavioural, cognitive or a combination? What are the temporal boundaries? Using videogaming as an analogy: Are they limited to a specific moment of play? A single match? A whole gaming session? Or perhaps the entirety of interaction with the game? Longer temporal boundaries also raise the question of contextual boundaries. Again, using videogames as an example: Is the concern with engagement only during gameplay? Or is it with the totality of engagement pertaining to the game, but not limited to direct engagement with the game?

**Meaning** relates to the differentiation of accompanying features and defining features of a concept. Accompanying features predict or represents outcomes, whereas defining features are part of the definition(Steen, 1993). Returning to O'Brien and Cairns, they found that defining features of user engagement has been extensively examined in the form of attributes(2016, p. 7). Attention, motivation, perceived time, control and more are examples of such attributes. However, they are also seen as context and user dependent(2016, p. 8). Accompanying features have seen less interest, though antecedents of user engagement has been studied.

The key takeaway is that despite significant research into user engagement it is not a clearly defined concept(H. O'Brien & Cairns, 2016, pp. 8, 9). There is little reason to believe that this should be different for engagement in other domains.

### 3.1.2 Media Channel and Form

Multimedia often gets described as a dated term, mainly combines different display forms, audio, visuals and text within one channel. Tay Vaughn (2001) fittingly summarized and described multimedia as “any combination of text, graphic art, sound, animation, and video that is delivered by computer”.

#### Crossmedia

Refers to communication or story telling where, more than one media platform is used to communicate related content about one story. According to Erdal (2007) crossmedia as a concept “involves two or more media platforms.”

#### Transmedia

At its most basic level transmedia storytelling can be defined as “stories told across multiple media. At the present time, the most significant stories tend to flow across multiple media platforms” (Jenkins, Purushotma, Clinton, Weigel & Robison, 2006, p. 46)

Scolari (2009) outlines that in the idealized version of TS “each medium does what it does best.” Star Wars serves as an example, the original trilogies story was expanded with a multitude of media, including more films, TV Series, books, video games and comics. Ideally, according to Scolari (2009) “each franchise entry needs to be self-contained enough to enable autonomous consumption” meaning that none of the other entries of the Series is necessary to enjoy the current piece of media.

### 3.1.3 Playbour, UGC, PGC

The concept of Playbour stems from a journal article by Julian Kücklich(2005) who studied modding within the videogame community. Playbour is a contraction of the words ‘Play’ and ‘Labour’. In the context of modding, it was used to describe how it was widely perceived as being play, that is an activity which is engaged in for leisure and is generally unproductive, at least from a capitalist viewpoint. However, many of the mods created provided great value to both the game proprietor and other players. From this perspective it was essentially free labour being exploited by the former, as only very few modders were remunerated.

User Generated Content is similar to playbour, though this term is also widely used beyond the context of the videogame industry(J. Kim, 2014).

Professionally Generated Content, as the name implies is professionally produced. J. Kim has described how PGC such as clips from commercially produced series has been placed onto YouTube in a licensed fashion by the proprietors to monetize it on the platform. Here it co-

exists with UGC(H. W. Kim, Chan, & Kankanhalli, 2012) As time has gone on, the lines between all three concepts seems to have been blurred. Many a popular live streamer started by making UGC but transitioned to PGC once they had established a personal brand and sufficiently large following.

Regardless of the name, all three concepts provide value to a wider community, though they differ in remuneration for the creator. For our purposes we will mainly use the term UGC to refer to all three concepts, as this is the most widely used term.

### 3.2 Process Model of Engagement

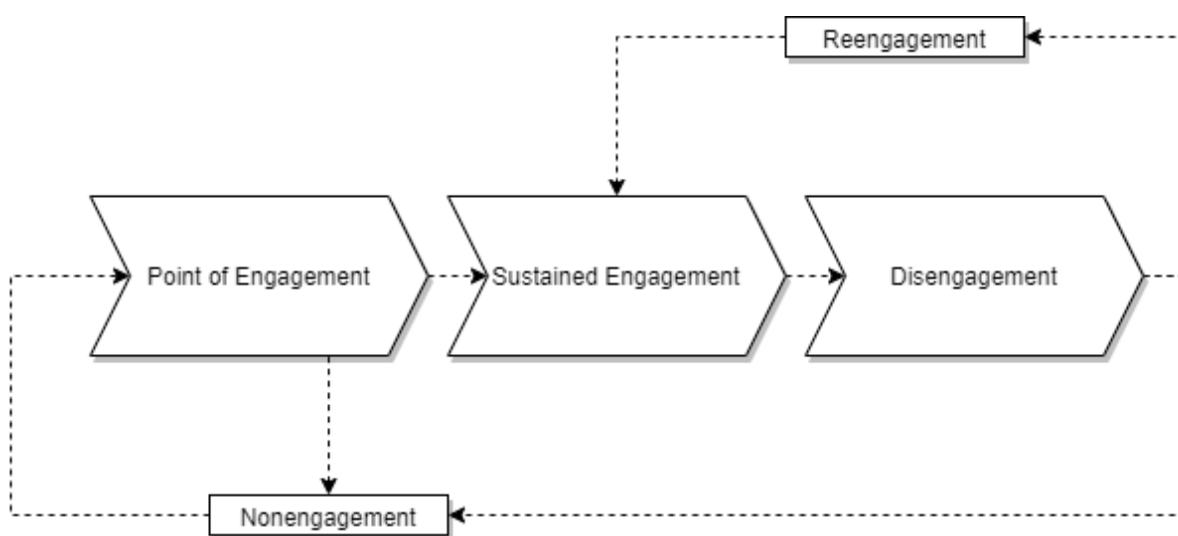


Figure 2: Illustration of the process model of engagement, adapted from the work O'Brien and Toms(2008)

To operationalise engagement, it can be seen as a process. The process model of engagement is an artefact from user engagement research by O'Brien and Toms (2008). By dividing engagement into a process of steps attributes for each stage can be identified. The main steps are point of engagement, sustained engagement (or period of engagement) and disengagement. Before the point of engagement, there is nonengagement. The point of engagement indicates the start of engagement. However, engagement can fail to materialise, hence the connection back to nonengagement. If engagement is achieved, there will eventually be a disengagement. This can lead back to nonengagement. Depending on the temporal bounds, an interruption of engagement need not to be considered nonengagement. In this case disengagement leads to reengagement. The process model has the advantage of being adaptable to different levels of analysis and temporal bounds(Cairns, 2016, pp. 84, 95).

### 3.3 Game Engagement

O'Brien and Toms process model of engagement has been applied to videogame engagement by P. Cairns(2016). In his analysis point of engagement is seen as the start of play, and here a key question is what drives users to play games? For identifying motivations and needs that attracts users to gaming, Cairns points to Self-Determination Theory (SDT) and Uses and Gratifications Theory. Both have been used extensively in videogame research. Sustained engagement is mapped on to gameplay, though here the temporal bounds can be expanded to beyond a gameplay to include creating content for the game, watching videos about it or reading a walkthrough of the game. Most research in the sustained engagement phase is temporally limited to gameplay however(2016, p. 95). Here the focus tends to be on attributes of gameplay engagement. The disengagement step is most often thought of as the end of gameplay. Here Cairns question which internal decisions and/or external events that leads to disengagement. For the former he highlights the theory of self-consent and SDT. Reengagement is also covered in the form of continuation desire.

### 3.4 SDT

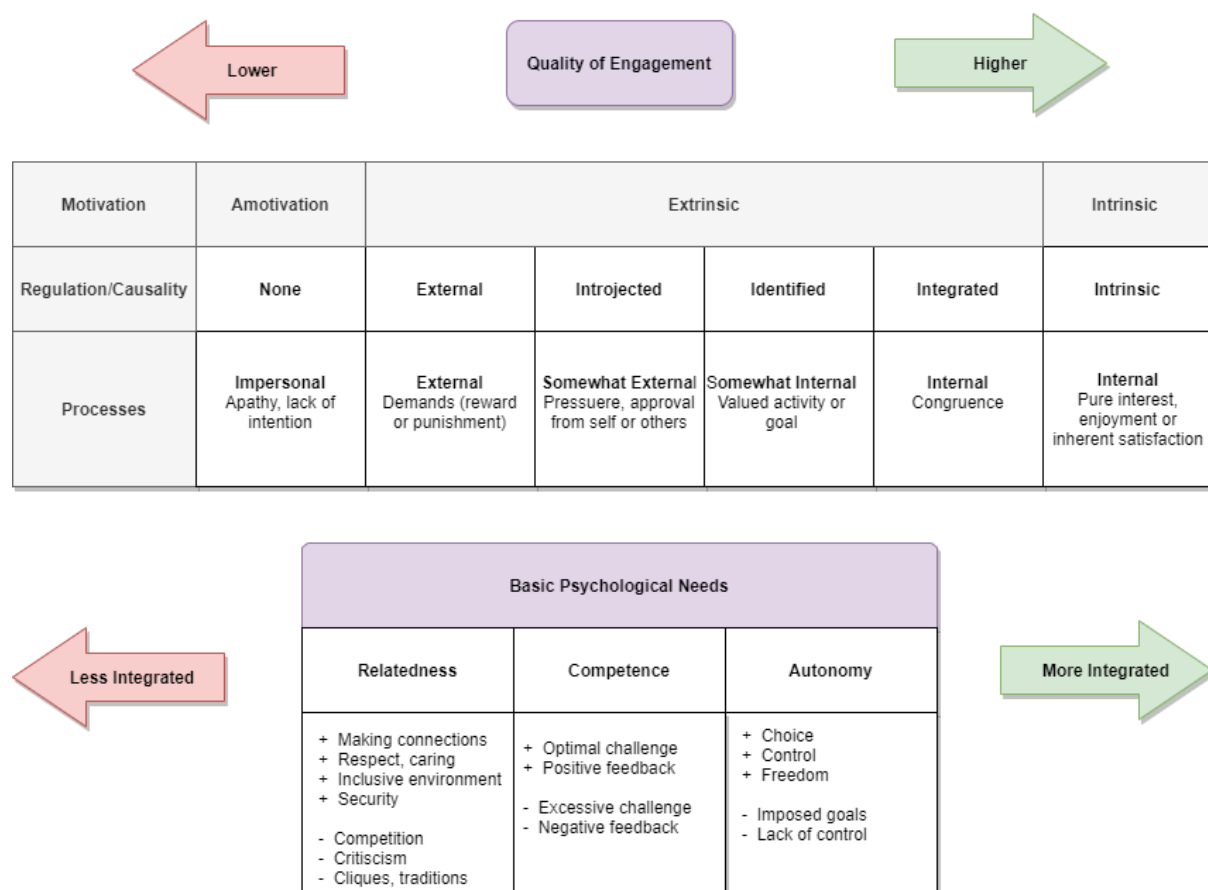


Figure 3: Adapted from (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000)

Self Determination Theory (SDT) posits the basic psychological needs of Relatedness, Competence and Autonomy and relates these to a continuum of motivation ranging from extrinsic to intrinsic (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Intrinsic motivation is seen as the most enjoyable most conducive to a high quality of engagement. Humans are seen as having a natural inclination towards intrinsic motivation; however, it can be undermined by nonsupportive conditions. Externally imposed demands in the form of rewards or punishments can foster extrinsic motivation, if they do not match with internal interest or goals. As one moves along the spectrum towards intrinsic motivation, the more integrated and aligned with the basic need it will be.

SDT has been used for videogame research. Two studies have looked at the relationship between the basic needs and gameplay enjoyment, future gameplay and various aspects of videogame design (Rogers, 2017; Ryan, Rigby, & Przybylski, 2006). Relatedness, competence and autonomy were found to independently predict enjoyment and future gameplay. Intuitive controls were important in facilitating a sense of competence and autonomy. Feedback in games gave mixed results; a perceived overload of feedback, obtrusive feedback or negative feedback resulted in a lowering of feelings of competence and autonomy. A game designed to be open with flexible rules increased the sense of autonomy but was inversely correlated to relatedness.

While the impact of SDT in furthering videogame research has been acknowledged, some criticism has been levelled at lack of sufficient experimental control in studies relating to this area (Cairns, 2016, p. 88).

### 3.5 Meta-Analysis for Playing Intention

Identifying a gap in research incorporating both instrumental and hedonic purposes for game use, J. Hamari and L. Keronen have contributed to the body of literature on videogames by producing a meta-analysis on reasons for game use (Hamari & Keronen, 2017). 985 research articles were sorted according to an inclusion criterion of quality and topic amongst others. 48 were selected for incorporation into the meta-analysis. **UGT**, **Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)**, **Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA)**, **Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB)** and **Social Capital Theory** were the main frameworks observed in the articles, though some did not use a specific theory but rather adopted a composite of variables. For strong correlation with **playing intention** in ranked order **Attitude** (positive or negative to playing games), **Enjoyment** and **Perceived Usefulness** (*“defined loosely as any sense of usefulness in playing games”* (Hamari & Keronen, 2017, p. 130)) was identified. Medium correlation was established for **Satisfaction**, **Perceived Ease of Use** (such as intuitive controls and interface),

**Perceived Playfulness**, **Subjective Norms** (perceived social acceptance of gaming), **Critical Mass** (perceived amount of others playing the game) and **Flow** (Optimal experience as coined by Csikszentmihalyi (1990)). One item, **Gender**, was found to have no correlation to playing intention.

### 3.6 Esports

During the last 20 years Electronic sports (esports) was able to attract and maintain a massive popularity, through worldwide events reaching millions of participants either offline or online. One of the key reasons behind the increasing popularity was the simultaneous growth of the livestreaming industry, which then again helped esports becoming an integral part in nowadays youth culture. The actual term of esports is utilized broadly but most researchers point towards defining esports as a form of competitive multiplayer gaming, combined with the involvement of spectatorship (Freeman & Wohn, 2017). Moreover, people tend to watch esports due to different reasons, such as following a specific esports organization, a specific player, a commentator/caster and mostly out of interest for a specific game (Rambusch, - Sofia Alklind Taylor, & Susi, 2017). Therefore, similar to traditional sports, which offer multiple different categories such as football, baseball or basketball, there are also different kinds of categories in esports revolving around the different games such as League of Legends (LoL) or Counterstrike Global Offensive (CS:GO) (Baltezarević & Baltezarević, 2018).

A definition, which expands up on these findings and there is more detailed is provided by Taylor (2015):

*“E-sports involves the enactment of video games as spectator-driven sport, carried out through promotional activities; broadcasting infrastructures; the socioeconomic organization of teams, tournaments, and leagues; and the embodied performances of players themselves”* (Taylor, 2015, p. 2)

Due to the rapid growth of the overall esports scene, the esports scene developed into a whole industry with different sources of revenue incomes such as *“Marketing Support (sponsorship and advertising), Media Rights, Publishers Fees and Merchandising and Tickets”* (Chikish, Carreras, & Garc, 2019, p. 39).

### 3.7 Live Streaming and VOD

The audience appeal of videogames has been recognised to precede the emergence of live videogame streaming platforms in the form of arcade culture in the 70's and 80'. Some events from this period even attracted the interest of mainstream television media at the time (Tammy Lin, Bowman, Lin, & Chen, 2019). Later, the proliferation of the internet and popularity of certain multiplayer games such as Starcraft, led to the arising of a competitive community centred around the game and resulted in the birth of modern esports (Cheung & Huang, 2011). Esports events are arguably the first successful live streaming of videogames. In the west, extensive live streaming of videogames first became popularised in 2007 with the launch of Twitch.tv's predecessor Justin.tv (Bingham, 2017).

#### 3.7.1.1 Motivation

In the journal article “**Social motivations of live-streaming viewer engagement on Twitch**” (Hilvert-Bruce, Neill, Sjöblom, & Hamari, 2018) UG is leveraged to study the social aspect further. Here 8 motivations (Entertainment, Information Seeking, Meeting New People, Social Interactions, Social Support, Sense of Community, Social Anxiety and External Support) are mapped on to 4 indicators of engagement (Emotional Connectedness, Time Spent, Time Subscribed and Donations). The motivations of entertainment and information seeking (reviews, gameplay tips etc.) are not explicitly social motivations but are nevertheless included. While time spent, time subscribed and donations are straightforward items emotional connectedness is a measure of psychological attachment, in this case to a live streaming platform (Twitch). Data collection was done through an online survey. As previously mentioned, live videogame streaming is still in its infancy, hence many items for measurement were adapted from general social network research scales. The emotional connectedness items for example were adapted from the Facebook Intensity Scale (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007). Building from lessons learned in previous research, this study included survey questions on channel size preference of respondents. The authors found that social support and social anxiety were the only motivations not associated with any of the four live stream engagement indicators. Emotional connectedness had the strongest association and was linked with the social motivators of meeting new people, social interactions and sense of community with entertainment and information seeking also playing a role. Time spent was connected to entertainment, sense of community and external support. In the latter case the association was negative (i.e. the more external social support, the less time spent). Subscriptions and donations, the only monetary measures, were associated with social interactions and sense of community. Overall the authors found that social motivations had strong explanatory powers over live stream videogame engagement and suggested that this might be one of the key motivations to watch a video game stream as opposed to playing a

game, for which enjoyment and usefulness has been found to be the most important factors in previous research(Hamari & Keronen, 2017).

Live streaming and live videogame streaming rely heavily on user generated content. While some organisations help deliver content, particularly within the Esports category, the vast majority of content is created by individual users of the platform, which are then typically referred to as streamers. The motivations for providing content in the form of streaming has received less academic interest than viewer motivations. Mathilde B. Friedländer however sheds some light on this in her research paper **“Streamer Motives and User-Generated Content on Social Live-Streaming Services”(2017)**. Comparing and categorising over seven thousand streams originating from three different countries (USA, Germany and Japan), the top motivation for streaming appeared to be boredom, followed by socializing. Interestingly, the ranking of motivation differed between west and east. While boredom was consistently ranked above socializing in both USA and Germany, socializing was the number one motivation in Japan. It should be noted however that this research paper investigated live streaming as a whole, hence motivation for live videogame streamers might be different.

### 3.7.2 Influencers

Digital media have laid the foundation for a new generation of influencers that are steadily taking over the roles previously reserved for established film and movie stars. These mainstream celebrities and marketing organisations have recognised the value of digital influencers and collaboration is becoming common(Backaler, 2018). Many of the largest digital influencers cover gaming content. PewDiePie, who has 103 million subscribers on YouTube(Socialblade, 2020), started his following by posting ‘Let’s Play’ videos and he still regularly post gaming content. Of YouTube’s categories, ‘Gaming’ is the third largest, just ahead of ‘Sports’. Micro-celebrities represent more ordinary users of social media, that have cultivated a smaller following. Both influencers and micro-celebrities represent a shift away from a top-down control of fame as seen in the film industry, to a more autonomous and decentralised system(Khamis, Ang, & Welling, 2017). Research has found that while influencers aren’t as effective for branding to heterogeneous audiences as traditional celebrities, they have far higher levels of trustworthiness with familiar audiences. Concluding on this research, J. Gräve writes “influencers are perceived to be significantly more trustworthy and similar to oneself than celebrities. (Gräve, 2017, p. 4). Extensive research has been done regarding how influencers establish this familiarity and trustworthiness. The ability to form parasocial relationships is seen as a key component(Blight, 2016; Hu, Zhang, & Wang, 2017). This has implications for product endorsements and branding, where parasocial relationships

can transfer the trust and familiarity to brands(Jin & Muqaddam, 2019). As such influencers and micro-celebrities serve as an important channel to consumers. In the videogame industry, individual games, platforms and peripheral manufactures all value influencers and vice versa. In the case of videogame live-streaming for example, this has been found to increase the lifespan of many games and has even been instrumental to the success of some games, such as Rocket League(Johnson & Woodcock, 2018, p. 2). As for streamers becoming associated a popular game can help launch them to prominence, especially if they can monopolise most of the attention around the game(Johnson & Woodcock, 2018, p. 7).

### 3.8 Business model Canvas

Osterwalder et all (2010) developed a model to understand what a business model is, in order to enable the creation of a frame of reference that can be understood by a majority of people and therefore foster understanding and discussion about the business model. They developed the Business model canvas (BMC).

It allows for the analysis of the business model of gaming publishers and specific games. As it is designed to “easily describe and manipulate business models” (Osterwalder et all, 2010) it allows for challenging beliefs about business models and develop a deeper understanding of underlying connections, and important factors.

The BMC is composed of 9 building blocks:

#### **Customer Segments:**

It is important to identify the target audience, that are aimed to be reached by the game. With gaming becoming more mainstream, the demographic changes and games no longer serve a niche segment by default. Therefore, games need to decided who they are serving, is it the mass market of consumers, or is it a specific niece segment that enjoys a particular type of games. Type of segments range from specified segment, the mass market, multifaced platforms that serve many different customers at the same time. Etc.

#### **Value Proposition:**

The value proposition block descres the value the product or services creates for the chosen customer segment. It is the deciding factor for customers to choose a service, or product over another. It includes the type of game, whether it offers a space for socialisation and community, escapism through an immersive story line, or a competitive environment to show off one’s skills. The value can range from functional to hedonistic.

**Channels:**

How does the company deliver the value proposition towards the customers. This includes five channel phases that are awareness, evaluation, purchase, delivery, after sales service. They could be all on the same channel, or on different platforms and ways. They will also differ from value proposition to value proposition. Sometimes they are even part of the value proposition itself, if the value proposition is delivered over the channels that are preferred by a specific target segment. In gaming that for one relates to support and after sales, but more importantly on what gaming platform the game is available.

**Customer Relationships:**

It is important to establish what kind of relationship the company wants to build with a specific customer service segment. Does it want to build a community? Or automate service? The company might employ several kind of relationships with customers or customer segments but they are key in achieving the goals the enterprise has in maintaining customer relationships. This particularly plays a role when it comes to UGC around the games.

**Revenue Streams**

This determines how a game monetizes the game. Usually a business model involves two types of revenue streams: One-time payment transaction revenues or reoccurring payments to either deliver a value or provide post-purchase support or a combination of the two. Which seems to be very common in the gaming world. GaaS can have different revenue models that include free to play, premium games, and many more.

**Key Resources**

Most important assets that make a company work. These can be physical, intellectual, human or financial. Usually a combination of all of them. For GaaS that involves very much hardware and human capital in forms of developers, but also financial support through Investors, that often forces publishers to return certain margins in order to keep the financial resources from investors coming. And more and more IP and virtual property implications begin to play a role in managing key resources.

## **Key Activities**

The key activities category is an agglomeration of all important activities a company must do in order to succeed. In the gaming industry that includes game development but also platform or network related key activities. It could be that the constant updating and renewing of the platform or game is a key activity that the publisher undertakes to keep the game or service exciting and delivering a value proposition to the consumer.

## **Key Partnership**

In order to optimize their business model, strategic partnerships might be employed to reduce risks or acquire resources. For GaaS there are two types that stand in the fore ground: Strategic partnerships with non-competitors, this could include brands or business outside the scope of gaming like peripheral companies, or companies that are popular within the same audience, like energy drinks for example. The other model is coopetition which are strategic partnerships between competitors. For example, CD Project Red and Valve. They are both game publishers, that both have their own platforms for games gog and Steam respectively. As well as both are creating and publishing games. However, CD Projects Reds games are available on Steam as well.

## **Cost Structure**

All cost incurred to operate the business. The opposites are here cost driven or value driven, most business fall somewhere in between the two, the same goes for games. Usually users have a good sense on which side of the spectrum the games fall.

## **3.9 Business Ecosystem**

A business ecosystem has the main goal of generating value to its customers through either produced good or services, within a certain community of economic actors. Moreover, this implies that the community of these actors might consist of suppliers, partners, customers or even competitors (Yuan, Chou, Yang, Wu, & Huang, 2017). In other words, a business ecosystem involves “*a large number of loosely interconnected companies that are dependent on one another*” (Kim, Lee, & Han, 2010, p.1). Of course, a requirement for that to happen has to be fulfilled, namely a symbiotic relationship between the involved community members/companies must be established, in order to gain advantages by working together. Furthermore, the resulting generated value is a crucial factor to ensure business sustainability,

thus maintaining a healthy business ecosystem is key for securing the vitality of the business (H. Kim et al., 2010).

These symbiotic relationships can be visualized with the help of a model based on so-called keystone platform and flagship companies. Firstly, at the centre of the model is the keystone platform, which the entirety of the ecosystem revolves around. Consequently, the keystone platform receives the most benefits resulting from the symbiotic work within the ecosystem, it can be compared to a predator at the top of the food chain. However, the keystone platform is also responsible for the overall well being of the ecosystem's health, which means once the keystone platform starts to break down, it will also leave a vast negative impact on its other ecosystem members. In addition, a keystone platform is hard to replace, meaning once a keystone platform completely disappears from its ecosystem, it is very likely that closely connected companies will also share the same fate. Secondly, the keystone platform is surrounded by so-called flag ship companies. Flagship companies act as nodes between the keystone platform and the other members of the ecosystem, such as customers, competitors or suppliers. Therefore, flagship companies are more involved in the overall engagement of the ecosystem, due to their close relationships within the ecosystem. Even though, flagships companies have an overall lower impact than the keystone company on the ecosystem, their well-doing is still crucial to the health of the ecosystem. Thus, healthy flagships result in an overall performance boost on the business of the whole ecosystem. Last but not least, the model at hand presents a third category of ecosystem members, which do not have a specific term. These members can be competitors, suppliers or customers. Compared to the keystone platform and flagship companies, most of them are replaceable within the system, since their impact in the overall ecosystem is relatively low. However, there is a number of key companies, customers or suppliers which are even in a direct relationship with the key platform, which sets them apart from regular companies, customers or suppliers (H. Kim et al., 2010).

### 3.10 Platform ecosystem

A platform ecosystem revolves around a single platform, which clearly identifies as the owner of the whole platform ecosystem and generates value through autonomous members of its ecosystem. Therefore, a platform ecosystem can be defined as an ecosystem which *“comprises a platform owner that implements governance mechanisms to facilitate value creating mechanisms on a digital platform between the platform owner and an ecosystem of autonomous complementors and consumers”* (Hein et al., 2019, p. 4). It goes without saying, that the platform owner is crucial for the overall well doing of the ecosystem, since the owner has the power to change or implement governance mechanisms in order to stimulate positive ecosystem growth. The autonomous complementors are categorized into two segments,

namely low autonomy complementors and high autonomy complementors. On the one hand, low autonomy complementors do not experience too much freedom, since they are tightly bound to the platform and therefore usually act as strategic partners with the main task of enhancing the core value proposition of the platform. On the other hand, high autonomy complementors experience a great amount of freedom, since the bound to the platform is very loose, making them fairly independent. An example for loose complementors is the digital platform Airbnb. The complementors of this platform are the home owners, and due to low entrance barriers, **multi-homing** becomes a possibility, meaning they can easily use a different platform instead (A. Hein et al., 2019).

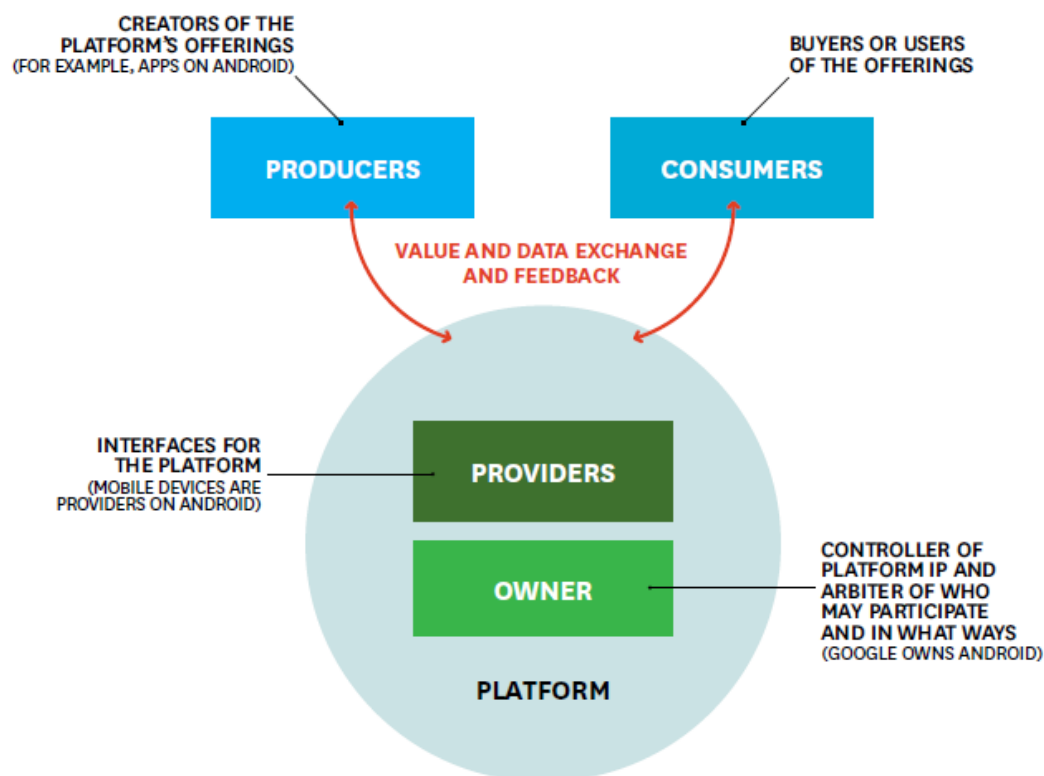


Figure 4 The Platform Ecosystem by Van Alstyne, Parker, & Choudary, 2016, p. 6

The platform ecosystem model by Van Alstyne, Parker, & Choudary (2016), provides an easy visualization of the overall ecosystem by utilizing the platform of Android as an example. In general, the model highlights that a platform ecosystem always follows the same basic structure, which consists of four different ecosystem members:

1. Owner: the owner of the platform who acts as a controller of the platform intellectual property and the governance of it. In the case of platform ecosystem of Android, Google is the owner.

2. Providers: they establish the interface of the platform for its users. So, for the Android platform, mobile devices act as the providers of the interface.
3. Producers: are creators, who supplement the platform with offerings. Android's producers would be for example mobile developers, who add their apps onto the google play store.
4. Consumers: are the buyers or users, who finally consume the created offerings. Android's consumers are for example the people who buy apps on the google play store.

Moreover, the platform also acts as an infrastructure for the whole ecosystem to link the producer side to the consumers side, while also governing the market with regulations (Van Alstyne et al., 2016).

Furthermore, the model also supports the definition provided by Hein et al. (2019), even though the terminology is slightly different. Hein prefers the term "complementors", which essentially refers to producers and providers in the model. High autonomy complementors are basically producers like for example mobile game developers in the case of the Android platform. Whereas low autonomy complementors could also be understood as providers, due to the close strategic relationship to the platform owner. An example for that based on the Android platform, would be a mobile manufacturer such as Samsung, who only utilizes Android as its operating system and therefore enters a close strategic relationship with google, meaning they mutually depend on another.

### 3.11 Virtual goods

Within computing 'virtual' is defined as: *"Not physically existing as such but made by software to appear to do so"* (Lexico, n.d.). With the rise of ICT, a lot of virtual 'things' have come into existence. There are virtual worlds, virtual communities, virtual goods and so on. Defining and categorising these 'things' is difficult and depends on the perspective through which they are viewed. In gaming culture things like weapons, clothing, pets and more is often referred to as virtual items. Research relating to gaming frequently use terms such as virtual asset, virtual property and virtual goods. 'Asset' is a broad financial term that implies value (FAFT, n.d.). 'Goods' also represent value but is more limited in scope and indicate a purpose of trade and eventual consumption. Both terms denote possession. For the purposes of this thesis, we will mainly use the terms virtual good and virtual item. The use of 'property' is particularly used in legal writings on the topic of whether virtual goods can be seen as property and if so, what kind of property and who does it belong to? A recurring citation within this arena is Joshua Fairfield's definition of virtual property: *"Virtual Property is Rivalrous, Persistent, and Interconnected Code that Mimics Real World Characteristics"* (2005, p. 1053). Rivalrousness

is particularity important, because although the code of a virtual item can be considered non-rivalrous, within a virtual world the virtual item created by said code can be implemented in a rivalrous way. For example, from a user's perspective a sword in a MMORPG cannot simply be copied; it can be traded or given away, after which it will no longer be accessible to the user who traded it or gave it away. Persistence refers to the fact that a virtual good persists in the virtual world, logging out or turning off one's computer does not erase it. Finally, interconnectedness is a requirement for it to be considered property; if a virtual item can't be transferred to, interacted with or seen by others it falls outside the definition of property. There is not currently agreement on whether virtual goods should legally be considered property, nor what kind of property (Harvey, 2017). For those that do consider it property, there is an open question as to whether it is purely intellectual property (Erlank, 2015). From a user and economics perspective, many virtual goods appear to be intangible private property; within the virtual worlds which they exist, they look and function much like actual goods; obtaining or making them (if the virtual world provides for that) can require great effort or cost, and they can often be traded or sold in many cases even for real money. When it comes to game publishers however, the opinion is different; many End User Licensing Agreements (EULA) specifically states that users must forfeit any rights to content within the game and states that the publisher does not recognise virtual property (Harvey, 2017, p. 144). While the debate about virtual property has many more aspects to it and extends significantly beyond the sphere of gaming, for our purposes it is enough to note that there is a large gap between users, publishers and economic realities when it comes to virtual goods. Legal frameworks for navigating this gap are lagging behind with significant variances between jurisdictions.

### 3.12 Virtual currency

When it comes to establishing the value of virtual goods in games there are generally two approaches: use of a sovereign currency or a virtual currency. The former is fairly self-explanatory while the latter deserves elaboration. There is not an agreement on an exact definition of virtual currency (Dabrowski & Janikowski, 2018, p. 7), but various definitions have been proposed. The European Central Bank (ECB) has published several papers on virtual currency. In a report (ECB, 2012) the Linden Dollar from the game/online community Second Life was used as a case study of virtual currency. The following definition for virtual currency was proposed in that report: *"a virtual currency is a type of unregulated, digital money, which is issued and usually controlled by its developers, and used and accepted among the members of a specific virtual community"* (ECB, 2012, p. 13). As time passed decentralised blockchain based virtual currencies became the main focus of regulators. The definition was updated: *"virtual currency can therefore be defined as a digital representation of value, not issued by a central bank, credit institution or e-money institution, which, in some*

*circumstances, can be used as an alternative to money.*” (ECB, 2015, p. 25). Note that the latter definition considers virtual currency not to be money, a departure from the earlier definition. Instead the term value is used with the caveat that it can act as an alternative to money in some cases. This change was made to reflect the fact that virtual currencies do not have the common acceptance required to be considered money. Both definitions of virtual currency seem relevant to the analysis of those implemented in games. The 2012 ECB report furthermore suggested three categories to classify virtual currency schemes based on their interface with the wider economy. The first is considered a closed virtual currency scheme; users can’t exchange real money for virtual currency and vice versa. Instead it must be earned and spent within the virtual community on virtual goods or services. The second scheme is characterised by being unidirectional; The virtual currency can be bought with real money, but the reverse is not true. Currency obtained can be spent within the community on virtual goods and services or in some cases real ones. Finally, the third type is bidirectional; The virtual currency can be bought with real money and in turn the virtual currency can be converted back into real money in accordance with an exchange rate.

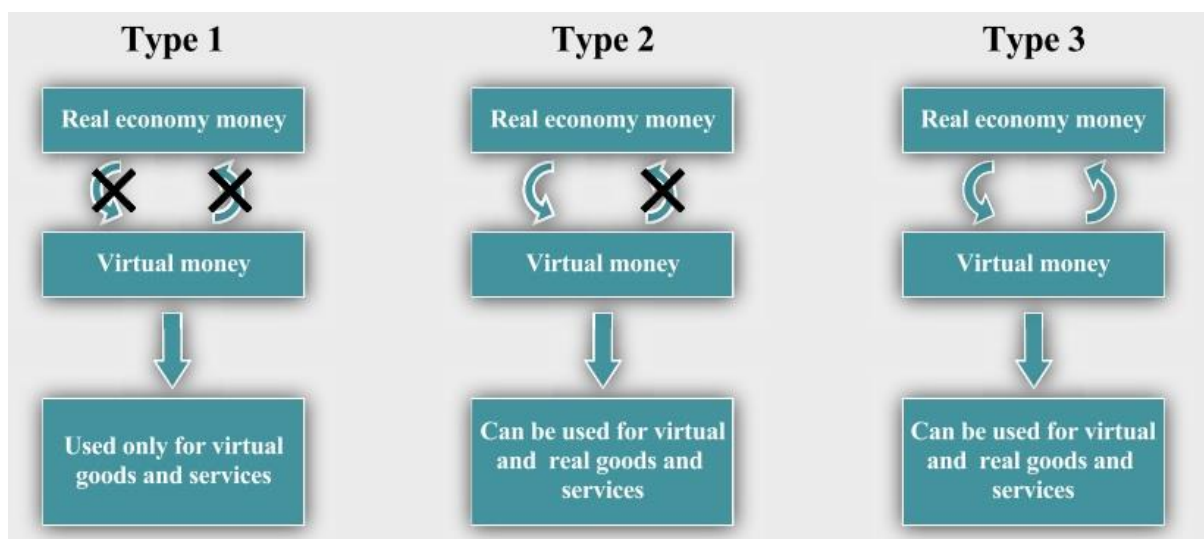


Figure 5: Illustration of virtual currency schemes (ECB, 2012, p. 15)

### 3.13 Virtual item purchase motivation

It's crucial to understand the reasons behind in-game purchases, since virtual items in games play a major factor when it comes down to the revenue incomes of companies. Moreover, virtual items from games who follow the free to play business model are increasingly gaining in importance for the overall profits of the online game industry (Lee, Lee, Lee, & Lee, 2015). There are multiple studies trying to identify the different motivations for such purchases. Lehdonvirta (2009) investigated 14 online service providers that were selling virtual items in Finland, United States and Korea and came to the conclusion that motivations which influence

the decision of buying digital items can be categorized into functional, hedonic and social attributes. Functional attributes refer to performance, e.g. the stats(strength) of a certain in-game item like a sword. Hedonic attributes refer to the visual appearances, e.g. how the sword looks. Whereas social attributes refer to rarity, e.g. the sword is part of a very unique collection (Lehdonvirta, 2009).

It is an on-going trend that especially developers seek to understand these motivations and try their best to cater towards them. Therefore, they design their games in a way, that allures the players of these games to purchase in-game items often and frequently (Hamari et al., 2017). Hamari et al. (2017) categorized a total of 19 motivations behind purchasing in-game items into 6 dimensions:

Unobstructed play: based on purchases, to avoid obstructions (e.g. cooldowns, waiting times) and therefore to facilitate continuous play.

Social interaction: based on purchases, which facilitate social interaction e.g. by playing with friends and giving them gifts.

Competition: based on purchases, to become stronger and to show off, which often grants advantages over other players.

Economic rationale: based on purchases that follow rational reasoning, e.g. supporting the game they like or making use of a special offer, since that is perceived as a great deal.

Indulging the children: based on purchases to make kids happy, basically parents willingly wanting to pay for content for their kids, by doing so they can also have their own motivations in mind, e.g. buying content for their kids in a game, buys them free time in exchange.

Unlocking content: based on purchases to gain more content, e.g. the users want to unlock more levels or a specific character.

## 4 Methodology

### 4.1 Research philosophy

While our overarching research question (*'What are the key factors behind the success of the GaaS model?'*) could be interpreted as implying that there is a set of finite and objectively verifiable key factors behind the success of GaaS, this is not what we aim to present our research. Rather, as we began the preliminary study of GaaS we quickly found that it was a complex topic, with a lot of plausible candidate key factors, that depended varied according to the context through which they were viewed. The domains relevant to GaaS research varied from ICT to psychology, media studies, business, law and much more, all containing valuable

contributions. The very nature of games allows them to play around with and question reality. The word 'virtual' for many laymen implicitly implies something not being a real thing. But to many gamers the virtual world with which they interact are very real. The dictionary definition for 'virtual' states: *"Not physically existing as such but made by software to appear to do so"*. For videogame companies an essential part of their work is to make their virtual game worlds a space for real engagement. Furthermore, the boundaries between the virtual and the physical world is breaking down. Many virtual economies extend into what we perceive to be the 'real' economy. The financial crash of 2008 helped many to understand that the latter is not as 'real' or objective as we might want to believe. Rather, it seems to be created by perceptions and actions of individuals and society as a whole, the core concept behind the ontology of subjectivism (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009, p. 111). As we attempt to understand GaaS, we do so extensively through the participants that form the wider gaming community; Gamers, developers, artists, analysts, creators and so on. The roles aren't clearly delineated nor mutually exclusive. As such, we consider their experiences and actions to form the many 'truths' (Orlikowski & Baroudi, 1991). We therefore adopt the ontology of subjectivism and the epistemology an interpretive epistemology.

## 4.2 Research Approach and strategy

While we did do a significant review of literature relating to GaaS before starting interviewing, we did not come up with a set of theories to be confirmed or rejected through our interviews. Rather, the literature review served to give us a basic comprehension of some elements of GaaS to prepare us for the interviews. Through our interactions with the interviewees our own comprehension was further developed, and this process continued throughout the thesis. This largely aligns with an inductive approach, which is also very well suited for a subjectivist ontology and interpretive epistemology (Saunders et al., 2009). The interviews in conjunction with our own observations of and participation in the gaming community served as the main research strategy.

## 4.3 Data and data collection

Interviews are inherently qualitative in nature, and this ties in well with our chosen research approach (Saunders et al., 2009).

A combination of both primary and secondary data was used for the research, this allowed for some degree of reliability as well as gaining access to more information that would not be possible purely with primary data in the scope of this research alone.

Our Primary Data is a combination of in-depth interviews and observational research data. The interviews are comprised of Expert and gamer interviews with open ended questions.

We also used observational data we gathered from our own interaction with and observation of gaming through various mediums and channels.

Secondary data was also an important source of information for our research. We used peer-reviewed journal articles, government and NGO reports, corporate investor relations documents, such as conference calls and earning reports, interviews and news articles. In many areas secondary data granted access to information that would be hard to come by, though we had to be critical of the accuracy and truthfulness of secondary sources, particularly in the case of news articles and to some extent corporate documents, as both might be affected by vested interests.

#### 4.3.1 Sampling

In selecting participants for interviews, we used a combined approach of quota and snow-ball sampling, both types of purposive sampling. The first group of people we interviewed were people that do not work in the industry but are actively consuming GaaS or content relating to GaaS. When picking participants for our expert interviews, we used the snow-ball sampling or chain-referral sampling. We used our initial interviewee to connect to other people in their network that were familiar with the topic and might give us valuable insight, that included people working in all sectors of the gaming ecosystem: Peripherals, events & streaming, publishing, etc. While the classical definition of “hidden population” often includes the notion of an unwillingness or a danger to identify as being part of that particular group, the gaming industry is a similarly specialized group like for example “Hollywood” that has a big interconnectedness between the members, and a sort of exclusivity to their path.

#### 4.3.2 Questions

As is the case in a qualitative study, we used open ended questions. We used two different approaches, based on the two different groups of interviewees. The expert interviews happened mainly in the intermediate stage of our study, and we had at this point gathered more data that lead us to have a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the subject matter. It also allowed us to be more specific in what sort of data we wanted to gather from each person interviewed. We therefore used a more tailored approach in questions that matched our research profile. Every person we interviewed worked in a different area of the videogame industry, so in order to gather most information we prepared the questions according to the area of their expertise based on their work and life experience.

#### 4.3.3 How we interviewed

We conduct the qualitative interviews through various means, some face to face, others over skype or Discord. One of the interviews were also performed using text chat, due to issues with verbal communication in a common language. In most cases we had longer verbal or text

exchanges with each individual to build an informal, setting that made the interviewees feel comfortable and relaxed with the purpose of creating an informal and relaxed atmosphere conducive to answering the questions in detail. It also allowed us to probe the interviews and interact with them based on their personality and needs, to get the best information possible. Close interaction and communication also allowed to understand implied meanings, or when the interviewee used sarcasm. The way things are said are often as important, if not more important than the verbal content, and let us infer how certain statements were meant.

The interviews were recorded, and then transcribed using software. Due to the varied nature of accents, manual transcription was necessary for parts of almost all interviews, as the transcription software did not accurately understand all accents.

#### 4.4 Ethical considerations

There were some ethical considerations, that we had to consider. This led us to carefully examine what questions to ask in the in-depth interviews. It was important to not misuse the trust established with the participants, as well as not pushing the questions when we encountered hesitance.

We had to commit to minimize the risk answers to the questions we asked potentially might have for the career, for some of the expert interviews. This includes questions about monetization techniques and methods used for the latter. Building a relationship with the interviewees, and having the interviews in an informal setting, has led in some circumstances, to sharing of information that might have negative consequences for the current as well as future career opportunities of the participants.

We therefore committed to clearing quotes by the participants beforehand and explaining in which context they will be used. In order to make sure that no confidentiality or non-disclosure agreement were violated on the participants side, we were very careful in using quotes. That includes remarks concerning opinions towards practices in the gaming industry, as well as specific techniques that were used. Even if no non-disclosure agreements, or similar were breached certain answers, could still be potentially be harmful for the careers of individuals, if connected. For example, heavily criticising monetization techniques and practices, could be seen as bad mouthing a former employer, or indicate an unwillingness to implement set techniques that might be deemed necessary by the publishing company and therefore could harm future employment chances.

## 5 Games as a Service

The transition from games as a product to a mixed business model largely based on revenue from microtransactions are often called Games as a Service, though some publishers have

framed it as ‘Live Services’. These Live Services seem to have resulted in strong revenue growth.

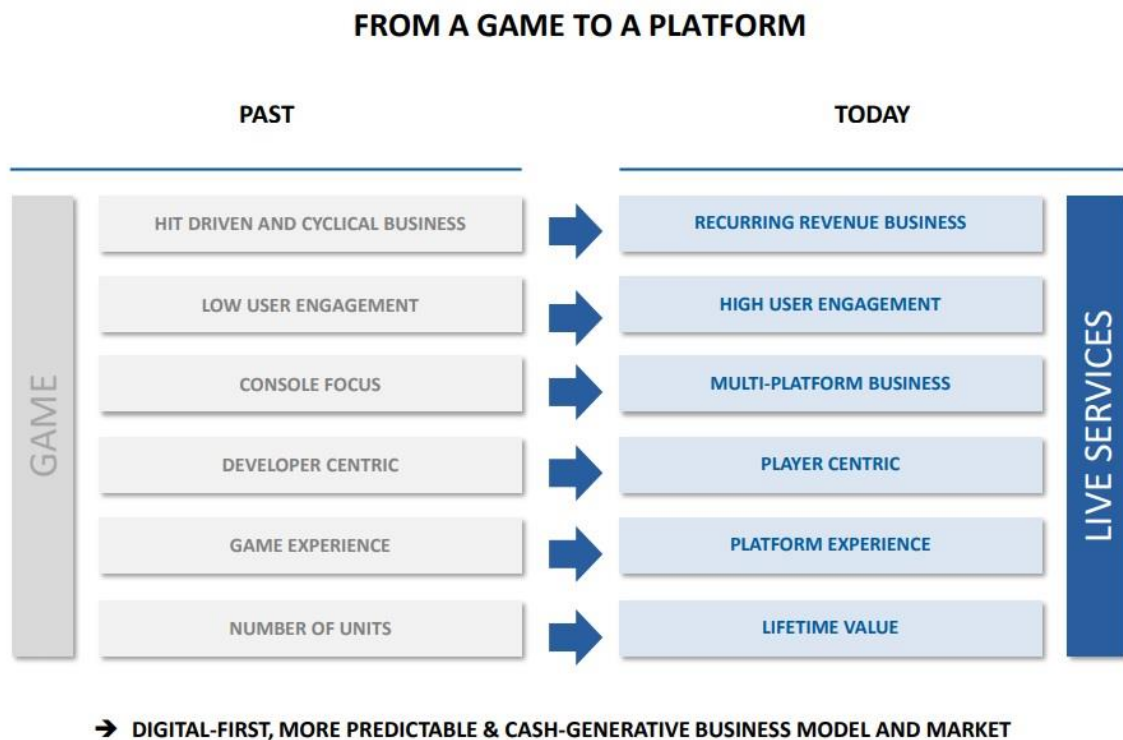


Figure 6: Slide from Ubisoft depicting transition to live services (Ubisoft, 2018, p. 12)

For example, in 2017 EA reported a trailing 12 months revenue of \$1.682 billion USD from ‘Live Services’, a merger of the categories previously referred to as ‘Extra Content’ and ‘Subscriptions, Advertising, and Other’. The former made up \$1.297 billion USD and the latter \$385 million USD. Digital sales of games, not considered to be part of the Live Services, netted \$724 million USD at the time (EA, 2017, pp. 5–6). In 2020 Live Services revenue had risen sharply to \$2.835 BN USD while digital game sales had grown much less at \$780 million USD (EA, 2020, p. 5). Ubisoft has seen a similar rise in Live Services income, though they label it as ‘Player Recurring Investment’. From FY16 to FY 19 revenue this segment rose from €132 million EUR to €644 million EUR (Ubisoft, 2019b, p. 12). While Ubisoft considers the Live Services model to have relegated the hit driven nature of game revenue to the past, the reality seems to be different; revenue is still largely dependent on getting a ‘hit’. As an example, EA has a live service mode called Ultimate Team integrated into their annual sports game series FIFA and Madden NFL. Ultimate Team is an online competitive mode where users can play against each other with the teams that they have assembled. All users are provided with a ‘starter’ team composed of football or NFL players of various skill levels. To acquire better

players and thereby be more competitive users can open 'packs' (loot boxes containing players). These are bought with either coins or points, the former a type 1 virtual currency while the latter is type 2. Many users opt to pay for points in order to get better players faster. While one could expect that most users would eventually end up with a team that they are satisfied with, thus spending less on packs, the players obtained in one version of the game does not carry over to the next, effectively resetting users in-game purchases once a year. In FY 2019, Ultimate Team generated 28 percent of EA's total net revenue and 37 percent of digital net revenue. This translates into \$1.386 billion USD (EA, 2019a, p. 33, 2019b, p. 3).

## 5.1 Antecedents and Success Factors

Through our literature review, observation and interviews, we have identified features that we consider to have been integral to the success of GaaS games. The individual features mentioned do not necessarily apply to all GaaS games. Selection criteria was thus not based solely on universality, impact was also an important consideration in its own right. As an example, many GaaS games do not have 'black' and 'grey' markets or gamblification mechanics. However, for some games one of these features or a combination of both have led to record breaking revenue generation.

### 5.1.1 Digital payment systems

Alongside the commodification of attention, mechanisms for exchange of Fiat currency has become omnipresent, allowing for the faster circulation of capital (V. R. Manzerolle & Kjösen, 2012). Digital payment solutions in combination with the pervasiveness of mobile devices has led to *"an all-encompassing market field in which the potential for market/commercial transactions are always 'ready-to-hand'"* (V. Manzerolle & Wiseman, 2016, p. 395). This has also led to the possibility of having 'ownership' over consumer payments (Maurer, 2012). App stores for example can control exchanges within their platforms and charge a transaction fee or a percentage of revenue. Many games, and certainly the majority of the mobile kind, are subject to this control. It is common for games to have an in-game store that is linked to an app store payment system. It exchanges real money for goods usable in the game's virtual economy, typically symbolised by a virtual currency. Once this conversion has been done, control over spending mechanics of converted means resides with a game's proprietor.

### 5.1.2 Commodification of virtual worlds

While ubiquity of digital payment systems has created the potential for fast circulation of capital, there remains the barrier of needs (V. R. Manzerolle & Kjösen, 2012). Without need there is no motive for exchange and circulation. On one level videogames compete with other categories of digital media to fulfil needs for entertainment, social connection, achievement and more. However, videogames are virtual worlds that can encompass an infinite number of

virtual constructs. These virtual worlds can, and often are, completely controlled by the game's proprietor. Once a videogame has won the competition to fulfil a user's need, the user engages with the virtual world. Here the game is free to impose goals and ways to achieve those goals. Or, it can simply make the virtual world available to users and let them set their own goals. As long as the videogame continues to fulfil the users initial need, the one that led the user to engage with the game, the virtual world can be modulated to serve the proprietor's needs. With games as a product, this modulation was typically done with a desire to sell games. Providing a challenging and compelling experience could result in good reviews which in turn could lead to selling more copies of the game. In-game economies in were designed with this in mind. Virtual currency could only be earned within the game and the mechanics with which this was done was designed to be rewarding. With GaaS the virtual world has instead been commodified; virtual currency can now be purchased in exchange for real money and game mechanics are deliberately designed to encourage this. The strategy of the proprietor has shifted from game sale profits to profit from virtual economies, attention and subscriptions. Essentially, creators of GaaS games can design needs within the virtual worlds and then sell the means to meet them (Hamari & Lehdonvirta, 2010). Again, the caveat of meeting and continuing to meet the user's original need still applies.

The emphasis placed on designing games for need creation was confirmed in our interview with Dean: *"some companies are probably and definitely using sort of psychologists to sort of extrapolate and prey on even gambling aspects of the brain, I think, and the addictive personality and the nature of some of these mechanics in the games."* (Interview, February 2020, time: 00:02:10).

Through our own observation we also came to see how game proprietors imposed artificial limits on their virtual worlds in order to commodify them. Taking one example, many games have inventory limits that defines how many items a player character can carry or store in their inventory. In the real world, this seems natural as objects have physical properties, such as mass and volume. In the virtual world there are no barriers to having an infinite collection of virtual objects. Yet imposing such limits can generate revenue by selling the means to overcome them. In the game 'Escape From Takrov player inventory space depends on how much a player has payed for the game. In CS:GO players wanting more inventory space have to pay a small fee per 1.000 extra slots.

### 5.1.3 'Black' and 'grey' markets for virtual goods

Videogame proprietors tend to claim the right to control of markets through which virtual items can be commodified. This right is generally established in videogame EULAs. This is of marked importance for games employing a type 1 or 2 virtual economy. But for games that

implement user trading limiting it to an in-game market is almost impossible. Just as digital media and payment solutions has enabled proprietors to establish such in-game markets, users and 3<sup>rd</sup> parties can utilize the same means to externalise an in-game market. For example, A user wishing to sell some virtual currency for a game can advertise this on eBay or perhaps a game forum. If a potential customer is found, the virtual currency is transferred through the in-game marketplace while a digital payment is made to the seller over PayPal or any other convenient payment solution. This is how a type 1 or type 2 virtual economy can be used for RMT, effectively making it a type 3. A whole separate but interconnected ecosystem has evolved around this practise. While this is unsanctioned use, it could well be argued that it adds value to videogames proprietor as it increases engagement (UK Gambling Commission, n.d., para. 4.12). Hence the attempts by game proprietors to limit RMT might be more of a maintenance of a façade to avoid legal exposure. Regardless of the videogame proprietors intent, it is clear that any efforts to reign in these practices have failed and these 'black markets' are prevalent throughout the overall videogame ecosystem(UK Gambling Commission, n.d., para. 4.5).

#### 5.1.4 Continuous update cycle

As GaaS are dependent on sustained engagement to create a revenue flow, the question of how to achieve this naturally arises. Continually updating the content of a game is one solution, as Dean explains: "But you normally see regular content drops to sort of keep retention high like the games, like sort of Warframe, Runescape. They'll use it with story quests as well. So there'll be an overarching story theme that you can continue to play. So the game is never over in that sense, which is quite good. I do play a lot of them myself as well." (Interview, February 2020, Time: 00:05:58)

#### 5.1.5 Esports

Jacob (Personal Communication) points out, that the top esports competitions are what the premier league is to football. It is the top competition for the best players. A way for users to keep engaged with the subject of their interest more than just playing it.

It creates user retention with the topic, even when they are not actively consuming the game as a service, and the high level competitions and leagues offer a great marketing opportunity for the game itself, but also for sponsorships, and allows to create an economic ecosystem of endemic brands around the game. Just like in regular sports where sporting apparel brands are tight intrinsically to a sport, which brings in most of their revenue.

An engaging top level competition, with it's own super star players, one the one hand motivates players to continue to be "on the grind" with the dream of having their own career in esports, and stick around for the enjoyment.

Successful esports endeavours also prolong the shelf-life of games, bringing the competitive aspect to the foreground, as is the case most prominently with CS:GO that by modern day video game standards has very low graphic standards, yet it one of the dominating esports titles. Esports also play an important role in UGC creation for games, that are focussed on competition, rather than narrative exploration and serve as substitute for Let's Play content that is created around on more story driven games or GaaS.

It therefore has become something that game developers actively facilitate and create like for example the franchised Overwatch league, or the new franchised COD league. In both instances the game publisher actively creates a league trying to mimic the success of CS:GO and similar esports.

#### 5.1.6 User Generated Content

While creating new content and updating a game is essential for the GaaS model to work, this process is also very labour intensive and require highly skilled artists, programmers and animators. However, if a game has a dedicated community, a lot of this work can be outsourced to users. Even before the rise of GaaS, users themselves congregated around certain games and kept them alive through user generated content, often known as modding. However, while this was a significant benefit for game proprietors, in the form of branding and reach, revenue generation from this was limited, as the user generated content was made available for free. Without subscriptions or microtransactions there was no way to monetise all this content and engagement. One infamous example of missed opportunity is that of the 2002 game World of Warcraft 3. The game had extensive support for modifying the game to create new maps, characters and gameplay modes. One mod, Defence of The Ancient (DOTA) was developed in several different versions by many different users. Over time the game mode became incredibly popular, but Blizzard, the game proprietor failed to monetize it. Instead, some of the users involved in creating the mod either formed their own company or were hired by one to make a stand-alone commercial version of DOTA. The lenient Warcraft 3 EULA prevented Blizzard from doing much about this and has become a well-known example in the legal sphere dealing with videogames(Lexology, 2018). The DOTA type genre became known as Multiplayer Online Battle Arena (MOBA) and has spawned some of the world's most successful GaaS games, such as League of Legends and DOTA2 (Developed by Valve NOT Blizzard). DOTA 2 generated around \$18 million USD of revenue per month in

2015(Grubb, 2015). While Blizzard created its own MOBA eventually, it came too late and failed to get traction within an increasingly crowded genre. The legacy of this reared its head again in 2020 when Blizzard re-released Warcraft 3 with updated graphics and some minor changes and named it Warcraft 3 Reforged. The EULA had been updated to give Activision Blizzard exclusive ownership of any mods created for the game. While non-exclusive ownership clauses are common in videogame EULAs, exclusive clauses are not. Its inclusion in the Reforged EULA is likely a consequence of DOTA. The aggressive ownership claim of user generated content by Blizzard led to widespread condemnation in the gaming community. Beyond the strict EULA the game was also missing promised features, had server issues on release and a disappointing graphics upgrade(Fenlon, 2020).

It is clear, that with GaaS, the industry has realised the full potential of user generated content and have sought to commodify it, by integrating it into the virtual economy. One of the trailblazers of this is Team Fortress 2 (TF2). The game initially was a P2P game without virtual items, but these were later introduced and the game became F2P. Olivier recounts: *“but I do remember it very much it very much not being part of the game at all and then all of a sudden hats and you know different costumes and everything you could think of was suddenly the hats craze being the main one”* (Interview, February 2020, Time: 00:05:35). Valve made some guidelines available and opened up for users to submit their own virtual item creations for the game. The best ones were then selected and put in to TF2 as a purchasable and tradeable virtual object. To further incentivise user generated content, a part of the revenue from a virtual item’s sales was shared with its creator. We interviewed NapyDaWise (his gamer name), who contributed several items to TF2 and made over €60.000 EUR from revenue sharing. He succinctly describes the appeal to creators and game proprietors: *“Embrace the community 8 years later I still get royalties from my items, I can’t even begin to imagine how much Valve is making.”* (Interview, February 2020, Time 01:05)

#### 5.1.7 Social networks and communities

In our interviews with gamers and creators, it became apparent how big a role social connection played for their gaming and in turn how important gaming was for their social relations. Olivier disclosed during his interviews that the majority of his online social presence is in the gaming space. Compared to traditional social media, in this case Facebook, he estimated that he used 1% or less interacting with others through it compared to Steam and Discord. Discoverability also had a very large social component, returning to Olivier, he himself introduced a number of friends to Steam and got them to use the platform through his recommendation. His use of the aforementioned Discord started when he was introduced to it by a friend. As for games, he was introduced to Rocket League and Rainbow 6 Siege by friends. Victor began playing PC games and using Steam after his mom’s partner introduced

him to it. This ties in with the literature, where social elements are one of the central elements of the models, such as relatedness in SDT, Subjective Norm in TPB, Social Integrative motivations in UGT and Critical Mass, stemming from network effects and highlighted in the meta review. Our industry expert mirrored the importance of social networks and communities in both attracting players and retaining them. Poppy identified one challenge for game companies; The high availability of social and communicative tools has spread these networks over a wide range of platforms, meaning that an individual company is not entirely in control of the channels they use to engage with their community of players.

#### 5.1.8 Digital influencers, Live Streaming and VOD

On the topic of social networks and communities, Digital influencers can serve as key nodes within these, gathering communities around themselves and the games that they play. They play an important part in shaping the Subjective Norm. All of our industry expert interviewees (Christopher, Jacob, Poppy and Dean) acknowledge the importance of influencers in reaching and engaging with gaming communities. Poppy disclosed that her former employee particularly targeted influencers for a humorous surgeon simulator game, naming organs after influencers. The strategy paid off when PewDiePie made a video of playing the game, generating millions of views (Interview, February 2020, Time 00:17:05). The appearance of approachability and interactivity ascribed to many influencers is also important to GaaS. Christopher backs this up pointing out that influencers, in the form of streamers, are perceived as credible and authentic. Brands and games can capitalize on this by associating themselves with these influencers. He further believes that live streaming has had a massive impact on the videogame industry: *“It was the game changer for everything. It has brought in sponsors, also making all the games grow, being not only something you that you play as an esports, actually bring in an audience for people to watch. So, I think this was the biggest game changer [...] I mean it keeps continue to grow and we are also starting to see a lot of competition with YouTube and Facebook trying to tap in and also for example Mixer from Microsoft. Streaming is growing the interest. For me when I am working, but there is a tournament happening, I can have the stream open in the background and you can see what other are doing. You just feel interested.”* (Interview, February 2020, Time: 00:34:05).

Beyond providing a channel to engage with a game outside of the game medium itself, live streaming and VOD also serves as a platform for discoverability. This is reflected both in literature (Johnson & Woodcock, 2018) and in our interviews. Olivier for example discovered Fortnite when one of his favourite streamers began playing the game.

### 5.1.9 Multimedia, Crossmedia and Transmedia

The rise of streaming, VOD and other ways of engaging with gaming highlights the impact of evolving media on the videogame community. While a game in itself represents both a media form and a media channel, the community and story can extend way beyond its own channel and form. Games are inherently a form of multimedia, they include audio, video, text and so on. The main channel for engaging with videogames used to be the game itself and to some extent still is. But now gaming has become expanded across media, from live streaming to VOD, fan websites, television, news, social media and even combining and blending physical and virtual space through events such as esports tournament. Some will watch a tournament while being physically present at the venue while many others will watch it through a stream or from within a game client. The former audience will be attending a physical location but watching a tournament that takes place within the virtual world, thus blurring the lines between virtual and physical space.

With GaaS, there often is one virtual world that contains an ever-evolving story, be that an overarching story, a set of smaller stories or a combination. While these stories are grounded in the game world, they can be expressed in many forms and through many channels. Fan sites can write their own stories or game proprietors can license rights to their IP to film or television companies. And the reverse is true, game proprietors can integrate stories and elements originating from gamer and influencers into their game or collaborate with other creative IP holders to bring their respective stories and universe together if only for a while. Fortnite in particular has been very good at doing the latter collaborating with movie IP to merge their universes. The transmedia nature of many GaaS games makes them appear omnipresent at times and provides them with many points of entry for engagement.

### 5.1.10 IaaS, PaaS, SaaS

Games as a Service relies on other services for development and operation. An example is the aforementioned digital payment systems. The online nature of many GaaS games require ICT infrastructure to function and expertise to set up and operate it. Much of the setup and operation used to be handled by developers or publishers, but with the rise of IaaS, PaaS and SaaS this can be more efficiently handled by outside companies. As there is presently intense competition to be the leader of these services, the videogame industry has a strong bargaining position.

## 5.2 Revenue models

The mix of revenue models available for GaaS games to utilize is also a big part of their success. In this section we explore the most prominent ones.

### 5.2.1 Video games as a product

The traditional way of monetizing video games, especially for PC, consoles and handhelds, has been a pay to play approach (Tomić, 2017). The game is seen as a product that is created and then sold in a finished and static state. The user makes a one-time purchase of the game and gets unlimited access to play the game. This was largely due to the distribution methods at the time; games were on a physical medium such as a cartridge or CD. Distributing added content or bug fixes to end users after release was very difficult and expensive; selling a complete product was therefore the way to go. This business model carries some inherent risks though: it is expensive to produce major videogame titles and there is no guarantee that they will sell enough to make a return on investment. Once a user has been sold a copy of the game, it is difficult to gain further revenue from that user. One way of increasing revenue is by making an expansion to the game. An expansion is generally a continuation or addition to a game that provides it with new gameplay. Expansions are less costly to make than a sequel or a prequel as they use the same engine as the base game and many assets can usually be reused when making the expansions. As the user must have the base game in order to play the expansion, for an expansion to be economically viable, the base game must have sold well. Hence an expansion is unsuited to make up for a lack of sales of a game. As internet infrastructure matured and adoption became widespread, digital distribution of games became an option. Though the pay to play model still dominated, the increasing ease of distributing additional content post release opened the doors for new business models.

### 5.2.2 Individual game subscription

World of Warcraft is perhaps the most well-known and successful videogame with a subscription component as a key feature of its revenue model. The game falls into the category of a Massive Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Game (MMORPG). As the name implies these types of games are designed to be played online in virtual worlds with many other players. For a game developer or publisher, this requires a significant investment in networking code and server hosting. The reward for this is a game ideal for a subscription model and thereby recurring revenue. World of Warcraft itself was launched in 2004. At launch the game cost \$49.99 USD and included a one-month subscription. To continue playing beyond this, users would have to pay between \$14.99 USD and \$12.99 USD per month depending on the duration of their subscription (Gamesindustry.biz, 2004). At one point it was estimated that income from subscriptions came close to \$180 million USD per month (Leack, 2017). While World of Warcraft has since divested its revenue generation streams, including releasing expansions and introducing microtransaction, subscriptions continue to be a significant source of income. Even though subscription-based games have the potential for substantial recurring revenue generation, major titles can be extremely expensive to produce, and retaining a

subscribing player base can be challenging. The subscription based model for individual games has in general fallen out of favour, with microtransactions being the preferred mode of sustained revenue generation(Leack, 2017).

### 5.2.3 Early Access

Developing a video game can be very expensive and time consuming and there is no guarantee that the game will generate a return on the investment. One way of reducing financial risk is by shortening the time to market. A game goes through a number of phases throughout its development but tends to reach a stage where a core set of gameplay mechanics are in place relatively early in the development cycle. To capitalize on this, the concept of an early access release has become increasingly popular amongst game developers. Once a game has reached a playable state, it is made available to users with the early access branding and is usually sold at a discounted price in relation to the expected price for the full game. This has several benefits to the game developers, it creates a revenue stream early on and helps gauge interest in the game, alleviating some of the financial risk. It also provides a pool of users that provides feedback and have essentially paid to become game testers. Early access can also help with marketing, every time new content is added, or an update is rolled out there is an opportunity to draw attention and promote the game. What makes this unique to early access is that the content and updates are already part of the game's development, and as such doesn't require extra resources to produce. The early access model has proven especially popular with smaller developers that lack upfront funding(Hinton, 2014) and has found its way into mainstream gaming, in no small part due to the adoption of the category by the Steam game distribution platform in 2013(Valve, 2013).

### 5.2.4 Crowdfunding

Though not a unique business model to the video game industry, crowdfunding has nevertheless seen some notable success and controversy within it. In some sense crowdfunding has similarities to the early access model, as potential users pay upfront for a product that hasn't been completed yet with all the risks that this entails. The expectation is that their financial contribution will be used for the development of said product. Steam, arguably the largest purveyor of early access games, do however explicitly state that early access should not be used on its platform as crowdfunding and continues to emphasise that developers must have other funding options in place(Steamworks, n.d.). Furthermore, it highlights that an early access title must provide a core of gameplay and be more than merely a tech demo. For crowdfunding requirements vary from platform to platform, but they tend to be much less restrictive in terms of what must be provided at the onset of a funding campaign.

The yet to be completed space sim game “Star Citizen” perhaps best represents the possibilities and pitfalls of videogame crowdfunding. Development of the game was started in 2011, but only really gained attention after a Kickstarter campaign in 2012. Promising a release in 2014, as of writing the game is still at an alpha stage with no firm release date in sight. Nevertheless the game has had the most funds raised ever from crowdfunding with the exception of blockchain based projects(Perez & Vardi, 2019). In early 2020 it had raised more than \$260 million USD(RST, n.d.).

### 5.2.5 Advergaming

Sharma (2014) defines advergaming as the “process in which advertising message, logo of company or other information about the brand is incorporated with online games or videos games.”

These can be attributed to three main categories:

1. Ads integrated into the game play as ads.

An example for this is the cooperation of Sennheiser and Need for Speed Payback. The peripheral company and the game developer cooperated on creating gaming headsets for the game part of the licensing agreement, was the display of the brand and their headsets on the billboards featured in the game (Sennheiser Communications, Internal Document, 2017). The advertisement here is part of the game and happens within the virtual universe of the game.

2. Ads in exchange for progression or in-game currency.

A monetization technique employed by many free to play mobile games. In exchange for in game currency, that reduced the grind time or allows for purchase of specific skins and weapons, the user can watch an add to receive a certain amount of the virtual currency. In this form of advergaming, the user is taken out of the game environment. The ad is not part of the game itself, often you get redirected to another platform. Monetization is here usually driven through platforms such as Mintegral, that specializes in in game ads placements. As Poppy (Interview, February 2020) points out there are many points that need to be considered to do free to play with having ads as the main source of revenue well. According to her, for Sybo games this part of advergaming was an important part of their revenue model, as “most players don’t spend a whole bunch of cash” (Interview, February 2020 [00:09:14.830]), this particular applies to countries with a lower monthly income, that make up a bulk of the player base of Subway Surfer.

### 3. Adgames for marketing purposes

Another revenue model for game publishers or studios can be games as ads. Meaning that the entire game serves as promotional tool. That can include particular levels included into the games that are sponsored by a company for marketing purposes, or complete games like the recent "I Love You Colonel Sanders: A Finger Licking Good Dating Simulator". The purpose here is not for the game itself to make the money, but rather as in any marketing material produced, the revenue comes from the production of the element.

#### 5.2.6 Data gathering

In their latest article about Data and Analytics Forbes(2020) is quoting a Deloitte survey with saying

*"49 percent of respondents said analytics helps them make better decisions, 16 percent say that it better enables key strategic initiatives, and 10 percent say it helps them improve relationships with both customers and business partners."*

Data has become at the centre of many business, and the core of business models of social media giants like Facebook. Data also plays an important role in GaaS. There are two main areas of Data that can be gathered from users. Data about how the user interact with the game, and data about the users themselves.

Data about how users interact with games help in improving the game, but also help to facilitation of the monetization from the game itself. According to Poppy (Interview, 2020) it is key for games to gather data as the developer needs to know *"how often people play, when do they play, if there's a part of the game that they stop at. What is it? How can you get them playing longer? What makes people spend money and what makes people not spend? These kinds of analytics can all be built into these kind of games to help shape it."*

Dean (Interview, 2020) points out that gathering data and analytics are especially important in the beta phase, to be able to monetize the game properly. While the producers might have an idea, it is only through testing with cohorts or in open beta, possible to find the "sweet spot" where monetization meets "grindability" in a way to no frustrate the user. He points out that the user feedback, and abandonment rates are really necessary to balance the in-game economy.

Personal user data on the other hand is directly monetizable, without adjusting the game for it. User demographics are essential for advergaming, e.g. for the display of ads. The better the demographic data available, the better the CTR, and with that more income.

The same goes for partnerships, as Poppy (Interview, 2020) points out, for companies wanting to partner with games it is important to know who the players are. So that it matches with the brands strategy. Jacob (Interview 2020) voices a similar sentiment. Where Data quality becomes. That player or viewer numbers by itself are not of much use, if they are in the wrong demographic.

However, the gathering of user related data, is increasingly facing scrutiny from consumer protection organizations.

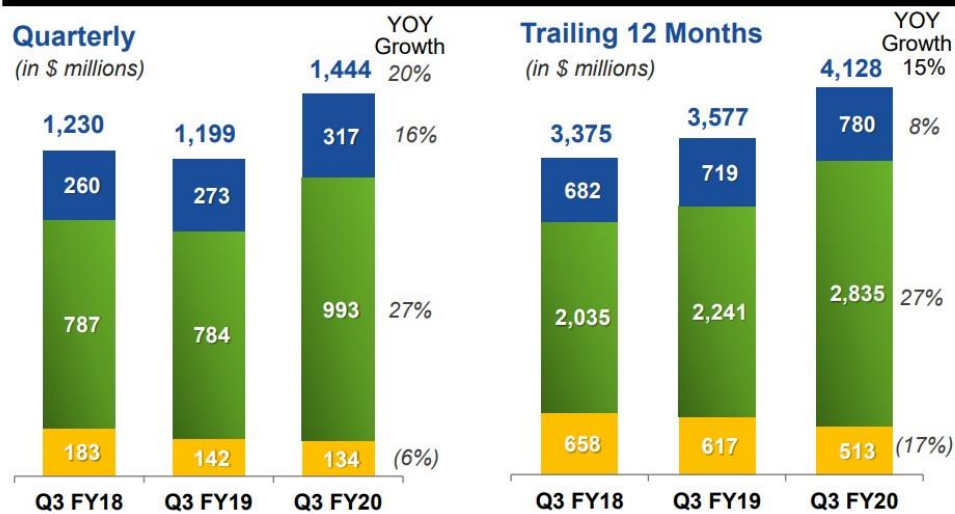
### 5.2.7 Microtransactions

It is difficult to name anything that has had as much influence on videogame business models and game design as microtransactions. While seemingly similar to the concept of micropayments, microtransaction are defined by their domain (apps and games) rather than their magnitude(Tomić, 2018), which can fall within an expansive range even if the median microtransaction payment tends to be small. Thus the umbrella term refers to the purchase of further content or benefits for a game(McCaffrey, 2019). Microtransactions are most commonly associated with games that are free, aptly known as free to play games, but they can be implemented in any game regardless of pricing model. The mobile gaming market has played a big part in laying the foundations for microtransactions and their subsequent rise to popularity. As smartphone app stores emerged as a new marketplace, mobile game developers quickly realised that consumers were unwilling to pay the same upfront price for a mobile game as for a pc or console game(Tomić, 2018). To combat this, many games were offered for free, relying instead on ads and/or charging users for premium features and items. On a technical and business level the homogenised digital payment system integrated into app stores made these transactions easy to handle for both consumers and developers. This combination of a large potential customer base and a platform which enables frictionless transactions has propelled some free to play mobile games to astounding financial success. For instance, one of the most well-known titles, Candy Crush, at its peak in 2015 generated more than \$1.8 billion USD of revenue(Minotti, 2019). The success of free to play mobile games and a willingness amongst users to pay for in-game items did not go unnoticed by the wider gaming industry. Microtransactions have since proceeded to proliferate across all hardware platforms.

## EA Digital Net Bookings by Composition



Full Game Downloads Live Services Mobile<sup>1</sup>



1. Mobile digital net bookings only; excludes non-digital mobile items such as licensing revenue.

Figure 7: This slide shows how much 'Live Services' makes up of EA's digital revenue (EA, 2020, p. 5)

Some of the foremost benefits of microtransactions for the videogame industry is increased cash flow stability, asset reuse, decreased vulnerability to piracy and increased customer revenue potential (Tomić, 2018). Microtransactions have the potential to create revenue for as long as a game has users playing it, consequently it provides a more steady and predictable cash flow compared to a upfront pay to play model where the majority of revenue is expected to be shortly after a game is released. Whereas creating a new game is very labour and resource intensive, adding content to an existing game is much less demanding; many assets can be reused or only slightly modified, cutting development time significantly. Piracy is much less of an issue for free to play games that relies on microtransactions for revenue generation, as much of the incentive for pirating these games is removed. With a pure pay to play model, the revenue generated from a user is generally limited to a single purchase of the game. With a free to play game some users, maybe even the majority, won't provide any revenue, but from users that do engage with microtransactions, the revenue potential is only limited by the content available for purchase, which can be expanded over time. The rise of the microtransaction model has not been free of controversy however; legal and ethical objections have been raised to some implementations and there has been significant pushback from users of pay to play games.

### 5.2.8 Categories of microtransactions

There is a myriad of different ways to monetize games with microtransactions, but they tend to fall within one or more of these categories: Cosmetics, additional content and gameplay

advantages. The category of cosmetics, also referred to as customization, denotes microtransactions that does not significantly impact core gameplay balance such as giving the user a competitive advantage. Instead they focus on giving them the ability to customize various aspects of the game, particularly the appearance of items such as weapons or player characters. Though cosmetics were initially met with ridicule and doubts about the willingness to pay to modify the appearance of virtual items, cosmetic microtransactions has become ubiquitous in the video game industry(Senior, 2019). They are particularly effective in multiplayer games, where cosmetics can be used for virtual self-representation and function as symbols to convey status, thereby adding a social incentive to purchase cosmetics(Hernandez, 2019).

Additional content serves to extend the gameplay of a title and can take many forms; it can be similar in content to an expansion, providing additional gameplay and storyline, but it can also be much smaller in scope, such as a music track for a music-based game, a new map for a multiplayer game or a new vehicle for a simulation. As the internet was crucial in enabling and delivering additional content to a game after launch, post launch content is widely known as Downloadable Content or DLC for short. While some additional content is free, it mostly tends to be made available for purchase. Prices can vary wildly from a couple of dollars for a music track, to tens of dollars for content that is closer in nature to an expansion. The amount of and total value of additional content available also differs from game to game but can exceed the initial purchase price for the game. One edge case is Rock Band 3, a 2010 music game for consoles that allows users to play various instruments to a range of music tracks accompanied by visuals indicating which buttons to press. The base game included a selection of music tracks and visuals, but a much larger collection was released subsequently for purchase as DLC. The combined cost for a user to get all DLC for the game would exceed \$5.000 USD(RockBandAide, 2012), which is nearly 100 times the price of the base game.

Gameplay advantage microtransactions confer special benefits to the users that purchase them and as such affects core gameplay balance. These benefits are either not available to other users or requires significant time and/or effort to obtain. The latter type is predominantly used in free to play mobile games; crops in FarmVille takes time to grow and hearts (lives) in Candy crush takes time to regenerate. Microtransactions allows users to bypass these restrictions at a price. This phenomenon has also found its way into some pay to play games where it has been described as "Time Savers"(Tassi, 2019) and caused controversy with speculation that in game progression has been designed intentionally to be more tedious than necessary in order to incentivise their purchase. Another common microtransaction type modifies the gameplay or player abilities allowing users to perform better. This type has been

described as a commodification of the 'cheats' that were often implemented by developers in older pc or console games (King & Delfabbro, 2018). In multiplayer games such microtransactions are especially impactful as they provide a competitive edge and tilt the balance in favour of paying users. This has ruffled some feathers amongst players and games implementing these mechanics are frequently given the derogatory "Pay to Win" label (Huang, 2018). Specific implementations vary dependent on the type of game and can take many forms, be it a more powerful weapon, a skilled character, more health or perhaps special abilities.

### 5.2.9 Virtual goods in games

The aforementioned World of Warcraft provides a good example as one of the most popular games to have extensive trade of virtual items. The online nature of the game allowed it to easily integrate a marketplace where players could trade virtual items or sell them for virtual gold. From the developer's perspective this was meant to be a closed loop system as can be seen in the original Terms of Use (ToU) where Blizzard expressly claims ownership of characters and items and prohibits any sale of these for real money (Blizzard, 2004). The reason for this is likely to be partly grounded in legal exposure as previously discussed, but prevailing sentiment amongst gamers used to the pay to play model could also have played a part. The idea of some users being able to bypass the time and effort normally required to achieve success in a game just by the virtue of their real-world wealth was seen as unfair and tantamount to cheating (Stephens, 2002). Having made the game economy a closed system the developers wouldn't see any direct revenue from the real-world trade of virtual goods, thereby giving them little incentive to risk upsetting part of their user base. As World of Warcraft contains both Player versus Environment (PvE) and Player versus Player (PvP) elements, buying virtual goods with real money could give a clear competitive edge against other players. Despite the ToU and possible resentment from their peers, many users of the game went ahead and sold items from the game for real money anyway. This was typically done by using third-party platforms such as eBay. A virtual item would be listed on the third-party platform; once sold it would be transferred within the game through the built-in marketplace. Money could even be earned by 'farming' gold, that is playing the game with the aim of obtaining the most amount of gold in the least amount of time and then selling it. A rough estimate put income from gold farming at around \$3 USD an hour (Wilson, 2006). Another strategy was to buy and sell accounts that had high level characters and items attached. One such account was sold for more than \$9,000 USD, though reportedly the account was suspended shortly thereafter due to publicity surrounding it alerting Blizzard to the sale (Miller, 2007).

A few games from that era took a different approach though and implemented a fully bidirectional virtual economy. One example of this is Entropia Universe which gained public

attention when a user bought a virtual Island in the game for \$26.000 USD (BBC News, 2004) and then again when another user paid \$635.000 USD for a virtual nightclub (Ke, Ba, Stallaert, & Zhang, 2012, p. 1040). In China it was estimated that sales of virtual goods related to gaming went from \$296 million USD in 2006 to \$1.3 billion in 2009 (Lakhani, 2014, p. 109). In some sense, the shift from the up-front purchase pay to play model towards microtransaction driven revenue can be seen as game developers recognising the value gamers place on virtual items. The reaction has then been to commodify these items themselves through in-game stores with a unidirectional economy.

#### 5.2.10 Virtual currency in games

Virtual currencies in games with microtransactions tends to belong to the second type, partly to keep value locked into the system and partly because it limits legal and regulatory exposure in comparison to type three. Some games use more than one virtual currency, such as having a type one currency that can be earned in-game and a type two currency that can only be purchased, with the latter being of far more value (Tomić, 2018). There are numerous advantages for developers in using virtual currency for in-game stores. It obfuscates the cost of the content, leaving users without a real world frame of reference when judging whether to purchase. Developers have control over the exchange of virtual currencies, which enables them to sell the currency in bundles rather than using a fixed exchange rate. Several bundles can be made available at different rates; the larger the bundle the better the rate. This incentivises more spending. In addition, content can be priced so that it does not correspond in value to any of the bundles, leaving users with an excess of the virtual currency after a purchase, thereby providing a sense of investment in the game. Managing regional pricing and marketing is also simplified; the cost of content displayed in virtual currency remains the same across all regions, only the pricing of currency bundles needs to be converted into regional sovereign currency.

As desire to make a purchase mainly arises during interaction with a game and can be shaped by the experience a user is having, perhaps progress seems slow or maybe an item feels underpowered or looks unattractive. Regardless of what sparks the impulse to purchase, it is essential for revenue generation that acting on said impulse is as simple and pain free as possible (Tomić, 2018). To achieve this, most games utilizing microtransactions have a digital store integrated into the game that allows purchases to be completed without closing the game. This is one of the reasons why the digital payment systems found in app stores and game distribution platforms are so crucial to the success of microtransactions. But even though app stores and other game distribution platforms has enabled easy payment with real money, there can still be checks, such as entering a password or even just pressing a button to confirm a purchase. With virtual currency, once the user has obtained it, the developer has

complete control of the in-game purchase process; spending the virtual currency can be done without any checks or confirmation thereby minimizing disruption of in-game immersion and maximising the chances of impulse buying.

#### 5.2.11 Games as a subscription service

Beyond the subscription model for individual games, attempts at making a subscription-based service for access to an evolving catalogue of games has been made. Reminiscent and by some even directly compared to the business models of film and series streaming services(Tassi, 2017), a number of video game subscription services have been launched by major players in the industry. There is some interesting variance in the business plans being employed though, that differentiates these services. Apple launched its own game subscription service, Apple Arcade, in late 2019 for \$4.99 USD per month. This gives users unlimited access to +100 games in the Apple Arcade catalogue(Apple, 2019) across the Apple ecosystem of devices. Of particular note is the promise that games in the subscription service will be free of “any ads or additional purchases”(Apple, 2019). This is a significant departure from current trends, particularly in the sphere of mobile games, where ads and microtransactions remain dominant.

Microsoft has a similar concept with its Xbox Game Pass, also providing access to a changing catalogue of +100 games playable across their range of Xbox consoles and PC(Microsoft, 2020). Unlike Apple Arcade, the Xbox Game Pass includes games with microtransactions.

## 5.2.12 Videogame Streaming

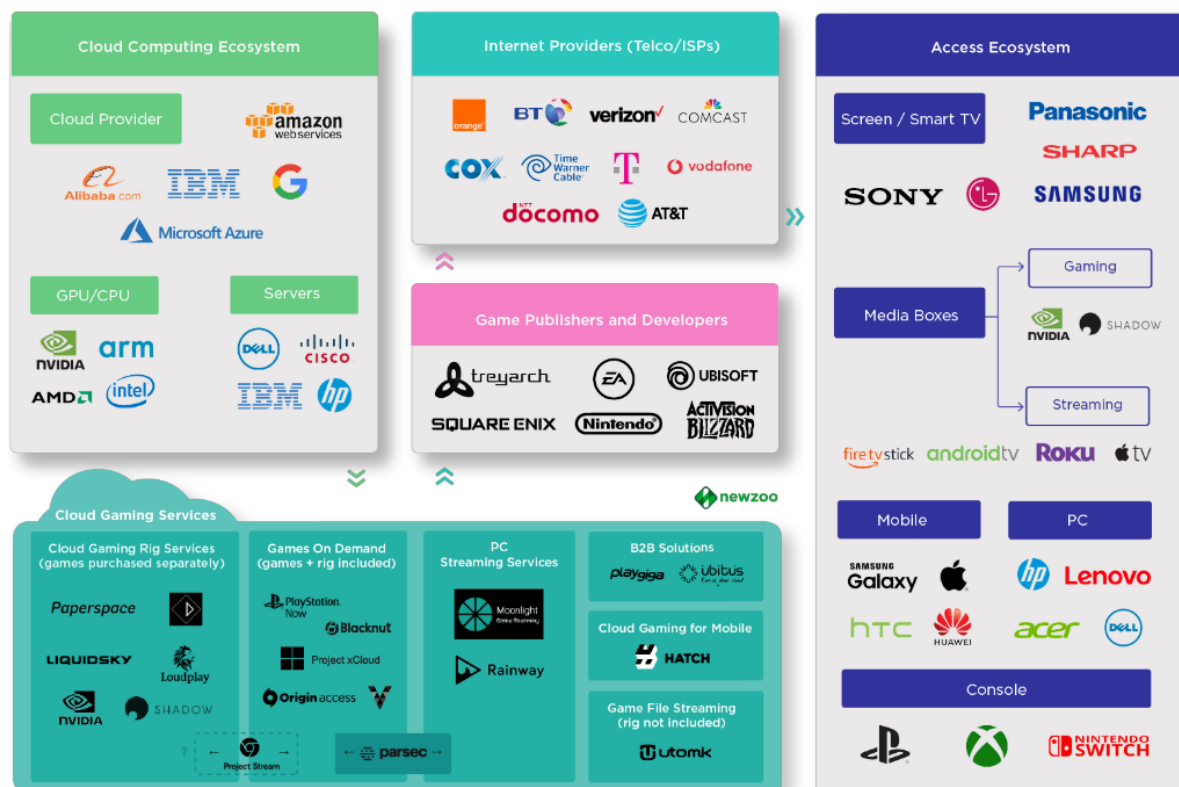


Figure 8: Videogame streaming ecosystem overview from Newzoo report(2018, p. 13).

Some high-profile Cloud-based video game streaming service has been made available within the last year. These services can handle all storage and computation operations in the cloud. Thereby end users are only required to have a suitable screen, input device and a good internet connection in order to play games. This model however has a serious technical obstacle to solve in order to achieve widespread adoption. By its nature, the content of a videogame is shaped by input from the user through an input device, such as a keyboard or a gamepad. The time between a user performs an action on the input device and that action being processed and displayed to the user is known as input lag. Having 500ms of input lag in a racing game for example, is similar to driving a car that takes half a second to start braking after the brake pedal is pressed. Input lag must thus be kept low in order to deliver a good experience. This is difficult to achieve when both input and response has to travel through the internet (Nelius, 2019). Despite this obstacle some subscription streaming services have been launched into the market. Sony's PlayStation Now, the recently launched Google Stadia and Nvidia GeForce Now are amongst these. Reception of these streaming services has been mixed, in part due to the technical issues, limited catalogue of available games and concerns about investing in an unproven service (Greenwald, 2019; Park, 2019). It remains to be seen whether this model will make it into the mainstream market or be relegated to a smaller niche

section. One of the most important factors in determining this will be the availability of the low latency 5G network to a large enough consumer base (Newzoo, 2018, p. 10).

### 5.3 Risks

With success there is inevitably also risks and we feel it is important to briefly touch upon some of these in this section.

#### 5.3.1 Increased scrutiny of gamblification and revenue streams

Many games employ randomisation mechanics reminiscent of gambling when selling virtual items. Popularly known as loot-boxes, these virtual containers can be purchased and opened by players. A range of items might be in the such a loot-box, but an algorithm determines what specific item a player will receive. Valuable items will have a low probability of being in any one loot-box and conversely low value items will have a high probability. As many loot-boxes are effectively bought with real money, the question has been raised as to whether they should be classed as gambling. This would have dire consequences for games relying on them for revenue, as stringent regulation might be applied, including age restrictions. Presently some titles employing loot-boxes, such as FIFA Ultimate Team, are rated PEGI 3, the most lenient rating available. The mainstream media has always had some coverage of gaming. Much of early reporting was sought to link video game violence to real world violence, and concern was often raised of videogames impact on kids and young people. This is a narrative that is still deployed by both media and politicians. As both gaming and digital payment became increasingly ubiquitous, some attention was brought to the extreme amounts of money spent in-game on virtual goods. In particular stories of children purchasing virtual goods for hundreds of dollars have kept appearing in the news. Often the children would have used a mobile device with a parent's credit card linked to an app store. In many cases the children wouldn't even be aware that they were spending real money. Many frustrated parents, out hundreds or even thousands of dollars, have told their stories to the media. The publicity has reached politicians and caused them to take notice. Some countries have passed laws that prohibit or severely restrict some of these gambling mechanics. They are covered in the legal section. Meanwhile, other countries are at the stage of conducting inquiries or proposing bills to deal with the issue. The UK House of Commons released a report from an inquiry into the gaming industry in late 2019. It was titled "Immersive and addictive technologies" and investigated psychosocial and financial harms of these technologies. It was deeply critical of the videogame industry and its ability to self-regulate. The industry's argued that loot-boxes and virtual items are not to be considered 'money's worth', thus not being applicable to gambling law. The inquiry found that unlicensed use of virtual items was a direct result of the games design and monetisation, undercutting the industries argument. Furthermore, cooperation with the inquiry was found to be sub-par, with representatives from the videogame industry being labelled

‘wilfully obtuse’ in places. Several recommendations were made, including calls for further research and a revision of the gambling laws and age rating practices. Inquiries like this indicate that the gaming industry is being scrutinized and regulation of some aspects of these mechanics might become subject to increased regulation or even outright bans.

While the income generated from a single revenue stream such as EA’s Ultimate Team can be very impressive, it can also present a risk to rely on a single revenue stream. In the case of Ultimate Team, income relies on loot-boxes that use gamblification mechanics. Given the political scrutiny of gamblification, this presents a clear risk to Ultimate Team and all other games that rely heavily on loot-boxes. It does seem that companies are aware of this, certainly EA is. In a form 10-Q report filed with the US Securities and Exchange Commission, EA acknowledges that Ultimate Team presents a risk and states: *“the growth and development of electronic commerce, virtual items and virtual currency have prompted calls for new laws and regulations, or the application of existing laws or regulations, that could limit or restrict the sale of our products and services”*(EA, 2019a, p. 52,55). That a credible threat exists is evident; Ultimate Team was singled out in the aforementioned UK inquiry into gamblification, with the company’s defence testimony of loot-boxes being described as “a bare face lie”(House of Commons DCMSC, 2019, para. 78)

### 5.3.2 Fragmented attitudes to revenue models

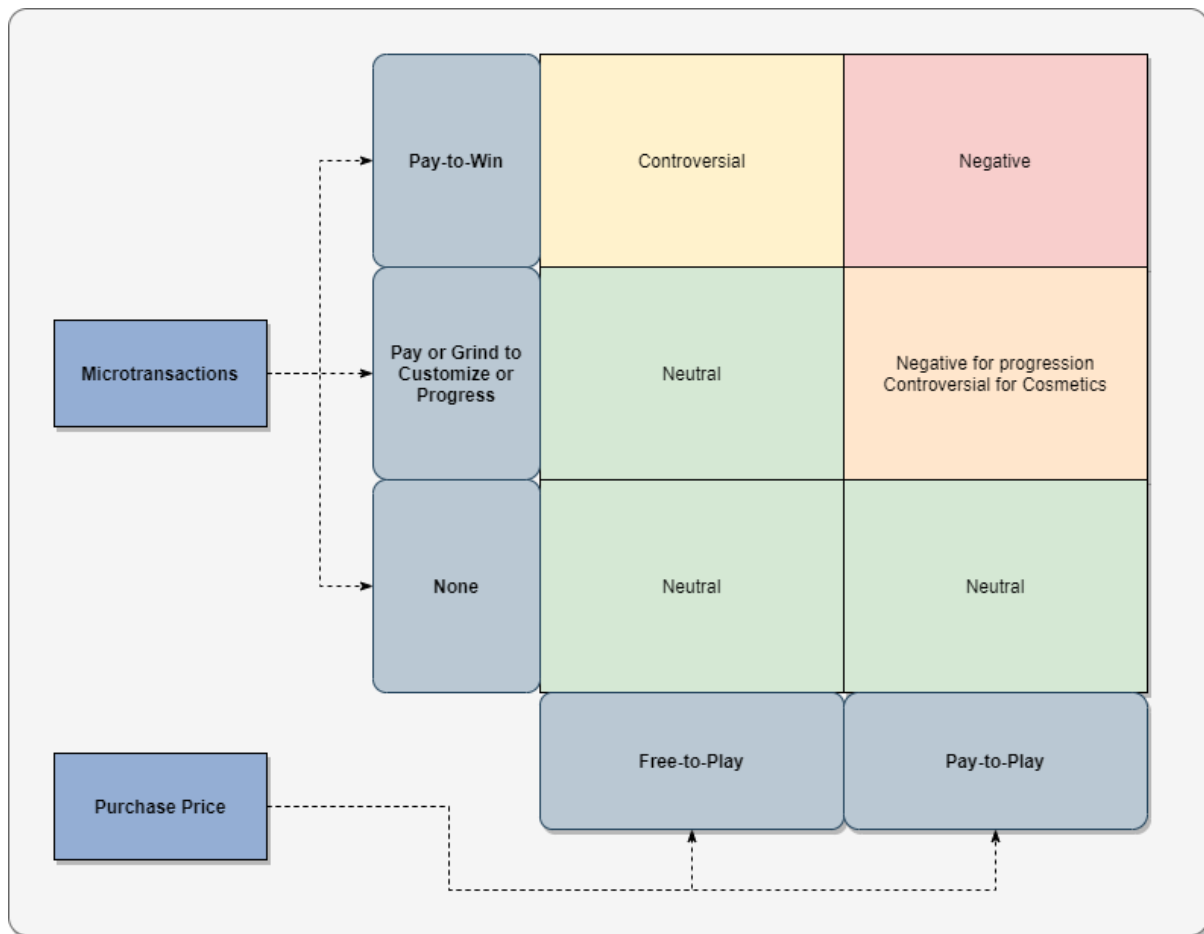


Figure 9: Attitudes to revenue models based on interviews

The change from up front purchase towards in-game purchases, also known as microtransactions, have led to an intensely emotional debate about its ethical implications within the gaming community (Fung, 2016, p. 240). The discussion is now mostly taking place in Western markets. In Asia, where microtransactions were pioneered, there is less debate and more acceptance of even more aggressive forms of microtransactions (Huang, 2018). In markets such as China, many consumers first internet capable device was a smartphone and thus they have been accustomed to in-app purchases right from the beginning. In western markets with a larger proportion of PC and console gamers, many consumers have experienced the transition from pay-to-play to GaaS and microtransactions. Western game media and KOIs have been and still are very negative towards aggressive monetisation (Fung, 2016). Figure 10 is useful in visualising attitudes to microtransactions. The most negative reactions are found in the upper right and middle quadrant. Here reside the games that charge upfront to play them, while also implementing microtransactions that allow players to pay to win. The previously discussed Ultimate Team from EA provides a good example. In FIFA Ultimate Team gathering a team of esports quality cost about 20 million FIFA coins (Porter,

2019). Playing the game earns an estimated 6.000 coins an hour(Laselle, 2020). It would thus take more than 130 days of constant play to obtain an esports worthy team, bearing in mind that it will then be outdated in less than a year once the next FIFA instalment is released. Paying to be esports competitive seems to be the only option, though that will cost over \$5.000 USD(Porter, 2019) This has attracted significant criticism from the community, and there is even an attempt at suing EA for its Pay-to-Win mechanics(Gibbs Law Group LLP, n.d.). Given that Ultimate Team generated a record \$1.386 billion USD in revenue during FY 2019 (EA, 2019a, p. 33, 2019b, p. 3), the negative attention has failed to impact the bottom line. This might be due to the enormous value of the FIFA IP. Less high-profile games using pay-to-win might fare significantly worse.

The middle right quadrant represents games that have an upfront cost and microtransactions other than Pay-to-Win. These tend to be in the form of cosmetic alterations and/or the option to buy progress within the game, such as XP, Levels and new characters. Sometimes the cosmetic alterations can be obtained through playing the game, and progression can be achieved without paying. However, gameplay tends to be designed to take a long time obtain progress or items. This is known as 'Grind'. Paying for cosmetics seems to be more accepted than paying for progress. A recent AAA title, Ubisoft's Ghost Recon BreakPoint, have had its failure partly attributed to a monetisation strategy resulting in excessive grind for users who didn't wish to pay for progression. The bad reception and severe criticism caused an investors to ask Ubisoft's director *"Are you concerned that gamers are beginning to rebel against more aggressive monetisation in games?"*(Ubisoft, 2019a, secs. 24:20-24:28). Consequently Ubisoft significantly revised its revenue expectations from the game and decided to postpone a number of other games to implement learnings(Ubisoft, 2019c).

It is notable that titles receiving the most negative attention appeal primarily to hardcore and midcore players on the PC and Console platforms (Both FIFA and Ghost Recon are PC and console titles). This audience is accustomed to the games as a product model, where an upfront payment gives full access to the game. Putting aggressive microtransactions in a game costing full price is seen as unfair.

## 5.4 Epic Games and Valve

Having obtained a holistic macro level view of success factors, revenue models and risks, we now move on to exploring how individual ecosystems and games implements these. We choose to investigate Valve, as its digital distribution platform dominates most of the online sales of games for the PC platform. Besides being a storefront, it is also an ecosystem in and of itself, creating and fostering community and providing the framework for a virtual economy.

Valve has made a number of highly successful games throughout the years. We choose to focus on Counter-Strike, as this originated as a mod in the late 90's and have gone through several iterations over the year, including the transition to a GaaS game. The virtual economy is to a large extent similar to all Valve GaaS games as these are tied in with the Steam platform, rather than being closed systems limited to individual games. As Counter-Strike was also one of the first esports games, we think that it will serve as the best example we can get from Valve.

Our decision to compare Valve to Epic Games is grounded in its recent rise to prominence through Fortnite and the subsequent decision to challenge Valve and their Steam platform for dominance of the digital PC market. Beyond this, Epic Games and Fortnites virtual economy differ significantly from that of Valve and Steam. Comparing two contrasting GaaS models will help generate a more nuanced perspective.

## 6 Epic Games Ecosystem

Founded as a tiny videogame studio by Tim Sweeney in his parents' house in 1991, Epic games has transformed into one of the most prominent players in the videogame industry. In the early days it was a one-man operation but steadily expanded from the mid-nineties and onwards. One of the studios most notable early games was the first-person shooter 'Unreal'. The game engine used to create the game was also named Unreal and was developed in house. It was made available for other videogame studios to license and has since become a key product for Epic Games. During the 2000's Epic games released a number of AAA titles including the 'Gears of War' series which Microsoft later brought the license for. After selling off the Gears of War IP Epic wanted to transition to a GaaS model and partnered with Chinese Tencent that bought a 40% stake in Epic games for 330 million US Dollars in June of 2012. Epic Games specifically wanted partner with Tencent to draw on their experience with the GaaS model. At that point in time the Chinese market was significantly ahead of Western markets in adopting the model and Tencent was and still is the industry leader. Epic Games then experimented with the GaaS model releasing several different live-services games and also had a departure into VR with the hit game Robo Recall.

When the Battle Royale game genre rose to prominence with the release of PlayerUnknown's Battlegrounds, Epic Games quickly realised the potential of the genre. Fortnite at the time was under development but was intended to be a co-operative Player vs Monsters game. Intending to capitalize on the Battle Royale genre, Fortnite was quickly adapted and released as an early access title in the summer of 2017. Unlike PlayerUnknown's Battleground it was released as a Free-to-Play game. It was positively received and got more than 10 million players in the two weeks after release. Despite being second to market, the Free-to-Play model combined

with universal appeal resulted in Fortnite overtaking PlayerUnknown's Battlegrounds in terms of player numbers. Fortnite generated more than 2.4 billion of revenue in 2018 and had a venture investment round that year resulting in \$1.25 billion US dollars of investment. It was the single largest investment in the video game industry at the time. This capital allowed Epic Games to invest significant resources in the development of the Unreal engine and change its revenue model to a 5% royalty fee instead of individual licensing. Epic Games had also acquired founder Steam Spy Sergey Galyonkin. Steam Spy is a data gathering site that scrapes data from the Steam platform. Data gathered included user profiles, game statistics and reviews, Wishlist information and much more. Running Steam Spy had allowed Galyonkin to gain an intimate understanding of the Steam platform and its user base. He was put in charge of creating the Epic Games store specifically to challenge Steam's near monopoly on the PC distribution market in the West. The store was launched in late 2019 and integrated with the Fortnite PC game client. This meant that all Fortnite players on the platform would be exposed to the store whenever they wanted to play. Initially it had just a few select titles available but quickly expanded the selection. The basic strategy of the store was to attract developers by offering a much better revenue split than Steam and paying for game exclusivity. Epic Games has announced that it intends to implement a store for Android that can compete with Google Play, also by undercutting them in terms of revenue split. Unlike iOS android apps can be sideloaded outside of the OS platform store, in this cases Google Play. Epic Games already does that with their Fortnite app and intends to implement the store in the same way. This allows completely bypassing revenue sharing with Google.

## 6.1 Customer Segments

The Epic Game Store services a global market and is available in most regions of the world including China where it has had help from Tencent to establish itself. The store has some key glocalization features such as regional pricing and acceptance of regional currencies and payment methods. In the West PayPal and credit cards are by far the most commonly used payment methods. In China WeChat and Ali Pay are the only accepted means

The Epic Store is a multi-sided platform with 3 principal participating parties. These are gamers, developers/publishers and creators. Currently the Epic Store is only available on the PC platform limiting the available market. Gamers represent a mass market and use the Epic Games Store as a game launcher, library and store.

Game developers and publishers can be segmented as low-tier, mid-tier or high-tier according to their size and brand recognition. Low-tier developers represent a mass market. Each individual developer adds relatively limited value, however the cost of adding a low-tier developer is limited. In sufficient numbers they provide network and long tail effect. Mid-tier

developers represent a relatively little segments on the PC market, but some have notable IP. High-tier developers and publishers represent a key segment. They own and develop well know IP and have high brand recognition and value. Their presence on the Epic Games store adds significant value. This also means that they have strong bargaining power and some, such as Ubisoft, have their own competing platforms.

Creators represents a wide group of mostly gamers that create content around Epic IP. This can be Twitch streamers, YouTubers modders or anyone else who's main value contribution is not the purchase of games nor development of them. They can also be divided in segments, with a large mass market consisting of smaller creators and a select few that have been fused with Epics brand, such as Ninja (Fortnite streamer with +14 million viewers) or Tfeu (Fortnite streamer and esports competitor).

## 6.2 Value Proposition

Epic games have two different product that provides that has been central in establishing the Epic Games store. Firstly, the Unreal engine has evolved to be a market leader and many developers are familiar with it, leading to brand value that can spill over to the Epic Game Store. To further enhance this synergistic relationship Epic Games offers to waive the 5% royalty fee for all games sold on the store that has been made with the Unreal engine. Fortnite is the second product. Without having a superstar game that have attracted hundreds of millions of gamers to the Epic platform, it would be difficult to provide a compelling argument as to why game proprietors should choose to join the Epic Games Store. These two key products have helped Epic Games solve the chicken-and egg problem inherent to multisided platforms.

### **Epic Exclusives**

But beyond this, other tools have been employed in the attempt to break the Steam monopoly on the PC digital game distribution market. Arrangement for exclusive distribution of 3<sup>rd</sup> party games have been a controversial yet apparently successful strategy. The default exclusivity period for games on Epic is one year. 'Hades' and 'Ashen', both relatively small titles were some of the first 3<sup>rd</sup> party titles exclusive to the Epic Games Store. Metro Exodus, the third instalment in the Metro series, became the first AAA title to be exclusive to the store. This caused great controversy, as the exclusivity deal was announced just 18 days before the games release date. At that point the game was already available for pre-order on Steam, forcing Valve to remove the listing. Many gamers were annoyed with both the exclusivity arrangement and its late announcement. The former was largely due to players feeling invested in the Steam platform. Asked about Steam, Olivier responded that he had at least 85% of his games on Steam and that: *"I will go out of my way to try and find if there's a game*

*that is available on both[...]even if it's cheaper on one than the other, I will usually wait until it's on sale as long as I can have it on Steam"* (Olivier, interview, February 2020, time 00:40:53). Based on reporting in game media, he is not alone in preferring Steam. Epic Exclusivity has become a risky choice for developers as they risk backlash from the gaming community. An indie developer consisting of a husband and wife team had been developing a casual adventure game called 'Ooblets' funded by smaller donations through Patreon. They were approached by Epic and given an exclusivity deal that guaranteed a minimum revenue for the game. Upon announcing this to the wider gaming community the pair received significant negative reactions including threats of violence (Webb, 2019). In the case of Metro Exodus there is no signs that the exclusivity agreement hindered sales though. The game sold more than twice the number of copies in its launch period compared to its predecessor (Dring, 2019). For smaller developers there is little available information to determine whether their game sales are affected by Epic Store exclusivity. However, as most indie developer studios are not profitable (Wright, 2018) the promise of guaranteed revenue is a very strong value proposition. The exact amount of Epic pays for exclusivity deals are not disclosed and will vary depending on the perceived value of the game for the Epic Store. However, some have investigated SEC filings and financial reports and established figures for two exclusive games. Phoenix Point, a crowd funded indie game, is believed to have received in excess of \$2.2 million USD for exclusivity rights (Henry, 2019b). In comparison the gaming raised \$500,000 USD from its crowdfunding campaign. It is however unclear if the amount paid is an advance on guaranteed sales (i.e. the game would not receive any sales revenue before passing \$2.2 million USD) or a lump sum payment for the exclusivity rights.

## **Free Games**

While the Epic Store features Free-to-play games, it also entices users with free copies of pay-to-play games. Users that redeem a free copy have the game added to their library where it remains free to play. This incentive has been available since shortly after the Epic Stores launch in late 2018. Usually one or two games are available at any one time with a rolling rotation every few weeks. During a 12-day period in the 2019 Christmas and New Year holiday season, the availability time was reduced to 24 hours with one new game being available each day. This incentivised gamers to visit the Epic Store regularly. In total more than 70 Pay-to-Play games have been made available for free (Morris, 2020). Most of the games are smaller indie titles, though some older AAA games has been made available such as 'Kingdom Come: Deliverance' (Released February 2018, free on Epic Store February 2020) and 'Metro 2033 Redux' (Released August 2014, Free on Epic Store September 2019). We have been unable to find information on what compensation Epic provides to the game proprietors or what metrics is used to decide the compensation. As a strategy to get gamers to build up a game

library and instil a sense of investment in the platform, it seems to be working. Epic Games themselves claim that over 200 million copies have been redeemed. After initial scepticism of the Epic Store Olivier expresses some acceptance and even affinity for it: *“they keep throwing free games at me. So yeah, I actually prefer it now. I've gotten used to the layouts and everything and I prefer it to, to uh, to Uplay and Origin.”* (Olivier, interview, February 2020, time 00:39:24).

### **High Revenue share**

At the time of the Epic Store launch, Steam was When do epic games store was launched the steam was charging a 30% cut of game and content sales on the platform. Epic undercut Steam by only taking a 12% revenue cut further offered to waive the 5% Unreal engine royalty fee for games that were developed using it(Grubb, 2019a). This represents a break with the dominant digital distribution model that usually charges 30% across all platforms including app stores and mobile devices. In general, the developers have reacted positively to this change. Gearbox, the game developer behind the AAA Borderlands series praised the Epic Store revenue model and even commended its ability to reach players(Palumbo, 2019a). Ubisoft, a major AAA publisher with several original IP series, decided to release one of their games, The Division 2, exclusively on the Epic Store and its own Uplay platform. CEO Yves Guillemot stated that it was an opportunity to increase exposure to their own store while at the same time trying out a new platform with much better terms. According to Ubisoft's own data pre-orders for The Division 2 were much higher than for the thirteenth instalment in the series and notably pre-orders on Ubisoft's own platforms were 6 times higher(Palumbo, 2019b).

### **Creator Partnerships**

Epic Games recognise the value creators can bring to an ecosystem. They can create content for games, such as mods and maps, or they can create content centred on a game, such as live streams, how to play guides and much more. They also help frame the conversation in the gaming community, including attitudes towards games and platforms. As such they are very valuable to both the Epic Store and game proprietors that publish their games on the platform. To attract and retain creators, Epic Games has implemented an affiliate system that they have named 'Support-A-Creator Program'. It is open to all creators with a social media following of more than 1.000 followers. The program was created after a similar system in the Fortnite in game store proved successful. Creators enrolled in the program get a creator code that gamers can enter when they make a purchase in the Epic Store and rewards them with 5% of the sale. This is obviously an attractive value proposition for creators themselves, but also gives gamers a way to support creators that does not involve just donating money. The ability to support a creator a creator while also getting something in return was brought up in

our interview with Melissa (00:09:29 – 00:11:15). The creator codes also help game proprietors in gathering analytics data to determine who the key influencers are for their games. Daniel is also very happy about this program adding: *“And I think it's a really good thing that Fortnite had brought into their game because it finally gave creators a way to actually get monetized for promoting the game. So that's something a lot of games didn't do. And you see a lot of games you starting to do now. But I think it's nice because, you know, it finally gives a spotlight on the creators who are actually helping the game and, you know, they can turn into a profit.”* (Interview, March 2020, 00:05:03).

### 6.3 Channels

The main component for raising awareness about the Epic Store has been Fortnite. As such it is helpful to analyse the channels through which Fortnite itself connected to its audience. When asked to describe how he got into contact with Fortnite, Olivier said: *“this streamer guy he would play rocket league for hours on end and then, uh, he would get requests to play Fortnite. I was like, Oh, it looks kinda cool.”* (interview, February 2020, time 00:37:53). Our interview with esports expert and former professional Counter-Strike player affirms the importance of Live streaming platforms (time 0032:34 – 00:36:27). They represent a very important channel for content discovery, player engagement and gaming product and services evaluation. VOD services such as YouTube serve the same purpose. WOM is also an important channel, and given the popularity of Fortnite amongst younger players, schools and colleges serve as an effective place of generating organic WOM and the game has even become a college esports(Playvs, 2020). Mainstream media has also taken an interest in the game, and to a lesser extent Epic Games as a whole.

For developers, there is familiarity with the Unreal engine, and it has served as a channel for generating interest around the Epic Store. Steam has also served as a channel to identify attractive developers. Games can be listed on Steam for pre order before they are released, and users can add them to their Wishlist. Mining Wishlist data can give an indication as to the potential of a game. One indie developer have detailed how he was contacted by Epic for an exclusivity agreement after his game had been announced on Steam and gained significant interest(Unfold Games, 2019). The Epic games store launched with very basic functionality but with the intention to continually develop and integrate new features. While roadmaps are common throughout the industry, Epic has taken the unprecedented step of creating a dynamic public roadmap for the Store. This is done using Trello as a channel(Epic Games, 2019c).

E3, GDC, Gamescom and other videogame industry events also provide an opportune channel to engage with both industry insiders and the wider gaming community. Esports event

arranged by Epic Games provides them with a channel that they have ownership over. Epic games also have some very prominent investors that can be used as a channel for both B2B and B2C communication. Most significant perhaps is the connections that can be established through Tencent, Disney and Endeavor. Tencent dominates the Chinese gaming market and can help Epic Games establish connections to this highly attractive market. Being a Disney Accelerator company(Kayser, 2017) provides Epic Games with unprecedented access to Disney's network. Endeavor has a number of child companies, including IMG, which specialises in the licensing of sports and entertainment. They can be used as a Channel for B2B communication, especially in regard to esports.

The main purchase channel for Epic is the Store itself, although game keys (essentially a digital coupon for a game) can be purchased from 3<sup>rd</sup> party resellers such as G2A or Kinguin. Some hardware manufactures, such as AMD and Nvidia have also bundled game coupons to the Epic Store with purchases of their gaming hardware. Finally digital videogame storefront section of the Humble Bundle site has recently received integration with Epic Game accounts that enables it to sell games from the Epic Store(Epic Games, 2019a). After sales channels are also on the Epic Games platform, though Reddit and Discord is also utilized.

## 6.4 Customer Relationships

To a large extent Epic Games customer relationship are focused on customer acquisition in order to break Steams monopoly. Besides enticing gamers with free games or forcing them on to the platform with exclusives, Epic tries facilitate community creation around their products. This is done through the aforementioned Reddit and Discord, but also on the Epic Games platform, where users can form connections through a friend list. Epic supports importing friends from Facebook and Steam. The latter has proved controversial as the Epic Games platform software copies a file from users that have Steam, containing their friends list data and game library data. Epic however claimed that this file was only used if the user choose to import friends from Steam(Wilde, n.d.).

Epic encourages creators to create content around Epic IP and provides a Fan Art and Fan site policy(Epic Games, n.d.-a). The exact relationship to larger creators, such as Ninja, Tfeu is not clear. However, Epic games has a community team that employs influencer coordinators and these will most likely handle all contacts(Looney, 2019). Epic Games use their relationship with creators to establish communities and for co-creation. Recently Epic began introducing in-game characters and dances based top creators. The first to receive an in-game content was Ninja(Carpenter, 2020).

As with creators, game developer and publisher relationships depend on their perceived value to the Epic Games platform. While the intention is that the Epic Store will have a publishing

process in place, at present there is only a contact form available for developers to submit their interest in publishing on the platform. It appears that Epic is intent on curating the games available on the platform. Epic CEO Tim Sweeney has stated that he wishes to maintain a high quality standard for games published to the Epic Store, though he emphasised that there would not be a certification process as is the case for console games(Henry, 2019a).

The relationship between larger publishers, such as Ubisoft, can be seen as coopetition. While the Epic Store has a much larger userbase and wider selection of titles than the Ubisoft's Uplay storefront, Ubisoft games must have Uplay installed to work, even if the game is purchased and launched on another platform. This makes them a competitor to both Steam and Epic. But while Uplay tries to drive traffic to its own platform, it still needs other digital distribution channels, as Uplay presently have far too small a userbase. As previously mentioned, Ubisoft's CEO has commented that the relationship to Epic Games Store has been a success so far.

## 6.5 Revenue Stream

Epic Games relies on three primary sources of revenue: In-game purchases in Fortnite, royalties from the Unreal engine (on non-Epic stores) and revenue split from 3<sup>rd</sup> party games sold on the Epic Games store. Epic does not share details of its Fortnite revenue data, but according to analysts the game is estimated to have generated \$2.4 billion USD of revenue in 2018 and \$1.8 billion USD in 2019(Perez, 2020). One major issue for Fortnite revenue has been the Chinese market, where there has been an extended backlog of game approvals. Without approval, games cannot be monetized. As Fortnite has not been approved, this represents the loss of a major revenue stream(Takahashi, 2020). Licensing of the Fortnite IP for events and merchandise also provides a revenue stream, however there is no publicly available information on its magnitude.

The Unreal engine provides another source of revenue for Epic. While it is a game engine, it is also being used in non-game products such as film production and digital showrooms(Grubb, 2019b). For games a royalty fee of 5 percent of revenue is charged, with the exception of revenue from sales on the Epic store. There is also an internal marketplace where game developers can sell assets and tools for game development. Here Epic charges a 12 percent fee(Epic Games, n.d.-c). Once again public data is not available on the magnitude of revenue generated in this way.

The Epic games store also charges 12 percent of revenue from 3<sup>rd</sup> party games(Epic Games, n.d.-a). In promotional material Epic Games claim that \$680 million USD have been spent in the Epic Store, however there is no breakdown of spending(Epic Games, 2020). The Epic

store implements regional pricing, meaning that sales of the same product can result in different revenue depending on region.

## 6.6 Key Resources

As with revenue streams, Fortnite and the Unreal game engine are at the cornerstone of Epic's intellectual property.

Human resources are essential to the Epic Platform as well, and includes programmers, designers, managers, IT and network staff to build and support the giant operation. Given the emphasis Epic places on attracting creators and developers, the community management team is also an essential resource. For the Epic Games Store Sergey Gaylonkin is a key employee. As previously mentioned, he founded the Steam Spy website and has built up extensive knowledge of how Steam works and what users, developers and creators like and dislike about it. He has been tasked with leading the development of the Epic Games Store and making it competitive with Steam (Daxy, 2019).

Epic has significant financial resources gathered through revenue from Fortnite, the Epic Store and the Unreal engine. However, Epic also has significant expenditure on developing and maintaining these products and marketing activities such as securing exclusives and giving away millions of free game copies will inevitably drain some of the cash flow. Epic has had investments made from a number of private investors, companies and venture capitals. It was reported that Epic received \$1.25 billion USD in a venture round in 2018 (Sinclair, 2018).

## 6.7 Key Activities

Epic Games' multisided platform strategy has been based on its ability to attract developers to its Unreal engine and gamers have been attracted through Fortnite. The Epic Games Store is where they both meet and additional value is created. The Unreal engine has proven its ability to attract and retain developers over the past two decades. Fortnite, while having achieved phenomenal success, has only been in the market for three years and it remains to be seen if its player base will gradually fade away or if the live-service model will manage to retain players. Analysts' revenue estimations for Fortnite indicate that the former might be the case, though Epic has disputed these claims, but haven't provided any evidence to the contrary (Sinclair, 2020). It is therefore essential for Epic to focus its activities on attaining critical mass for its Store platform, so Fortnite is not solely responsible for delivering on one of the sides of the multisided platform.

Analysing the Trello board roadmap(Epic Games, n.d.-b) it appears that Epic is focusing its activities on glocalization, community and co-creation, discoverability, media library features, bug fixing, and platform expansion. Glocalization is evident in much of their recently shipped releases, such as several language translations and added regional pricing and payment methods. The Asian market seems to be a high priority as several features relate to them. This tie into the previously discussed importance and untapped potential of the Chinese market and Epics partnership with Tencent. Community and co-creation key activities are the implementation of mod support, gifting and user reviews. This will provide significant value to all platform participants. Discoverability is also aided by user reviews. Wishlists, newsfeeds, curation, search and notifications will also aid in discoverability. The Epic store launched without a cloud save feature which was implemented later on. Media library features such as this continues to be a key activity. Fixing bugs and improving stability and speed is also reflected as a priority in the roadmap. Platform market expansion in the form of the aforementioned Android store is a key activity that could potentially allow Epic to upset the highly profitable mobile market. Besides expansion and development of the Epic Store, other key activities include leveraging investor networks and seeking to frame the discussion around distribution and monetisation in the videogame industry.

Epic Games CEO Tim Sweeney has attempted to position himself as a thought leader through posting on Twitter, giving keynote speeches and interviews. Generally, he has focused on attacking revenue distribution, promoting open platforms and a consumer centric ecosystem. The former has especially consisted in attacking the Epic Stores key rival Valve over their 30 percent Steam revenue fee(Sweeney, 2019a). Both apple and Google has also been on the receiving end of tweets criticising their monopoly on app store payments(Sweeney, 2020b). Conversely Tim Sweeney has praised platform openness initiatives, such as Nvidia's GeForce Now for being consumer centric(Sweeney, 2020a). Even Valve and EA's partnership announcement received a congratulatory tweet(Sweeney, 2019b). As previously discussed, some sections of the gaming community have had very negative reactions to the Epic Store attempting to break the Steam monopoly. Viewed in this light the attempts to shift the framing from Epic being a nuisance trying to muscle its way in to the digital distribution market, to Epic being an innovator tearing down monopolies to the benefit of consumers and developers makes sense. Apple's former CEO Steve Jobs have shown what value personal branding and thought leadership can have, and it seems Tim Sweeney considers this a key activity to further Epics brand value.

## 6.8 Key Partners

To run Fortnite, the Epic Games Store and its online services for the Unreal engine, Epic relies on AWS. A promotional case study from 2018 by AWS reveals that Epic Games had to deal with 2.000 Terabyte of data each month just for Fortnite(O'brien, 2018). Beyond the raw data challenge, loads between high and low activity peaks differed by a factor of 10. As such AWS is both a key partner.

Besides being customers of the Epic Platform, the developer and creator community also serves as key partners and are integral to the success of the Epic Games. Live streaming platforms such as Twitch.tv are also important partners. Twitch delivers data on gameplay and viewing statistics and provides a platform for engagement with Fortnite outside of the game itself. In collaboration with Twitch.tv Epic Games has made special in-game items available to prime subscribers of the streaming platform(Twitch, n.d.). Event organisers and esports management agencies are also important key partners as they help organise and drive engagement channels beyond Epic Games own channels.

Finally, Epic games investors also serve as key partners as their expertise can be leveraged in the development of Epic Games as a business. As mentioned previously they also provide a channel to reach further relevant resources in their respective business networks.

## 6.9 Cost Structure

Epic Games business model is an economy of scale(Epic Games, n.d.-d). They have very large expenses for cloud operations, but also have string bargaining power over their cloud provider given the size of Epics operation.

The sudden success of Fortnite has led Epic Games to take on significantly more staff and subcontractors, prioritising value creation and expansion over costs(Campbell, 2019). This represents a change from before Fortnite, where Epic had a cost-driven focus on departments such as customer support, which was in the process of being slimmed down and automated when the sudden success of Fortnite changed priorities and increased workload on the department 100-fold. The spending spree on exclusives and giveaway of free games further underscores the shift to a value-driven cost structure.

## 6.10 Fortnite

Although Fortnite technically refers to two games, 'Save The World' and 'Battle Royale', the latter is the free-to-play game that is generally perceived to be Fortnite and which has catapulted Epic Games to success. Fortnite can be viewed as a 'killer app'(Merriam-Webster,

n.d.-a) as the impact the game has had are seen throughout the gaming industry. Despite being second to market in the Battle Royale genre, the free-top-play nature and universal appeal of the game led to a meteoric rise. On the first day the game was available to the public, 26<sup>th</sup> September 2017, it attracted over 1 million players(Fortnite, 2017). By the end of the year over 45 million players had registered with Fortnite, climbing to 200 million by the end of 2018 (Richter, 2019) and according to Epic CEO player numbers are now at 300 million(Sweeney, 2020b). While the raw player numbers are impressive in itself, the impacts of Fortnite on the gaming industry went far beyond them. The platformisation and walled gardens that existed at the time, and still exist to some extent, could not afford to ignore Fortnite. Sony and their PlayStation hardware and software ecosystem were extensively walled of when Fortnite was released, requiring players to have an account specific to PlayStation. On other platforms, such as PC (and Mac), Xbox, iOS and Android, cross-platform play quickly became possible (i.e. players on Xbox could play with their friends on PC or they could play on their mobiles when on the go) and account linking likewise, meaning that items and virtual currency purchased on one platform would be available on the others. Sony resisted this for quite a while, but intense pressure from both Epic and Fortnite players eventually resulted in Sony enabling both cross platform play and account linking features, including compatibility for Xbox(Plunkett, 2018). Sony themselves admitted that this represented a major change in their policy towards opening up their platform. As previously mentioned, Epic Games refused to cave in to Googles demands of charging a 30 percent revenue fee and accused them of having a 'fake' open platform(Sweeney, 2020b). If Epic Games manages to implement a store on the Android system, this could represent another seismic shock to the walled garden platform model. Fortnite has also attracted significant attention from the mainstream media. Using the BBC as an example of a mainstream media channel, its web version had articles mentioning Fortnite (the game, not an unintentional misspelling of Fortnight) in their headlines 57 times throughout 2018 whereas PUBG, the game that initially popularised Battle Royale, only had 5 mentions. Similarly, an analysis of 212.291 tweets mentioning either PUBG, Apex Legends or Fortnite harvested over a 3 day period in early 2019 found that 60 percent of them mentioned only Fortnite (F. Hein, 2019).

### 6.10.1 Economy










Fortnite is free-to-play across all platforms and relies on in-game purchases to monetize its player base. The microtransactions implemented in Fortnite are primarily cosmetics, extra content and time savers and they are the same across all device platforms. There are no pay-to-win or randomization mechanics in the game. The latter is surprising as this is a widespread a very successful monetization strategy for free-to-play games. Tim Sweeney has stated that this is a deliberate decision as he finds loot-boxes to be an anti-consumer mechanic(Sweeney,

2020b). Incidentally this decision also keeps Epic free of the controversy and possible legal implications of randomisation mechanics.

#### *6.10.1.1 Virtual currency*

Fortnite uses V-Bucks as its in-game currency. Using an in-game currency provides a layer of abstraction between in-game items and their price in sovereign currency, leaving users without an easy reference point (Flunger, Mladenow, & Strauss, 2017). It is implemented as a type-2 virtual currency, which means that sovereign currency can be used to buy V-bucks, but the latter can't be transferred back to sovereign currency. V-bucks can also be earned in game, though only in very limited amounts. V-Bucks are sold in bundles, another common feature of free-to-play games. As the bundles do not coincide with the price of any in-game items, the sovereign currency price of the items are further obfuscated and after purchasing an in-game item players will have some left over V-Bucks, providing a sense of value that is locked into the game. The virtual currency can also be bought in a variety of other digital stores, such as Microsoft store, the PlayStation Store and even as gift cards in some physical stores. V-Bucks are also used by hardware manufacturers as an incentive to purchase their offerings. Both Xbox and PlayStation consoles occasionally come bundled with varying amounts of V-Bucks.

#### *6.10.1.2 Virtual items*

Outfit		Harvesting Tool		Spray	
Glider and Contrail		Emote and Emoticon		Wrap	
Backbling		Loading Screen and Music Pack		Toy	

The Fortnite in-game store has a limited selection of virtual items available, some of which changes every 24 hours. The items are sorted into the categories. Outfits changes the

appearance of a player's character. Harvesting tools are used for harvesting materials in the game and come in many different variations. Sprays are essentially in-game graffiti that players can use during matches. Gliders are employed to float to the ground during the start of a match. Dances & Emotes are used to make player characters express themselves and are often accompanied by music. Wraps can best be described as wrapping paper of various colours and patterns that are automatically applied to weapons and vehicles in the game. There are many variations of backbling, including pet backpacks. The latter is a backpack that houses a pet, such as a dog, hamster or cat. The pet has no impact on gameplay but makes sounds and various gestures in response to gameplay events. Toys can be equipped and thrown. They are programmed to bounce off the environment in different ways and are used for some achievements. Many items belong to collections. They are centred around a theme. A space exploration themed collection for example would have an astronaut outfit, a space shuttle glider and space back bling. Usually all of these items won't be available in the store at the same time, instead players wishing to collect a complete set will have to monitor the in-game store daily.

#### *6.10.1.3 Extra Content*

Fortnite is divided into seasons, each of which usually last a duration of 10 weeks. Each season is centred around a theme and contains a set of different events and changes to the gameplay and map. Seasons do not require a purchase to join however they come with a Battle Pass. This consist of 100 tiers that can be progressed through by playing Fortnite and completing certain daily and weekly challenges. Each tier unlocks a reward, such as a skin, some V-Bucks, a dance or other in-game items. Besides a few tier rewards that are 'free' most rewards can only be claimed by players that have paid for the battle Pass. In addition to being able to unlock all rewards, Battle Pass owners also gets boosts to how quickly tiers are earned. Besides playing to unlock tiers, players can also purchase tier progression with V-Bucks. This represents a timesaver microtransaction and is especially used during the start of the season to progress quickly through the tiers to be amongst the first to unlock and equip the rewards from higher tiers.

#### *6.10.1.4 Market (or lack thereof)*

Fortnite does not have a market allowing for trading nor selling of virtual items or V-Bucks. There is a gifting function, allowing players to send virtual items to each other, but is rather limited. Daniel explains that you must have been friends for at least three days to be able to send someone a gift. Likely, this is to prevent unauthorized use. Asked whether he would like to have a market for trading, Daniel states that he thinks it would be a good idea in the future

and something that he would like. However, he also expresses concern over security pointing out that Fortnite accounts have been hacked and sold. It thus seems that for the time being, Epic is set on keeping Fortnite a type 2 virtual economy, both de facto and de jure. Though some accounts have been hacked and subsequently sold on the black market, this is without any implicit consent from Epic, rather they seem to be taking aggressive steps to combat this, such as pushing two factor authentication(Epic Games, 2019b).

### 6.10.2 Engagement

To better make sense of the content, it is useful to divide it according to temporal and contextual boundaries(H. O'Brien & Cairns, 2016). Analysing the content design within the Fortnite game, we find that temporal boundaries can be divided into six distinct phases: A single match, a gameplay session, one day, a week, a season, a chapter and special events. The temporal boundaries in and of themselves include some contextual elements and vice versa. The delineation of contextual boundaries can best be understood as engagement within the Fortnite virtual world, within the 'real' world and transmedia engagement. For the temporal engagement analysis, we will start from the micro perspective of a single match and then move towards a macro view. But first we will briefly outline the game start process, as this serves as a separate point of engagement whenever players start Fortnite.

The process of starting Fortnite depends on the platform a player uses. If on a mobile device, the game is opened by an app. On consoles players access it through the respective platform libraries. On pc the Epic games launcher is used, which also houses the Epic Games Store. This allows Epic to push notifications about free games, exclusives and other non-Fortnite content to players. As a live service game, Fortnite has a lot of different content that players can engage with in and out of the game. Once the game has been launched, players will either be taken to the Battle Pass menu, or an introductory information screen or movie. The latter is typically used when there is a new season, updated content, particular events or anything else Fortnite related that Epic wants to bring to the players attention. The Battle Pass menu urges players that haven't purchased the battle pass to get it. For those that already have purchased it, it showcases challenges and player progress. To join a match, players have to select the 'Play' menu. This showcases the players character and selected outfit. It serves as a dynamic showroom for the character and players can utilize their dances & emotes with their characters. If a player wants to play with friends, these can be invited directly from the main menu. Their friends' characters will then stand next to each other. Besides serving as a showroom, the play menu also provides information on some challenges. In the lower right corner, a large box is placed where gameplay mode can be selected and a 'play' button to find a match.

### 6.10.2.1 Single match

#### point of engagement

Once the play button has been pressed, players will be connected to a server and then transported to a 'starting' island. This serves as a virtual waiting room where player damage has been disabled, but otherwise all game mechanics are in place. Once enough players have joined (usually 100) players are moved on to the 'Battle Bus', a flying bus that overflies the Fortnite map.

#### Sustained engagement

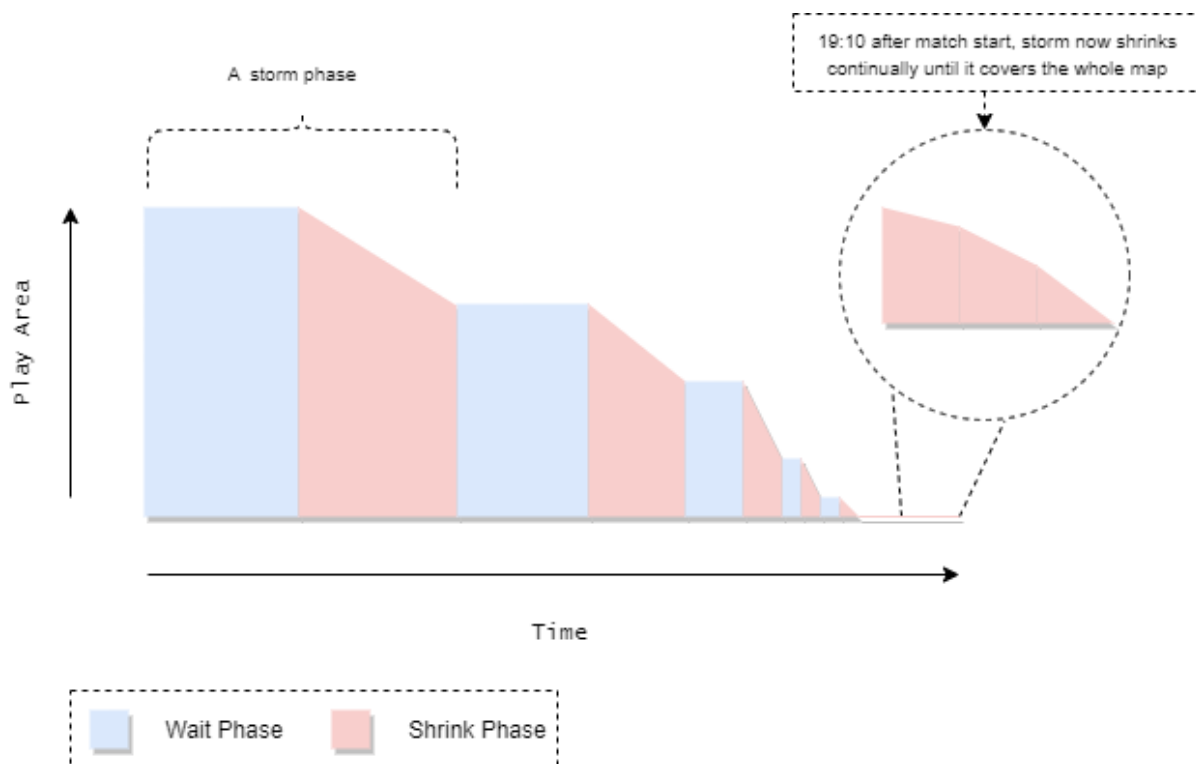


Figure 10: Illustration of temporal and spatial 'funnel' created by the storm in Fortnite

From the bus, players can jump off and glide to any location on the map. This represents the first phase of the core gameplay. Players are unarmed except for a pickaxe that can be used to harvest resources from trees, rocks and metal, which can be used for building. Weapons are scattered throughout the map with some out in the open and others hidden in chests. The latter provides a randomization mechanic, as chest can provide a variety of items based on a probability algorithm, however players do not pay to open the chests, hence they are not considered loot-boxes. After a certain amount of time, a zone on the map is revealed. Outside this zone a storm will slowly advance, dealing damage to players caught in it. This helps funnel gamers closer together and forms a temporal constraint on the max possible duration of a match. The first phase of the game consists of scavenging weapons and material and traveling

to the safe zone before the storm hits. Once the storm has covered everything outside of the safe zone, a new smaller safe zone will appear on the map and a countdown timer will signal when the storm is going to start moving again. The middle phase of gameplay consists of traveling from safe zone to safe zone while avoiding being eliminated. At some point the safe zone becomes so small that all remaining players forces together. This signals the end game phase. Now players fight to be the last player or team of players standing as the storm continues to move in and the safe zone slowly disappears. Once only one player or team is left, the game ends.

### **Re-engagement**

If a player is eliminated prior to the end of the game, they are transferred into spectator mode, where they can watch their teammates, or if they are alone, they can watch the other remaining players. If the eliminated player has a teammate that is still alive, they can potentially be respawned into the game if the teammate reaches a respawn point in time. In spectator mode, there is also the option to find a new match or go back to the play menu. If the player chooses the former, they will stay in spectator mode until a connection to a new server is found and then transferred to a starting island straight away. This can keep players engaged in a constant game loop without having to exit the virtual world.

#### *6.10.2.2 Gameplay session*

A gameplay session is generally bound by the time a player starts engaging with the in-game virtual world until the point of disengagement that leads to non-engagement. If disengagement leads to re-engagement, it will still be viewed as being within the temporal bounds of a gameplay session. An exact definition of what constitutes disengagement to re-engagement and disengagement to non-engagement is not clear and will be context dependent. For our purposes, minor interruptions, such as a bathroom break or a snack will be considered the former. Going out for dinner with family or going out to shop will be considered the latter. For surveying gamers, we suggest that the emphasis of the distinction should be on the players perception of the interruption, i.e. 'I just need a quick bathroom break before the next match' vs 'I need to go shopping, then I'll start gaming again'. Fortnite encourages sustained engagement during a gameplay session in two distinct ways: Making it as easy as possible to transition from one match to the next and displaying achievement progress and rewards at the end of each match. The latter consists in showing points earned during the match and adding them to the players overall progress. If the player has reached a new tier as a result of points earned during the match, the associated reward will be unlocked and shown to the player. Progression towards the next tier will also be shown in addition to remaining in-game

challenges. This creates a constant loop of feedback on progression and awareness of achievements.

#### *6.10.2.3 Daily cycle*

Fortnite has two features that define the daily cycle: Items in the in-game store are replaced with new items and daily challenges. The former is described in the section on virtual items. The daily challenges consist of a 'Medal Punchcard' and 'Daily Assignments'. The medal punchcard consists of ten objectives that can be completed every day. Completing these provides extra experience points. The medals are subdivided into four categories: Battle Medals, First Match Medal, Scavenger Medal and Survivor Medal. Each has its own objectives, such as collecting a certain amount of materials, eliminating a player or just playing a match. These do not change from day to day but are just reset every 24 hours. Daily assignments on the other hand vary from one day to the next.

#### *6.10.2.4 Weekly cycle*

Every week there is a set of challenges. Presently, these are specific to an outfit and the theme of the season. A recent feature in Fortnite is the ability to further customize individual parts of one specific outfit that comes with the purchase of the current battle pass. Customization includes hairstyle, tattoos, sleeves, boots, shirt colors, vest, helmet, pants color, face paint and scarf. Each individual aspect must be unlocked by completing a challenge. These are made available on a weekly basis, i.e. full customization can only be achieved after ten weeks (one for each item).

#### *6.10.2.5 Season*

Until the fall of 2019, seasons were the largest temporal cycle in the game. Typically, a season spans 10 weeks. Each season has a battle pass associated with it that charts progression and rewards. The start of each season tends to bring changes to the Fortnite map, new weapons and new vehicles. Some weapons and vehicles will be removed from the game to make way for the new ones. However, so far none of the purchasable in game items have been removed. While there can be weekly themes within a season, the season itself will have a theme and an overarching if vague story that sometimes connects to the previous seasons story. In season 10 (fall 2019) for example a comet first appearing in season 3 and 4 made a return. The comet became a central point in season 10. During the season a rocket was constructed in the middle of the Fortnite map, becoming more complete each week. By the end of the season a countdown timer was added at various places in the game, starting from 8 days. When the countdown timer reached zero, a live in-game event started to mark the end of season 10 with the rocket blasting off towards the comet, leading to the two day 'Fortnite Blackout'.

#### 6.10.2.6 Chapter

The Fortnite blackout at the end of season 10 was a two-day period in which the Fortnite virtual world was replaced with a black screen, occasionally showing some numbers and gradually transitioning to an artistic rendering of a black hole. The start of the event had been timed with the Columbus Day long holiday weekend in the US, meaning that a lot of kids were at home with the possibility to follow the event. Besides the blackout of the in-game virtual world, the Fortnite twitter account was also temporarily disabled together with the Fortnite website. Besides announcing that there would be a live event, no prior information about its form had been given. Reportedly viewer counts for the live event peaked at 6 million across streaming platforms such as YouTube, Mixer and Twitch, with multiple services experiencing server issues due to the increased traffic (Michael, 2019). Daniel remembers streaming the event: *“I streamed almost the whole thing. It was almost a three-day thing and it was the most tiring thing ever. Especially when you're trying to stream it because you're trying to sit there and find a black hole and talk to your chat about how, yeah, there's black hole here might be here for another month and we don't know. But, you know, it was interesting. It was very interesting. I did not expect it at all. And because of that, I think it brought more hype to the game.”* (Interview, March 2020, Time: 00:14:13). Daniel was right, as a publicity gathering exercise, the event was a great success. The unexpected blackout of Fortnite was widely reported in mainstream media (Dvorak, 2019) and celebrities such as Niel deGrasse Tyson (2019) and Elon Musk (2019) tweeted about it, with the latter jokingly retweeting an article claiming that he had bought Fortnite and closed it down. It also caused some consternation for some players and parents. One mom reported that her kid was devastated fearing that he would have lost his £3.000 GBP worth of in-game items he had accumulated even if the game came back (Best, 2019). In the end, it appears that Epic Games used this blackout event to create publicity and mark the beginning of a new temporal boundary, that of chapters. When the Fortnite virtual world was reinstated, it was labelled as season 1 of chapter 2. A whole new map replaced the old one and a graphical upgrade and slight change of art style was introduced. In-game items purchased through the store remained in players inventories, however.

#### 6.10.2.7 Opportunities for Re-Engagement

When considering the lifetime value of a single player, the temporal bounds are expanded to take up the whole of said players interaction with Fortnite. The transition from disengagement to nonengagement thus becomes finite. A return to the game thus represents a transition from disengagement to re-engagement, though it can only be classified as such in retrospect. The decision to detail the build in temporal content cycles in Fortnite stems from the previously discussed observation that continuous content updates are essential to GaaS games, and

Fortnite seems to have nailed this aspect. Daniel describes that as an essential characteristic of Fortnite in his interview: *“You know, what people need to know about the game is always changing with the game updated changes, how the whole game is played and how people see the game.”* (Interview, March 2020, Time: 00:09:08). Beyond keeping the player community engaged, these temporal cycles also serve as a hook to transition disengaged players to re-engagement. New days and weeks provide new challenges, special events come and go, a new season arrives with a new Battle Pass and theme, a chapter draws to a close, giving way to a new one. The larger the event, the more attention it gets across media channels and the higher the probability of reaching disengaged players and tempting them to re-engage.

### 6.10.3 Special events and transmedia context

In our interview with Victor, he remarked that *“There was simply too many strange updates [...] suddenly there was laser guns and a Star Wars theme [...] I think it has become way too unrealistic”* (Interview, February 2020, Time: 00:15:01) In response to Fortnites special events. These can exist purely in the Fortnite virtual world or they can be connected to external events, such as Halloween, Thanksgiving and Christmas. Events themselves often come with their own ecosystem of challenges and in-game item rewards. Many special events are also transmedia events, centred around IP beyond Epic Games.

As discussed in the Epic BMC, Tim Sweeney has advocated openness and cross platform integration. He also advocates cross media collaboration and the creation of gaming as social virtual worlds (Sweeney, 2020b), essentially a metaverse. In the case of Fortnite, the Disney partnership have been leveraged to provide several transmedia events. This has resulted in events involving IP owned by the Disney group such as Avengers, Deadpool, Black Panther, Star Wars and more. The events coincide with the launch of a movie. The Fortnite virtual world gets an alternative game play mode based around the IP, for Star Wars this resulted in lightsabres being implemented in the game. Participating in the special events or completing challenges associated with them rewards players with an outfit or other virtual item. Fortnite has also experimented with non-gameplay focused events. Most notably was a live in-game concert performed by the DJ Marshmello. In the weeks prior to the concert, a venue had been gradually constructed at a location in the Fortnite map. Once the concert went live, normal gameplay was suspended, and player damage disabled. However, player could still use their emotes, such as dances and gestures. Attending players were provided with a dance emote that they were asked to use several times during the concert. In addition, other Marshmello themed items were available for purchase in the in-game store. While there have been some live virtual world concerts, Second Life had a few, the Marshmello event was notable for the amount of people it attracted. A peak of 10 million concurrent players was reached during the

concert and millions more watched via live-streaming sites (Gerken, 2019). This event also attracted significant mainstream media coverage of Fortnite. Daniel live streamed the whole concert and experienced it together with his followers through chat. He really enjoyed it and described it like this: *“So seeing these scenes digital events, I feel like as a pioneer[...] You know, it's like you're there, but you're not. When you get a real like, you know, you're you feel like you're there when you're not. So I feel like there's a big connections that and I really enjoy those events.”* (Interview, March 2020, Time: 00:12:41 – 00:13:40).

#### 6.10.4 Live streaming and VOD

Though Epic Games actively courts and collaborates with creators, the channels on which many of these creators engage with Fortnite audiences are outside of Epic's own platform. It is difficult to overstate the impact live-streaming and VOD have had on the videogame industry. Playing a game such as Fortnite is a relatively active form of engagement. Spectating others play the game is a much more passive form of engagement, though in the case of live-streaming, it can still have a significant component of interactivity, such as chatting, gifting and so on. The emergence and popularity of this new media has allowed videogames to have a much broader range of engagement, encroaching onto the territory of films and series. As Netflix stated in a letter to shareholders: *“We compete with (and lose to) Fortnite more than HBO. When YouTube went down globally for a few minutes in October, our viewing and signups spiked for that time.”* (Netflix, 2019, p. 5).

#### 6.10.5 Esports

The 26-28th July 2019 marked the first Fortnite World Cup. The prize pool consisted of an impressive 30 million USD (epicgames.com, 2019) for the total prize pool of the world cup, marked an historic record in esports at that time, since it was the largest prize pool esports has ever seen. Moreover, the tournament was held at the sold-out Arthur Ashe Stadium in New York, where 19,000 fans watched 100 solo competitors and 50 duo teams (epicgames.com, 2019) fighting for the title of being a world champion, live and in action. Prior to that, the final contestants at the world cup have qualified for that tournament through a 10-week open qualifier tournament, from more than 200 countries. In total over 40 million players tried their luck and participated in the qualifiers (epicgames.com, 2019). Finally, the crown in the solo tournament was claimed by Kyle “Bugha” Giersdorf, where he managed to pick up the 3 million USD reward for the first-place finish. The Fortnite World Cup became the most-watched competitive gaming event outside of China. More than 2.3 million concurrent viewers across Twitch and YouTube watched the Solo Finals unfold on the Sunday (epicgames.com, 2019). The World Cup was a huge success and the starting point of Fortnite's still young esports scene. Other tournaments have not been able to replicate the viewership numbers and overall success the World Cup though this could be due to the smaller prize pools

compared to the world cup. For instance, DreamHack Anaheim 2020 hosted a Fortnite tournament with a 250.000 USD price pool, where the peak viewership reached ~145.000 (escharts.com). During our interviews with Victor, Olivier and Dean however, outside of the game they mainly seemed to engage with Fortnite through live streamers playing the game regularly, rather than esports events. Though esports have been integral to a number of GaaS games success, including Counter-Strike, it seems less essential for Fortnite. Nevertheless, Epic has recently announced a Fortnite Chapter 2 Season 2 Champion Series (FNCS). This championship is open to all Fortnite players. To qualify they will need to reach a certain rank in Fortnite's competitive Arena mode. The tournament is divided into two stages. In the first stage, the highest placed team in each region will secure a significant cash prize (\$5.000 USD in Europe but depends on region) and a place in the regional season finals where there is the chance to win a much larger prize. The first stage repeats every week, so this functions as an incentive for sustained engagement. Last but not least, Epic also announced an upcoming competitive roadmap.

#### 6.10.6 Twitter and social media

Whenever a new event, update, item or creator collaboration is announced for Fortnite, it is usually through Twitter on Fortnites main account. At the time of writing it has 9.9 million followers and has sent out 12.7 thousand tweets(Fortnite, n.d.). Separate accounts are maintained for status updates, creative mode and competitive events.

#### 6.10.7 'Real' world engagement

It is useful to briefly elaborate on organic WOM as Fortnite has managed to spill over from the virtual world to the everyday life of many people. Events in the game, new items and gameplay mode has become everyday conversation topics for many young people and children. The blurring of virtual and 'real' world has been evidenced by some children having been bullied for only having default skins (outfits and items available for free)(Thorpe, 2019). This indicates that the virtual items are perceived to be of value as status symbols that can pass through the boundary of the virtual world.

#### 6.10.8 Game design for needs and engagement

##### **Relatedness**

We found three elements within the Fortnite virtual world that can promote relatedness: Group play, events and customization. Up to four people can play together as a team against other teams. These can be formed by players that have a prior relation to each other, or and individual player can choose to be matched up with players from a pool of others searching for a team. Voice chat can be enabled in the game so players can speak to each other, and if a good connection is formed, a friend request can be sent. Once on the list as friends, they

can be invited to join as a team whenever they are online. Events such as the Marshmello one suspends ordinary gameplay and allows for a social in-game experience. The virtual items implemented in Fortnite allow player self-expression. Emotes & emoticons afford symbolic nonverbal interaction with other players, such as dance offs. However, Fortnite is at its core a competitive game, which can discourage relatedness. Not having the resources to purchase virtual items to customize one's character can result in being stigmatised due to the perception of default skins as low status. This can lead to a non-inclusive environment for some players.

## **Competence**

Five features in Fortnite boosts feelings of competence: Intuitive controls, skills-based match making, bots, wide skill range and post-match feedback. Fortnite uses a control layout that is common to other third person shooter games on the respective platforms it is available on. But beyond this, there is also some elements of aim assistance implemented for console controllers. This has been done to prevent the more accurate mouse and keyboard used on the PC platform giving an advantage that could be perceived as unfair. In extension of this, there is also match-making. This is a relatively common feature in many games. An algorithm monitors and evaluates players performance and gives them an internal rating that is not visible to the player. When creating a match, the algorithm scans the pool of players searching for a game and seeks to distribute them across servers according to a number of criteria, including the player rating. This helps ensure an optimal level of challenge for the most players possible. A relatively recent addition is ai players, also known as bots. They look the same as other human controlled players and they can be difficult to tell apart initially. However, the bots are not very skilled at the game and tends to be easily defeated by non-ai players. Epic games have stated that the bots have been introduced to help players grow their skills. They are integrated into the matchmaking system. As a player grows in skill level, they will be placed in matches with less bots. Essentially this represents another tool for Epic to tailor the challenge level to suit all players. Whether the presence of bots in the game affects relatedness negatively is an open question. The skill floor in Fortnite is relatively low, movement is natural, controls intuitive and much of the gameplay is point and shoot. This makes it easier for new and less skilled players to feel competent, particularly when taking the two previous measure into account. For players at the other end of the spectrum, the skill ceiling is high in Fortnite, the building mechanics adds a layer of complexity that can be mastered and make the game much more challenging. After each match, players can view a score screen, giving them feedback on their performance, such as time survived, kills, damage done and so forth. Overall it has been difficult to find any elements in Fortnite that negatively impacts players sense of competence.

## Autonomy

In the normal Battle Royale mode, Fortnite imposes some basic gameplay elements: The Storm and the Safe Zone and a player versus player environment. Beyond this, players have extensive freedom as to how they play the game. The size of the Fortnite map has been calculated to be 6.76km<sup>2</sup> with 4.46km<sup>2</sup> of that being land mass(1Up Analytics, 2019a). To put that in to context the movement mechanics in the virtual world must be considered: Players can run continuously at 20km/h and currently the fastest in-game vehicle allows for a sustained speed of 48km/h(1Up Analytics, 2019b). As the map is bounded by a square with sides of 2.6km this means a player can traverse the map in just under 8 minutes on foot and a little over 3 minutes in a vehicle. If travelling diagonally roughly 40% percent should be added to these times. As previously discussed, the storm mechanic in Fortnite serves to control the bounds of the virtual world temporally and spatially. In this way players start out with a high degree of freedom; they can be wherever they want on the map. If all players landed equidistant, each would have a square to themselves of 260 x 260 metres (Assuming a full match of 100 players). As the game progresses, less and less space is available, though this is modified by the number of players being eliminated. Freedom thus tends to drop as gameplay progresses.

## 7 Valve Ecosystem

The creator of Steam is Valve Corporation, which was founded many years before Steam, namely back in 1996 by Mike Harrington and Gabe Newell. Valve started as a pure game developer and had their first international break through with the creation of Half-Life, a multiplayer first-person shooter, which is a very iconic game even to this day. Half-Life was released back in 1998 and included a software developer kit (SDK) and a tool called Warcraft, which allowed the players to add their own content into the game. As it turned out the implementation of the SDK and tool, had a crucial impact on the overall future and success of Valve, since players came up with unique ideas for different game modes, which quickly gained massive popularity. As a result, games like Team Fortress Classic and Counter-Strike, which originated from this player made game modes, were introduced as stand-alone games. Later on, these games became real flagship games of the Steam platform.

Steam was officially released on September 12, 2003 as a pure software delivery technology, to facilitate automated updates and game downloads between its players. However, Valve decided to change this by releasing the long-anticipated sequel of Half-Life, Half-Life 2. With the launch of the long-anticipated sequel Half-Life 2 in 2004, Steam became a mandatory requirement to play games. Steam was tasked with the authentication of the Half-Life 2 copies, which caused some major difficulties, since Steam's infrastructure could not handle the load.

Consequently, this caused much frustration among the players and left an overall negative first impression of Steam.

This turned out to be the first real stress test for Steam, since Steam was tasked with the authentication of all games, which turned out to be too much for the fragile Steam infrastructure back then. Consequently, many players were frustrated since they were unable to play the game, leaving an overall negative first impression about Steam.

Despite the bad start, Valve continued updating the platform and started by distributing further games, which in the beginning were either created by Valve themselves or which Valve worked on as a co-operator. Another milestone for Steam was in 2005, where they decided to open the platform to other developers, meaning they could also sell games on Steam now. This marks the beginning of the Steam Store, which even to this day is Steam's core interaction, the whole platform revolves around.

A further milestone was the addition of Steamworks, which is an SDK, in 2008. Steamworks allowed third-party developers to release their games onto the Steam Store on their own, meaning Valve didn't have to play a part in this process any longer, making Steam very attractive for PC games developers.

The next major milestone was the release of the Steam Workshops in 2011. Steam Workshop allowed the users to create and share content for the games they play, in form of mods, game modes or later on even skins. In 2013 Steam implemented Steam Early Access, which allowed users to play games which were still under development, meaning they could actively participate in the development process by providing feedback to the game creators. One year later in 2014, the release of Steam Curators followed, which allowed players to write reviews and recommendations for games, which then would help other users of Steam with their purchase decision. All in all, the release of Steam Workshops, Steam Early Access and Steam Curators gave the user base the option to become active "creators" themselves, which had a great positive influence on the Steam community. This sparked social interaction within the community and the formation of groups, where people could help or just talk to each other about mutual interests. It facilitated Steam's function as a community, since before that, usually only people who added each other as friends would engage in social interactions, whereas now the Steam community is more connected and even strangers communicate with one another through various functions such as forums etc.

The introduction of the Steam Community Market in 2012, a place where players can sell and buy items from each other, had a huge impact of Steam's overall business model. Before that, Steam's main revenue income was based on games sales. Through the clever monetization of the Steam Community Market, based on transaction fees, Steam managed to form another

major form of revenue income, namely microtransactions. These microtransactions were facilitated by flagship games such as CS:GO and Dota 2 later on, since the release of cosmetics skins in these games became very popular, it even created whole skin-based economies revolving around these games.

In conclusion, all these milestones, which were achieved through continuous updates and implementations turned Steam into the platform it is now. The Steam Store now, offers over 30.000 games (Bolding, 2019). Moreover, Steam has over 90 million active users and a total of 1 billion created accounts (Lanier, 2019). Since Valve is a private company and therefore chooses not to disclose their earnings, there are no exact numbers about how much revenue they generate, but with the help of analytic tools it was estimated that Steam earned 4.3 Billion USD in 2017 (Huskra, 2018). Moreover, a flagship game such as CS:GO, managed to generate 414 million USD of revenue, in 2018 (Gough, 2019).

## 7.1 BMC

### 7.1.1 Customer Segments

Steam is distributed across the world and therefore services a global market. As of April 2018, the United States had with 14.43% the most Steam users, followed by China with 11.64%, Russia with 9.57%, Brazil with 4.77% and Germany with 4.16% (Statista, 2018). The numbers confirm that Steam has a strong foot in various regions all across the globe. However, it is a bit surprising that Steam was allowed to attract so many users to its platform in China, since they operate in a grey area, because Steam is publishing games in the Chinese market without the approved licenses of the Chinese government. Currently, the global version of Steam can be accessed without any issues. Only some Steam community features such as forums are disabled. Furthermore, Steam is already in contact with the Chinese publisher “Perfect World”, who already operates Steam’s flagship games Dota 2 and CS:GO in China, in order to release a Chinese stand-alone version of Steam, which will comply with the rules and regulations of the Chinese government. On the one hand, this will lead to a better multiplayer experience due to local servers running more stable. On the other hand, which is a massive down sight, is the fact that every game, which will be published from then on will require the official license of the government (Steven Messner, 2020).

Steam is a multisided platform, which offers three different participants, namely gamers, developers/publishers and creators. Further, Steam is available on the PC platform and also on the mobile platform for Android and iOS. However, it should be said that the Steam version for the mobile platform, is basically used for the Steam Guard function, which enables two-factor authentication, increasing the safety of the platform. Currently, it is not possible to play any games on the Steam App, but the Steam App offers access to the Steam Store and other

key aspects of the community hub, e.g. forums, community market, player profiles and chat functions. In general, Steam is utilized by its gamers side of the market as a store, game launcher, library, social media and community hub.

The next participant of the platform, the developers and publishers can be segmented into three different categories, based on their size and brand recognition, namely as low-tier, mid-tier or high-tier. The low-tier segment represents small game developers also referred to as indie game developers and they represent a mass market. Mid-tier developers...High-tier developers add a significant amount of value to the platform, due to their high brand recognition. The presence of such developers is crucial for any platform, since they attract a large and loyal followership. Steam currently is about to enter a partnership with EA, the high-tier/AAA publisher of games like Fifa20 and Apex Legends (Holt, 2019)

The third and final participant of the platform, the creators, represent users who actively generate content on the Steam platform. Users on Steam can become curators, by reviewing games and making recommendations for others. Moreover, users can become modders, by generating content for games. Lastly, users also can generate content by streaming either on Twitch or Youtube, or also by utilizing Steam' build-in streaming platform.

### 7.1.2 Value Proposition

Steam has a multitude of value propositions for every single participation side of their platform. Through the years, Steam developed its platform multiple times through updates, which led to new value propositions. However, the core value proposition is the Steam Store, which offers value for every side of their market.

#### **Steam Store**

The Steam Store currently has over 30,000 games (Bolding, 2019), from indie game- to high-tier developers, for basically every game genre there is. Such a massive amount of games basically satisfies every gaming audience there is, from casual to hardcore gamer and from young to old. Additionally, Steam also has a system in-place called Steam Refund, which automatically refunds games if the play time has not exceeded more than 2 hours. Moreover, Steam has established game franchises like Dota 2 or CS:GO, which are only playable through Steam and have combined more than 1.5 million players monthly. Currently, Steam has over 90 million active users (Lanier, 2019), which obviously facilitates multiplayer gameplay and also indicates a high reach for game developers. As of now, Chinese indie game developers are currently utilizing Steam as a loophole to sell their games on the Steam Store, since Steam bypasses the Chinese government regulations for publishing games (Messner, 2020).

First of all, another unique feature of the Steam Store is Steam Early Access, which allows gamers to play games which are still under development, and provide direct feedback to the game developers, turning them into game testers (a form of creator). Overall, Steam Early Access is an especially valuable tool for game developers and publishers, because it offers essentially two value propositions: Firstly, the game developers receive direct feedback from the players for example in form of reports once a player encounters a bug, which they can use to improve the game until the official release date. Secondly, the game developers are able to sell their unfinished game on the Steam Store, which is crucial for smaller indie game developers, since it provides the revenue, they really much need to continue the development process of the game. For instance, let's have a closer look at the small indie game Battle Royal Tycoon, which was available on the Steam Early Access program for nine months. During their first month in the Early Access program they managed to sell 3700 copies which generated a gross revenue of 27.000 USD. At the end of the 9-month Early Access period, they managed to sell 15.000 copies which added up to an overall gross revenue of 120.000 USD. However, it should be said, that due to multiple reasons such as taxes, chargebacks, refunds and of course the cut Steam takes, the net amount was significantly lower, namely around 50.000 USD (Cardoso, 2019).

Furthermore, the users have the chance to become curators (another form of a creator) by reviewing games on the store, which serves as a recommendation system for others. In addition to that, players can leave comments or questions under the reviews, to help each other out. On the one hand, this obviously influences other users in their purchasing decision. On the other hand, it also helps the game developers since they receive feedback through the reviews and might adjust and develop their game towards the right direction. KOL also profit from the curation system since it improves the discoverability of good games. In order to further aid discoverability, Steam has started an initiative called Steam Labs, a place where Steam offers users to test upcoming features in form of experiments, with the purpose of gathering feedback provided by the users on their usefulness (see chapter key activities). Steam has Another function of the store is the ability to wish list games. This allows users to add games they are interested into a list. Obviously, this helps the users with keeping track of games they might want to purchase in the future. In addition to that users will be notified by e-mail, once a game which is on their wish list is on sale. Consequently, this also has a benefit for game developers, because they receive valuable data about the desirability of their games and can act appropriately. For instance, game developers can use this knowledge, e.g. to set the price of their game pre-launch, based on the desirability or post-launch utilize this information when to set sales. Which leads us to our final proposition for the Store, namely Steam Sales. Seasonal Sales, which most of the times occur around holidays, offer great

discounts to its player base and also drives good revenues for game developers and publishers. In conclusion, wish lists and sale events are powerful marketing tools for the developers.

### **Media Library**

Steam has a media library called Steam Library. For users the library grants a solid overview over their game history. In addition to that, the users are able to quickly sort, explore and hide, uninstall and feature their games. They also have the possibility to drag their games into a collection, which allows them to personally customize their library. Further, the games on Steam are automatically updated via the Steam Cloud, it is easy to keep track and also manage updates for specific games in the Steam Library. Lastly, players have the option to enable “Family-share”, a function which allows users to share every game in their library with other persons playing on the same computer.

### **Community Hub**

The community hub of Steam encourages discussions with the help of various forums. For instance, players can post guides about games and receive feedback, if something is unclear or could be improved. Additionally, discussion forums are often used to help players with software related problems. Game developers can also use the community hub in order to inform their player base about the latest updates, events or activities in general. Steam’s community hub also has a broadcast section, which enables gamers to live stream their content easily without any additional software on Steam.

A big part of the community hub of Steam is the Community Workshop, which has the ability to turn regular players into creators and curators. Firstly, player can actively participate in the content creating side of steam by developing mods, game modes or skins, thus turn into creators. Secondly, the other players can rate the created content and provide feedback by commenting, which turns the players into curators. Thirdly, creators can earn money on the Steam Workshop, for example with the creation of skins, since Steams pays the creators an undisclosed % of the overall revenue they make with the creator designed skins.

The above-mentioned skins are cosmetics which can be equipped in certain games and can change for example the appearance of a character model within a game. Also, most of these skins can be traded amongst players by either using the trade function or listing them on the Community Market. The Steam Community Market is a market platform, which facilitates trades between its users. Further, the active users are able to either buy or sell items on the market through their Steam Wallet balance. The introduction of skins with combination of the market created a whole economic system based on skins (O’Connor, 2015), since players

tend to regularly utilize the market, to for example sell their old skins, once they got bored of them, in order to purchase some new one's from the market. Last but not least, it should be mentioned that the market acts as a middleman between buyer and seller so therefore the markets offer a high degree of safety.

### **Social Network**

The Steam platform has elements such as the player profile page which are identical to conventional social media networks like Facebook. For instance, the player profile page also allows its users to manage their friends, has a comment section and a displayed friend list. In addition to that players, can decorate their page, by uploading an avatar picture, showcasing certain items, artwork, achievement progress in games or badges. The badges can be levelled up by collecting achievements in games. Especially the badge, which showcases how many games the users managed to collect over the years, is one most users are very proud of. Further, players are also able to organize themselves into groups based on their in common interests, they have the option to keep them open to the public, so everyone can join or alternatively have them on invite-only. In these groups players can again engage in discussions through forums or use them to form guilds/clans/teams in games, since games like CS:GO will display their clan-tag. Lastly, Steam also offers players within their social network communication tools, such as private messaging, VOIP and group chats.

### **Steamworks, Steam Direct and Steam Hardware & Software Survey**

Steamworks is a collection of tools and services such as SDK's and API's which support game developers and publishers to build their games. In addition to that, it also provides guidance on how to distribute their game on Steam in the most efficient manner. Steamworks also provides a wiki called Steamworks Documentation, which basically is a great overview of all the tools and services Steamworks offers, and also explains every single of their functionalities in detail.

Steam Direct is an automated submission feature for new game developers, which offers an affordable, transparent and streamlined route for the developers to get their game published on the Steam Store. However, for every single submission the developers have to pay a product submission fee of 100 USD (Valve, n.d.-f).

The Steam Hardware and Software Survey is a monthly, voluntary and anonymous survey for the Steam users, which collects data about what kind of computer hardware and software they utilize. After every month, data spreadsheets with the results are uploaded and are helpful for developers, since it gives them an idea about the systems their potential customers are using, so they can optimize their games accordingly.

### 7.1.3 Channels

The main channel with which Steam managed to raise most of its awareness it is experiencing currently are their own games. Further, the integration of iconic Valve games into the Steam platform (see chapter introduction) was the key factor behind the success Steam has. Moreover, Steam was the first established game distribution platform and certainly benefited from a first-mover advantage, due to the novelty it brought back then. Ever since then WOM through the gaming community was an effective way to gain awareness. A recent survey also shows that Steam is being used by 95.56% of the survey participants, placing them way ahead of any other competitor (gamestar, 2020). Of course the presence of live streaming platforms like Twitch.tv also plays a main role if it comes down to attracting awareness (Christoph, time 00:32:34 – 00:36:27). Video on demand services like YouTube also fall into the same category, since they both bring in new audiences through content discovery and also player engagement. In addition to that, Steam also uses Social Media channels to promote certain events like Steam sales. Another crucial aspect in raising awareness about their games is the flourishing esports scene (probably reference esports chapter). Games like Dota 2 managed to reach 1.08 million concurrent viewers alone on Twitch.tv, during Dota 2 The International esports tournament (statista, 2019).

The esports scene therefore attracts large audiences, online by watching streams and offline by participating at events. Furthermore, there is a whole ecosystem of third party websites around certain esports titles, such as CS:GO. CS:GO as an esports facilitates awareness through third party websites, such as HLTV(see cs chapter) or betting websites, which keeps informing users about on-going games and tournaments. Nowadays, even mainstream media channels such as television have taking a big interest into the esports scene in general. ESL (an esports organizer) has signed a three year deal with the Danish TV channel “TV 2”, which grants them the right to broadcast the ESL Pro Tour Counter-Strike: Global Offensive (CS:GO) on Danish television. Obviously, this broadcast will reach a large audience in Denmark, especially catering towards a younger audience, since they believe esports will be one of the biggest sports in the future (ESL, 2019). Finally, Steam also spreads awareness to developers through value propositions such as Steamworks or Steam Direct (see Value Props).

In terms of helping customers to evaluate their products and services, content generated by the players is a crucial factor. Third party websites such as Twitch.TV or YouTube can reach a massive audience by either showing gameplay or making critical reviews. Additionally, discussion/news websites such as Reddit or HLTV help with the evaluation with for example certain game updates like in CS:GO. Especially, CS:GO had a few cases where certain updates, such as the introduction of the overpowered R8-Revolver, led to a huge community backlash, which Valve used as a form of evaluation and promptly implemented a fix in form of

a nerf (Valve, n.d.-b) Moreover, the Steam Community hub provides many forms of evaluation, such as players acting as curators. In addition to that, players have the option to evaluate player generated content e.g. skin designs as well, through the Steam Workshop.

Purchases on the Steam platform are facilitated through either the Steam Store or Steam Community Market. The user pays for the purchased products by using the balance on the user's Steam Wallet. Furthermore, the user has multiple options to add funds to the Steam Wallet, e.g. through PayPal or credit cards. Besides, users can also purchase Steam Gift Cards, either in digital or physical form, located at retail stores all across the world. Once they receive the gift card, they can either redeem the value through Steam themselves or give it to another player. After the player has been charged through the Steam Wallet, and the player decided the purchase the game for his/her own use, the game will be added to the Steam Library, from where the game can be downloaded and installed onto the players PC. Alternatively, there are also third-party resellers for games such as G2A and Kinguin, who sell "game keys", which also can be redeemed on Steam. Said game keys can be entered through the Steam Library under the "add a game" section, which also will add the game to the players Steam Library after the activation processes is completed. Thus, the distribution of software on the Steam platform is an automated, fast and convenient process. Last, but not least post-purchase support is mainly provided through self-service like troubleshooting guides. If the self-service is not sufficient enough to help with the solving of a specific problem, there is also an option to request help from the Steam Support team.

#### 7.1.4 Customer Relationships

Steam's customer relationship highly focuses on customer retention, in order to keep their large userbase happy. They use communities to facilitate content creation around their products by their users, with the help of the Steam Workshop. On the developer side, the content creation through communities is supported through Steamworks. In both cases, they use communities in order to facilitate knowledge exchange, so they can solve their problems by helping each other. Steamworks with its developers and publishers and the Steam Workshop with its creators engage with Steam in a form of co-creation, since both sides work together in order to create value. Moreover, Steam also managed to create an economic system revolving skins, which keeps users interested, since Valve regularly releases new skins for its games. Another point which speaks for customer retention is the fact, that Steam it has some customer lock-ins in place. One of the lock-ins revolves around the skin economy. A user of the Steam Community Market can sell items to another user and the money from that sale will be added to his Steam Wallet. However, there is no option to withdraw that money to someone's bank or PayPal account. Thus, users are forced to either spend the money on skins again or to buy games. Nonetheless, there are third party trading websites, who bypass

the Steam Community Market, and let the users sell skins on their website with the option to also withdraw it.

In addition to communities, Steam mainly engages with its gamers, creators and smaller game developers in the form of self-service and automated processes. Self-service and automated processes are in place, in order to provide detailed support for the large userbase to keep the users satisfied, thus this also falls into the realm of customer retention. There is no real direct connection and Steam offers a detailed troubleshooting guide, which should provide the users with enough help to fix their problem themselves. Further, automated processes are used, for example Steam Refund, which refunds the game and automatically adds the money back to its user Steam Wallet, once the user fills out the request and the request gets approved.

Last but not least, Steam also has a customer relationship driven by customer acquisition and boosting sales. A perfect example for such a relationship on the Steam platform is the partnership between Steam and EA, where both sides engage in a form of coopetition (see Key Partners). EA gets new users onto their own platform called Origin, whereas Steam gets to publish their games on the Steam Market, which results in acquisition of a new customers segment on the one hand and boosting sales on the other.

#### 7.1.5 Revenue Stream

Steam has two main streams of revenue, namely game sales and microtransactions. Regular game sales can be categorized as one-time customer payments. They include first-party sales in form of Valve games and third-party sales in form from other game developers and publishers. However, Steam recently had to adjust their revenue split model with third party developers. Back then, Steam took a cut of around 30% on all the games sold on Steam, with the exception for some smaller game developers who published their games via Steam Direct. The new pricing model states, that the cut goes down to 25% for all sales which generate between 10 million USD to 50 million USD. Once the 50 million USD mark is reached, for every sale from then on, the cut will be further lowered to 20% (Statt, 2018).

The other main revenue, namely microtransactions can be considered as recurring revenues, due to on-going payments. Into this category fall, the purchase of DLC's, in-game items and transactions fees on the Steam Community Market. Steam charges a 5% fee for every single transaction made on the Community market, with a minimum fee of 0.01 USD. Specific Valve games such as CS:GO or Dota 2 have an additional 10% fee on all transactions made (Valve, n.d.-a).

A further but rather minor stream of revenue is the sale of hardware through the Steam Store. Steam used to sale the Steam Controller, which was discontinued in November 2019

(Hollister, 2019). After having a glance at the hardware section in the Steam Store, Valve has switched their main focus to the sale of their own VR headset, called the Valve Index Headset with the starting price of 539€ for the headset alone.

Since Steam does not declare their revenue, only estimates can be made. In order to get estimates the website “Steam Spy” is often utilized, since it uses an API provided by Valve and continuously gathers data from the profiles of the Steam users. Based on the analysis of this data, Steam Spy is able to provide relative accurate estimates. In 2017, Steam Spy estimated that Steam earned 4.3 billion USD with game sale revenue alone. This sum does not include Steam’s second main revenue income in form of microtransactions (Huskra, 2018).

#### 7.1.6 Key Resources

To begin with, Steam has a multitude of intellectual resources, which probably are the main key resource behind Steam’s success as a digital platform. Firstly, Steam possesses intellectual property in the form of games created by Valve. Games like Team Fortress, Dota 2, Half-Life and Counter-Strike can be considered as key resources, since they are only playable on the Steam platform and they attract millions of users. Moreover, Steamworks with its free SDK’s and other tools have proven to be key assets for developers and publishers. Another intellectual resource are the agreements with game publishers to distribute their games on the Steam Store. Finally, and probably one of their biggest key resources is simply the brand Valve itself. Steam has established its monopoly in the gaming market, and probably fall under the category of “too big to fail”, due to its massive userbase with over 90 million active users (Lanier, 2019).

Since Valve is a developer of games and in charge of constantly updating and maintaining the Steam platform. So, it is safe to say that these processes are knowledge-intensive and require creativity. Therefore, Valve strongly relies on humans as a key resource, in form of designers, managers programmers, IT and network staff to guarantee a continuing successful future.

Steam Cloud is Steam’s inhouse cloud service and provides storage for games and the platform. For instance, games use Steam Cloud in order to store e.g. save game files and game settings. The cloud service is hosted on servers provided by Steam, meaning servers can be categorized as physical key assets.

#### 7.1.7 Key Activities

Since Steam is a multisided digital platform, it is dominated by platform and network related key activities, such as the constant development of software in order to further improve and maintenance the overall platform. Therefore, software development can be seen as Steam’s most crucial key activity, because of its importance of keeping the platform up and running.

For instance, Steam has been developing and improving their chat features for communication between the gamers lately, so players do not have to rely on third party applications for VOIP communication or group chats such as TeamSpeak or Discord (Valve, n.d.-d).

Further, Steam puts a lot of focus on its community and co-creation. On the one hand, they encourage users to become creators to bring content into their favourite games through the Steam Workshop. On the other hand, they also try to attract developers with value propositions of Steamworks and the market reach of the Steam Store. A key activity here is they act as a community enhancing infrastructure, which facilitates interactions between all the different user sides of their platform. For instance, the Community hub is a place where mainly the gamer/creator side interact with each other, whereas Steamworks enables the interaction of developer and publishers. Ultimately, the Steam Store acts as a place where both sides come together, for example in the form of Steam Early Access or reviews, where gamers can exchange information in form of feedback or bug reports with the developer side. Finally, Steam's community building measures led to a large userbase, therefore problem solving is also one of Steam's key activities, in order to come up with new solution for the issues their customers might encounter. Once again due to the large number of users, these solution are primarily implemented through self-service like detailed troubleshooting guides.

Platform expansion in form of glocalization or the acquisition of new customer segments also is a key activity. Firstly, forms of glocalization have been accomplished through the implementation of official support for 26 languages, since 60% of Steam's userbase use another language than English and therefore implemented language support improves user experience (Valve, n.d.-c). Furthermore, Steam utilizes regional prices based on the customers geographical location, also adjust payment methods based on that. For instance, Steam users in Europe can use PayPal as a payment method, whereas in China they offer Alipay. Steam's rapid expansion in China, is also part of their glocalization and acquisition activities. Last but not least, another form of customer acquisition is the entering of strategic relationship with game developers/publishers. Prime example for that, is the partnership with game publisher EA, which can be categorized as coopetition.

Additionally, facilitating discoverability is also a key activity Steam engages in. On the one hand, Steam aids discoverability in form of game reviews, recommendations and the Wishlist function towards the gamers and developers. Especially, small indie games developers have been struggling lately in terms of discoverability, since the Steam Store is flooded with games (Valentine, 2019). Therefore, Steam implemented an experimental area called "Steam Labs" with the goal of increasing and improving discoverability. Steam Labs aids discoverability in form of experiments Steam users can participate in and provide feedback via forums to the

developers of these experiments. For instance, an active experiment right now, is called “Interactive Recommender” a machine learning tool which predicts games a user might like, based on their Steam Library. Once an experiment is deemed to be useful the status will be set from active to shipped, which basically means the experiment has been implemented into the Steam platform (Valve, n.d.-e).

#### 7.1.8 Key Partners

We identify that Steam has two main motivations when it comes down to forming partnerships with others, namely the acquisition of new resources and the reduction of risk/uncertainty. First of all, Steam’s own userbase in form of gamers and developers are a key customer. Gamers engage in co-creation and become creators in form of for example modders or curators and can provide feedback to improve the structure of the overall platform, e.g. as mentioned with Steam Labs in the chapter earlier. Developers and publishers are crucial in order to fill the Steam Store with interesting and relevant games. Third party live-streaming websites like Twitch.TV are key partners, since they provide data in the form of viewing statics on specific games and also are an important tool to promote games in general. In addition to that, the esports industry in general can be considered as a key partner of Valve. Valve mainly utilizes third-party organizers in order to host esports events, except for Dota 2’s ‘The International’, which Valve complete organizes on their own esportsinsights.com, 2020. Therefore, third party esports organizers such as ESL or DreamHack can be considered as key partners as well. The key partners mentioned above, mainly revolve about acquisition of new resources, namely in the form of relevant feedback, content and the attraction of new audiences.

The attraction of a new audience was also a motivation for a strategic partnership with the game publisher EA. Their partnership can be labelled as coopetition, a strategic partnership between two competitors. EA utilizes its own platform called Origin, however with the start of the partnership the users’ Origin and Steam friend lists will be integrated, to facilitate cross platform multiplayer possibilities. Moreover, Steam users will be still required to have an EA account to access EA games on Steam (Holt, 2019). The nature of this relationship is further explained under the ‘Customer relationship’ segment.

Steam expansion into the Chinese market currently is quite successful, since China represents Steam’s second biggest customer segment, with 11.64% of all users coming from China (Statista, 2018). However, since Steam currently operates in a grey area (see customer segment chapter) and China already blocked large sections of Steam’s Community hub (Chalk, 2017), the current operation involves a high degree of uncertainty. An uncertainty Steam is trying to avoid by entering a strategic relationship with the Chinese publisher “Perfect

World” (see customer segment), which will nullify the uncertainty of getting locked out of the Chinese market.

#### 7.1.9 Cost Structure

Since Valve does not provide any information about their revenue streams or expenditures, so it is difficult to analyse their cost structure. Usually one of the main expenditures for other competitors are cloud operations. However, Steam has their own cloud service called Steam Cloud, so it is plausible to assume that Valve is not really affected by these costs unlike other platforms.

The customer support of Valve seems to be cost driven at first glance, since most of the support channels are facilitated through self-service and are highly automated. However, after taking into consideration what massive active userbase Steam has, it seems very likely to believe that this form of support channels is simply the most effective one. On the one hand, it is easy for the users to follow and on the other hand there is simply no delay regarding response time. Last but not least, it should be mentioned again, that Steam provides further support in form of opening support tickets via e-mail.

Steam's steady and continuous development of the platform for example with recent updates to the chat functionality, machine-learning processes for improved discoverability via Steam Labs or the development of VR technologies suggests, that Steam's business model is mainly value-driven. Thus, Steam wants to create as much value as possible in order to maintain their monopoly as a digital distribution platform in the PC market.

### 7.2 Counter-Strike

In the late 1998 the game company Valve released the genre defining story driven first person shooter 'Half-life'. After the game's release a software development kit (SDK) for the game's engine was made available to the public. The EULA of the SDK essentially granted creators IP rights of any mods produced with the SDK, but limited distribution of mods to users who owned a copy of Half-Life (Kücklich, 2005). One of the many mods created with the SDK was known as 'Counter-Strike' and released as a beta in 1999. The mod became very popular and caught the attention of Valve, who bought the IP rights to the mod and hired the creators as employees.

In 2004, two completely new and therefore standalone games were released, in the form of Counter-Strike: Condition Zero, and Counter-Strike: Source. However, the release of Counter-Strike: Source, later this year on November the 1st, 2004 seemed to be a real game changer, since this game was a complete remake by Valve themselves of Counter-Strike 1.6 based on a new brand new "Source" engine with updated and better looking graphics, and

more “realistic” game mechanics (“Counter-Strike: Source | Counter-Strike Wiki | Fandom,” n.d.). Nonetheless it is safe to say, that Valve underestimated the loyalty of the Counter-Strike 1.6 player base, since especially the older generation of players, including most of the players of the competitive and rapidly growing esports scene, who invested a lot of their time, into the previous game, did not make the switch to the new Source version, since the game was considered more easy and beginner-friendly to play and therefore lowered the overall skill ceiling. Andy also confirms CS:S overall lower skill ceiling and explains why he did not make the switch himself: *“I think the overall skill floor was way lower, making it more noob friendly game in general. Also, the mechanics were watered down in CS:S, for example movement was much more simpler and offered like less possibilities, so it reduced the overall skill ceiling. I think that the core of CS 1.6 players felt the same way, so they also never made the switch”* (Interview, February 2020, Time 02:21).

CS: Source was still doing good when looking at the overall player numbers, since it did in fact attract a lot of new players (rather than old 1.6 ones), but the competitive scene needed some serious time to develop and finally flourish. Ultimately, there is no denying that, the release of CS: Source split the player base in half, and even when looking at old forum records generated hate between both communities. This split of the community was also confirmed in our interview with Andy where he states: *“We kinda labeled CS:S as the newb friendly game. But yeah, it kinda sucked since the Counterstrike community was like ripped in half”* (Interview, February 2020, Time 02:52).

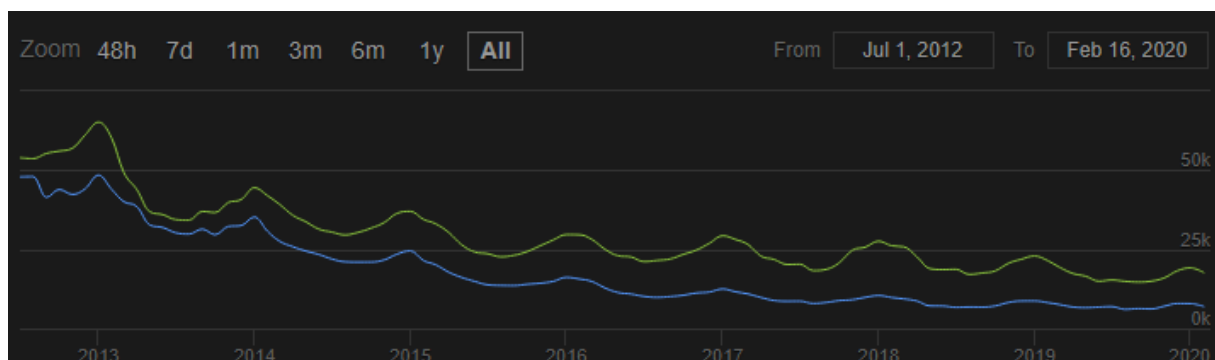


Figure 1 CS 1.6 vs CS:S peak player count 2012-2020 (Steam Charts, n.d.)

When comparing the player numbers, shortly before the Counter-Strike: Global Offensive (CS:GO) release, namely for July 2012, CS 1.6 (~34,000 avg. players) had a larger player base than CS:S (~28,000 avg. players).

Finally, on August the 21st, 2012, Valve and Hidden Path Entertainment released CS:GO (Liquipedia, 2019). Nevertheless, they faced a rather rough launch, since the game itself was

not very polished, hence game mechanics such as movement and accuracy were underwhelming, so basically it was a completely different game of what CS:GO is right now. Andy had a similar experience, when he first played CS:GO after the initial release: *“I was really disappointed, not gonna lie. The game felt very like “clunky” and it wasn’t really enjoyable at all”* (Interview, February 2020, Time 03:23). Valve quickly assumed the sole responsibility for developing the game further by providing further updates.



Figure 2 CS 1.6 vs CS:S vs CS:GO peak player count 2012-2013 (Steam Charts, n.d.)

As a result, the release of CS:GO initially flopped, as figure 2 clearly indicates, roughly four months after the initial launch of CS:GO, CS 1.6 managed to increase its player base, having more than twice the player base of CS:GO. The reason behind this trend is also explained through our interview with Andy: *“We played like 1 map of CS:GO and then went back and played some CS 1.6 instead. We immediately noticed that CS 1.6 felt way smoother.”* (Interview, February 2020, Time 03:32). With the release of CS:GO, the ultimate goal for Valve was to finally unite the Counter-Strike player base under a single game, but they rather achieved the opposite, namely they managed to split the player base into 3 parts now.

Despite the bad start CS:GO had, they managed to get the game back on the right track, especially with the help of two major updates. All in all, through our interview with Andy we were able to identify 3 key reasons which led to the success of CS:GO. Firstly, the introduction of matchmaking on October the 25th, 2012, which automatically pairs you up against opponents within your ranking (Fandom, n.d.). This feature was a complete novelty for Counter-Strike, since before that, players had to rely on third party websites, which would set them up with opponents, given one of the teams had a local server to host the game on to begin with. Andy recalls that during his old CS 1.6 days also the missing ranking system in combination with having to find opponent’s manually led to issues: *“We had to use third party tools or websites like IRC or gegnersuche.de in order to find enemies and give them our server IP. Most of the games ended up being unbalanced because there was no real ranking system in place.”* (Interview, February 2020, Time 01:24). The second major update was the

introduction of skins to the game. The first skins were introduced on August the 13th, 2013. Skins are cosmetic weapon finishes and probably the most crucial factor, why CS:GO evolved into the game it is nowadays. Andy also thinks skins had a big impact on the overall game: *“Skins were already popular in other games such as MOBA’s during that time, so obviously the majority of the community also enjoyed them in CS:GO” (Interview, February 2020, Time 04:10)*. Furthermore he also states that CS:GO’s esports scene was the biggest reason for him to come back to the game: *“Personally, for me esports was probably the reason why I came back to CS in general” (Interview, February 2020, Time 04:18)*.

Last but not least, also a countless amounts of smaller updates, patches, game balance changes helped CS:GO to get onto the right path. Furthermore, the introduction of different game modes, such as death match, arms race, demolition, casual mode, scrimmage mode and especially the latest danger zone addition, helped catering towards many different player types, so everyone has a preferred mode a player can enjoy. For instance, Andy states that he likes the new addition of the scrimmage mode and death match: *“I really like the addition of Scrimmage and also like Deathmatch in general in order to warm up.” (Interview, February 2020, Time 17:34)*. For example, the latest danger zone addition, offers a battle royal mode, a genre which got very popular with the rise of PubG, Fortnite and Apex Legends. However, Andy disagrees about the popularity of the Dangerzone game mode in CS:GO, since he thinks: *“I feel like if people want to play a good BR, they would rather just play PubG, Fortnite or COD instead you know.” (Interview, February 2020, Time 17:40)*. Moreover, Valve also stuck to their roots and allowed community servers to be in the game, which can be found and accessed through the “community server browser”. These servers are run by the community, like in the old CS 1.6 days, and offer many unique maps and game mods, Andy enjoys the implementation of old school game modes: *“Otherwise...I like that they implemented old school CS 1.6 modes like surf maps into CS:GO as well, which can be accessed through the community server browser”. (Interview, February 2020, Time 17:50)*.

So it is no surprise that on the 9th of February 2020, more than 20 years after Counter-Strike was first released, CS:GO went on to break its all-time peak player record, attaining over 901.000 concurrent players(Steam Charts, n.d.). Reportedly, CS:GO generated \$414 million USD of revenue in 2018 (Statista, 2019a).

## 7.2.1 Economic ecosystem

### 7.2.1.1 Issues transitioning from P2P to F2P

While the first many iterations of Counter-Strike were free for anyone that owned Half-Life, CS:GO was introduced as a stand-alone pay to play game. It remained so until the end of 2018 when it went free-to-play. However, an option was implemented allowing players to buy

a “CS:GO Prime Status Upgrade, Andy explains the Prime Status as: *“It’s basically some sort of additional service, that allows you to play against other players who have the prime status only as well. In order to get the prime status, you need to buy it nowadays, and also link your phone number to it. And no, I never had to buy it, since I have been playing for a long time and all the older accounts got it automatically for free. We basically just needed to link our phone number in order to get it.”* (Interview, February 2020, Time 20:15). To summarize Andy’s comment, prime players can choose to get matched against other Prime Status players only. Moreover, this is an attractive value proposition because it reduces the likelihood of encountering ‘cheaters’. Even when CS:GO was purely a pay-to-play game it had a significant problem with cheaters. The switch to a free to play model massively magnified this issue.

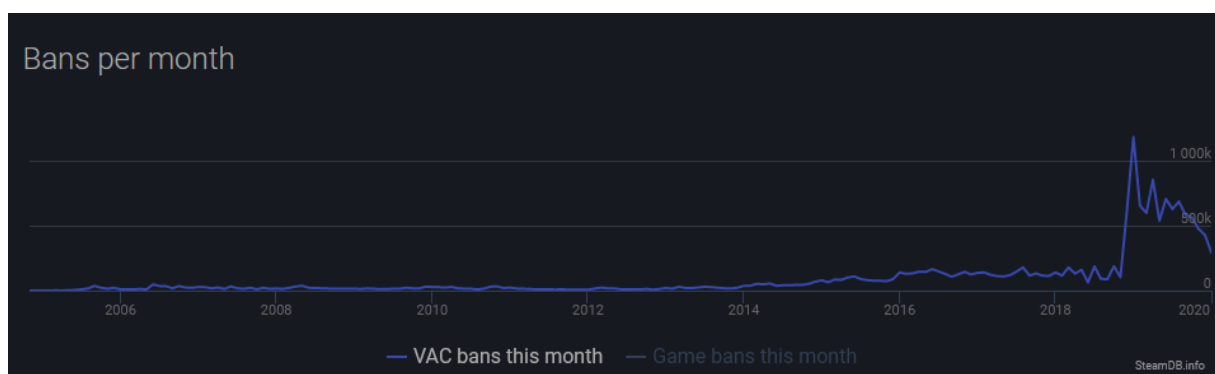


Figure 3 Figure illustrating players banned for cheating, notice the spike in late 2018 that coincides with adoption of the free-to-play model (Steamdb, n.d.)

In November 2018, the month before CS:GO went free-to-play, ~102.000 players were banned. In comparison, almost 1.2 million players were banned for cheating in January 2019. Essentially, the switch lead to an influx of cheaters by a factor of x10. Andy also reflects upon the current cheating situation CS:GO is having in our interview, where he also confirms that the switch to free to play had a negative impact on overall cheating situation: *“Also the switch to f2p made it so much worse, cheaters will get banned and can just create a new account and cheat again. Yeah... I really feel sorry for new players. But yeah, cheating is just really bad, it ruins the fun for a lot of players”* (Interview, February 2020, Time 26:58)

The crux of the issue lies in the effectiveness of banning players. With a pay-to-play model a ban results in a financial impact, as access to the game has a value corresponding to its purchase price. A banned player wishing to play again will thus have to create a new account AND pay for the game again. This serves as both a deterrent and an opportunity for remonetisation of banned players. With a free-to-play game however, only the hassle of creating a new account serves as a deterrent and the revenue stream from banned players re-entering the game ceases. Banned players can simply create a new account, use cheats on it and then repeat when they get banned again, as Andy has stated previously.

### 7.2.1.2 Virtual economy and commodification

CS:GO exists within the Steam economic system. As previously mentioned, this is a de jure type 2 economy, but a de facto type 3 economy. The virtual currency in the Steam ecosystem uses sovereign currency as a denomination. In CS:GO cosmetic items centred around weapon 'skins' serves as a main driver of revenue generation. Andy believes the following about skins: *"I think they are cool. I have a solid collection of skins myself. It's probably the best form of monetization, since it doesn't make the game like Pay to Win, unlike Fifa with Ultimate Team and their OP player cards."* (Interview, February 2020, Time 05:36). While some skins are rewarded or earned through gameplay, loot-boxes (called 'Cases') are used extensively as a delivery mechanism. These can be bought through the marketplace or they can be rewarded for playing the game. To open them a key is required (with a few exceptions) that must be purchased either from the marketplace or directly from within the game. The supply of keys is controlled by Steam who have chosen not to artificially limit it (unlike skins that are only available in limited quantities). Keys therefore do not significantly fluctuate in price. As keys can be traded in the marketplace, this low-price fluctuation in combination with a near constant demand resulted in keys becoming a de facto virtual currency. Whether this was intentional on Valve's part is unknown. However, the unsanctioned externalisation of the Steam virtual economy led to keys being used for RMT and money laundering. Valve reacted accordingly and decided that new keys acquired directly through Steam, are no longer tradeable between players. However, all the older keys which are currently in circulation remain tradeable and hence unaffected by this change (Shaun Prescott, 2019).

Other virtual items in CS:GO, namely skins, cannot be purchased directly from within the game. The marketplace, cases and the occasional in game reward are the only way of obtaining them. The latter two methods are the only way in which new supply of items are introduced. Cases are categorised into series based on a theme or a specific event. Content inside them and probability of obtaining a specific instance of said content varies between case series. However, Andy categorises opening loot-boxes as a form of gambling, due to the chance of getting the desired item is slim: *"Because I think it is another form of gambling and just money burning in general. If I know that this loot box can have a nice skin, I will probably just buy the skin from the market."* (Interview, February 2020, Time 12:03). As a series of cases get older, the probability of them being given as a reward gets lower. Cases specific to events completely cease being rewarded once the event is over. When a case is opened, it is consumed (i.e. they are rivalrous). The point of describing this process is to illustrate how the virtual economy is designed to introduce scarcity, artificially imposing the market conditions of the real world on the virtual medium in order to commodify the items within it. As an example, the AWP Dragon Lore, a skin for the most powerful sniper rifle in CS:GO, was added in 2014.

It could only be obtained from an event specific case or dropped as an in-game reward. The probability of obtaining it from an event case or as a reward was estimated to be 0.0004% per attempt (Skinwallet, 2019). Owning an AWP Dragon Lore has become a status symbol in the CS:GO community and serves accordingly to Andy as an item for self-expression and uniqueness *"[...] I also think the AWP Dragonlore is cool and unique, basically a skin you don't see every day."* (Interview, February 2020, Time 07:55). Further, many esports athletes have this skin equipped and use it in matches. Valve has capitalized on this by creating virtual autographs that can be applied to skins. These are also available from another series of loot-boxes, named 'Autograph Capsules'. Andy adds that 'Autograph Capsules' and 'Team Stickers' support the CS:GO esports scene: *"I think buying a skin here and there to also support the esports scene like with the purchase of autograph/team sticker capsules, it's a nice thing to do"* (Interview, February 2020, Time 06:42). In addition to that, he also highlights that: *"[...] a set percentage of the money would go like to the esports teams directly. I think it was 50%."* (Interview, February 2020, Time 07:32). The ability to trade or sell these items for RMT transforms them into virtual goods that can function as investments, as Andy explains: *"It feels like you are rather renting them in a sense and in some cases you even make profit over time with them since they gain in value, so it feels like making a smart investment."* (Interview, February 2020, Time 07:05). Returning to the AWP Dragon Lore, after a tournament in 2018, one bearing a virtual autograph of the tournament winner obtained from a CS:GO major souvenir drop (only obtainable during CS:GO Majors), was sold for \$61.000 USD (Chalk, 2018). In comparison, a pristine example of the real world AWP was sold for \$8.625 USD (RIA, 2017). In conclusion, Andy explains the high value of certain skins with: *"[...] because there is a thriving market for CS:GO skins and there is a high demand and obviously a limited supply like with the AWP Dragonlore for example."* (Interview, February 2020, Time 08:26).

### 7.2.1.3 Third Party Integration & User generated content (UGC)

The observation that the Steam virtual economy, including CS:GO, is de facto type 3 is primarily due to the extensive 3<sup>rd</sup> party integration that Steam offers combined with the ease of transferring items within the Steam platform. However, third-party websites in general have a huge impact on the behaviour of the customers, e.g. in regard to in-game/skin purchases or the consumption of their game. Firstly, by allowing third party trading websites and therefore facilitating the infrastructure of a type 3 virtual economy, users are inclined to buy more and also expensive skins, since they know that they can make their money back, according to Andy: *"I also think the ability to get your money back from them is also like another purchase motivation so to speak"* (Interview, February 2020, Time 06:50). Furthermore, he also confirms that the existence of such websites led to: *"[...] websites like OP Skins back then made it easy*

to convert skins back into real money again, so people were not afraid of spending hefty sums on skins.” (Interview, February 2020, Time 08:35). Since, the Steam Community Market is the biggest marketplace to buy skins on, users will still use the market regardless, meaning Steam will also receive some form of monetization. In addition to that, almost all of the skins which are sold on third party websites, originate from loot boxes, meaning third party websites also have a positive influence on users spending money on opening these loot boxes, in the hope of unboxing something valuable. Another big advantage of Valve’s fostering of a big ecosystem consisting out of third-party websites is added functionality. Essentially, added functionality which is free of risk and free of charge. For instance, converting Steam into a type 3 ecosystem is not impossible, but would lead to a lot of added complexity, e.g. when it comes down to manage thousands of daily cash out or legal matters. Another recent example is, Valve’s decision to let third party statistics websites access the match history of their CS:GO players. CS:GO players were unsatisfied with the rather short and clinical overview of their own statistics currently available in CS:GO. According to Andy his friends wanted: “[...] *have a detailed overview over their stats.*” (Interview, February 2020, Time 30:30). Therefore, they had to manually download every single demo of their matches and upload them on third party statistics websites, in order to receive the overview of stats they were interested in. With Valve’s change to grant access to the players match history, the players are now able to submit all their games through an authentication code, which they can generate through Steam.

All in all, it can be said that the relationship between Valve and third-party websites can be categorized as a symbiotic one, since both sides are able to generate value and also monetize it effectively. Moreover, due to the added functionality also the users of the Steam platform are beneficiaries in this symbiosis. Therefore, it is no surprise that Valve does not only allow the use of third-party websites, but even encourages it by allowing them access to their API’s.

#### 7.2.1.4 Trading

One limitation of the Steam Community Market compared to third party trading websites, is the limited maximum price of a single item on the market, which currently is at 1800 USD (“Community Market FAQ - Documentation - Knowledge Base - Steam Support,” n.d.). However, this limit was set to 400 USD back in 2017 and got increased around May of 2017. As mentioned earlier, rare skins can easily exceed being worth far more than 400 USD or even 1800 USD, for example like the mentioned AWP Dragon Lore. Andy recounts, that this was one of main reasons for him using third party trading websites: *“Back then you could only sell items for a maximum like of 400 USD on the Steam Market, and most of the items I was dealing with were worth way more than that, so essentially I was forced to use third party websites...unless I wanted to lose a lot of money.”* (Interview, February 2020, Time 10:20). Another disadvantage when compared to third party trading websites, is the relative high

Steam transaction fee. In general there are two fees, a 5% steam transaction fee and a 10% CS:GO fee, so in total a 15% fee for every single transaction ("Community Market FAQ - Documentation - Knowledge Base - Steam Support," n.d.). That's led to another value proposition of third party trading websites, namely lower prices as Andy recalls: *"[...] websites like OP skins simply offered cheaper prices than the Steam Community Market, since OP Skins transaction fees were way lower than the Steam market ones."* (Interview, February 2020, Time 10:13). In addition to that, Andy mentions two third party trading websites, we are going to have a closer look at.

Example 1: CS:GO Lounge: Andy states that: *"[...] the first third party trading website I used was probably CS:GO Lounge."* (Interview, February 2020, Time 09:40). This was essentially the most popular third-party trading & betting website. It allowed users, to list offers on the website to trade skins for other skins. Since real money currencies were not supported by the website, "keys" which are used to open loot crates became the unofficial currency for traders. So, for instance if a skin had a value of 1000\$, the seller would ask for 500 keys (keys were cheaper back then, roughly around 2\$~ per key). This way traders were able to bypass the 400 USD Steam community market limit. However, the users needed to handle the trade themselves, meaning they had to send trade offers after they have agreed on a trade. Because of that, there were a lot of scammers trying to steal items from users who were not careful enough.

Example 2: OP Skins: Compared to CS:GO Lounge, OP Skins was a major upgrade and basically the best third party trading site to use until 2018. In the interview with Andy, he describes OP Skins as: *"[...] a third-party trading website, which acts like a middleman between trades for users, meaning that it was also really safe to use. You can't withdraw your Steam Wallet balance on Steam, you can only use that balance on other Skins or other games within the Steam Platform. That's why OP Skins got so popular, since it acted as third-party service which finally added this possibility for the users."* (Interview, February 2020, Time 08:55).

Since the introduction in 2015, OP Skins used API's in order to facilitate trade with its users. With the help of Steam API's they were able to come up with a clever trading system by using trading bots. For example, the seller wants to sell a certain skin, therefore the seller gets a trade offer from a trading bot, which transfers the item from the seller into the OP Skins inventory. Then, after the buyer of the skin has transferred the money to OP Skins, the trading bot would send a trade offer from the OP Skins inventory to the buyer, basically completing the trade. It goes without saying, that since this was an automated process facilitated by bots, this happened in real time and took maybe around 1 minute to complete. Therefore, trading

on OP Skins was very secure. In addition to that, through the interview with Andy, we were able to identify three key functionalities OP Skins was able to complement the Steam Community Market.

1. OP Skins used OP Coins as a currency on their website, these coins could be purchased by either transferring real money for example via PayPal into your OP Skins account (users had to send a form of ID, when purchasing coins to verify their account), or by selling an item on the website. However, it was possible to revert the OP Coins currency back into real currency, by for example withdrawing it via PayPal again, a function the Steam Community Market up to this date cannot offer.
2. No maximum price limit for a single item. It was possible to sell an item for 10000 USD and have the money a few days later withdrawn to your PayPal account.
3. Low fees: The standard fee for every transaction was 10%. However, by paying a monthly subscription of 5.99 USD the fee was reduced to 5% (totalcsgo.com, 2015), making it far more lucrative than the Steam Community Market.

As of June 2018, OPSkins stopped operating, since Valve did shut down the trading bots. In 2018 Valve introduced seven-day trade cooldowns on skins to prevent harm caused by ongoing scams from other third-party services. But, OP Skins implemented a workaround called ExpressTrade, which basically completely bypassed Valve's new restriction, which Valve took as an opportunity to finally cut them off from the Steam platform ("Valve Shuts Down OPSkins Bots, Users Lose \$2M Worth of Skins - The Esports Observer," 2018). Last but not least, shortly after the downfall of OP Skins very similar websites appeared like "CS.Money" for example.

#### 7.2.1.5 Betting

Similar to third party trading websites, this trend also started with CS:GO Lounge. It allowed users to place bets on the outcome of professional CS:GO matches. In addition to that, Andy also believes that betting sites had a positive impact on the overall esports scene for CS:GO: *"[...] I think websites like CS:GO Lounge for example where people used to bet on games also had a huge impact of the overall viewership of CS:GO esports games, since the viewers were feeling more engaged with the games"* (Interview, February 2020, Time 05:01). As a result, it is commonly believed that this led to increased viewership numbers. Betting websites similar to gambling websites, usually take a small % of all the bets wagered and follow the concept of "the house always wins".

Example 1: CS:GO Lounge: Users were placing bets in form of skins against each other. CS:GO Lounge used trade bots in order to collect the skins and also to pay them out to the winners. For example, if a user handed in a bet worth 20 USD in skins, after winning the bet, he would then receive 40 USD (depending on the odds) in different skins transferred to the user's inventory via a trade bot. Nonetheless, this obviously was not a legitimate betting site since it was not really moderated and made it possible for minors to bet on matches, since no prevention measures were in place. Therefore, it was just a matter of time until CS:GO Lounge got shut down (see gambling chapter).

Example 2: Betway: Nowadays, it is quite easy to bet on CS:GO matches using real currencies. There are multiple official and licensed betting websites such as betway.com, who previously focused on traditional sports such as football, but now also made the switch to esports like CS:GO.

Last but not least, Andy also remembers a scandal which revolved around betting, namely the ban of the North American back then superstar team called 'IBuyPower'. He recounts, that this team got caught in a match-fixing scandal, which led to a ban from all Valve sponsored events (Interview, February 2020, Time 14:06).

#### 7.2.1.6 Gambling

With the rise in popularity of CS:GO Lounge, a number of third party websites appeared offering a different variation of gambling. Whereas CS:GO Lounge purely focused on betting on the outcomes of CS:GO Matches, the other sites implemented casino-like games, such as roulette, blackjack etc. but instead of betting real currencies the users would bet skins. Similar to CS:GO Lounge, no prevention measures were in place to prohibit gambling for minors and also the websites were not regulated or licensed at all. Andy also stresses that gambling was very negative: *"Think a lot of young people were exposed to this whole gambling trend and lost a lot of money."* (Interview, February 2020, Time 14:49). Furthermore, we asked Andy if he could recall any gambling related scandals and he recounted the following: *"Probably CS:GO Lotto and CS:GO shuffle with TmarTn and Phantoml0rd were the biggest ones. Basically, the owners of these gambling websites were huge influencers on either Twitch or YouTube and they advertised these websites to their young and probably some of them underage audience. They didn't really admit that they actually own these websites, and are essentially never actually at risk losing anything, so acted like actual scumbags. The sites were probably also rigged you know. They could tell when someone is going to win or lose, it was just disgusting in general, I can't really believe that they got away with that either."* (Interview, February 2020, Time 13:04). Due to the influencers as mentioned by Andy, these websites gained a massive popularity within a short amount of time. Andy also mentions that

some of his friends, were starting to “[...] *become more and more engaged and absorbed with this whole gambling stuff, thinking that if they continue playing, they will win and once they do they will stop playing and just cash out.*” (Interview, February 2020, Time 14:53).

After facing allegations that Valve was profiting from these third-party gambling websites, Valve issued a statement that they had no business relationships with these websites and also would start sending out notices to shut these sites down (Pereira, 2016).

Due to gambling being a relative sensitive and serious topic in CS:GO, we explain in detail below, how the two gambling websites mentioned by Andy managed to form a business around gambling and they wrong-doings got discovered.

Example 1: CS:GO Lotto: One of these websites, which got shut down was CS:GO Lotto. It basically allowed users to gamble skins against each other. Users would deposit skins into a “pot”. A pot would have space for around 100 skins, meaning the “game” would start once the pot is full. For example if a single user deposited skins worth 5000 USD into this pot, and the overall value of this pot was 10000 USD, the user would have a 50% chance to win the entirety of the pot, whereas a user who let’s say deposited 500 USD worth of skins would have a 5% chance to win. The website took a small % of the overall pot value as a fee. These type of gambling websites were really popular amongst streamers and youtubers, since they would try to challenge/snipe each other. However, in regards to CS:GO Lotto there was a huge scandal involved, discovered and made public by a YouTuber called H3H3. The popular YouTubers TmarTn and ProSyndicate were owners of the website and never disclosed that information to their millions of subscribers. It is also said they had the power to rig the outcomes of the bets, so basically scamming their own followers out of their money. In addition to that a lot of their followers are underage, according to their website the users only had to be 13 years of age (Lundquist, 2020).

Example 2: CS:GO Shuffle: To put it short, this website was nearly identical to CS:GO Lotto. It was owned by a Twitch streamer called PhantomL0rd. In July 2016, a hacker discovered Skype conversation logs between PhantomL0rd and his coder of the website. In these logs it became quite clear, that PhantomL0rd asked the coder about the outcome of the bets and was also mainly gambling with “house money”, basically with skins from skin inventory of the website. Allegedly, this was also one of the reasons why PhantomL0rd received a permanent Twitch ban (Chalk, 2016).

Finally, in July 2016, Valve shut down CS:GO Lounge, CS:GO Lotto, CS:GO Shuffle along with 18 other third party gambling sites. However, this sort of websites tend to reappear under different domain names, but have lost most of their popularity since they are no longer advertised by streamers or YouTubers.

#### 7.2.1.7 Cheating

Ever since the introduction of VAC back in CS 1.5, another lucrative form of UGC has made the entrance into Counterstrike, namely third-party cheating websites. These websites offer either free cheats with a limited number of functionalities and a higher risk of getting banned or more sophisticated cheats, which offer more functionalities and are also harder to detect. The latter are most of the times sold on a subscription-based model, since they are being constantly updated to avoid detection. Furthermore, cheaters also often buy these hacks in order to start a business on their own, and advertise them as so called boosting services. Andy defines boosting services as: *“cheaters who invite people to their lobby in exchange for money or skins. Then they will play with them and yeah farm wins, so the people in the lobby can rank up quickly.”* (Interview, February 2020, Time 28:37).

In other instances, cheaters also use their hacks in the game to create video highlight compilations, to generate views on websites like YouTube, obviously not disclosing that they were in fact cheating in these games.

Valve has been steadily trying to improve VAC, however the cheat developers seem to be always one step ahead, since VAC is limited by its user agreements and therefore has no rootkit level access to the systems. However, Valve released a deep learning system called “VACnet” in order to combat CS:GO’s massive cheating problem (see cheating figure)(Levan, 2018).

#### 7.2.1.8 Matchmaking services

Third party matchmaking services also benefit from the overall cheating problem in CS:GO. Andy highlights, that one of their main value propositions is a sophisticated Anticheat (AC) client, which has a deeper access to their user’s systems, making it a lot harder to run cheating software. In addition to that, they offer support in the form of admins and moderators, who will take care of cheaters or help users with other issues. Compared to CS:GO’s native Matchmaking system, third party matchmaking services such as “Facelt” or “Esea”, also host their games on their own 128 tick servers as opposed Valve’s 64 tick servers, which leads to a more responsive, smoother and accurate game play. These matchmaking services usually monetize their service through a subscription-based model (Interview Andy, February 2020, Time 29:07; 29:44).

#### 7.2.1.9 Discussion and News

Nowadays, social media has become an ideal solution to facilitate discussion with different users world-wide. Our interview with Andy reveals two major third party websites for that and the key reason for utilizing them: *“Basically, HLTV and reddit are two main ones. To keep myself informed about latest news or updates or about the esports scene in general.”* (Interview, February 2020, Time 30:18).

Naturally, people especially want to discuss or receive the latest news about topics, they are especially passionate about. Thus, we are taking a closer look at the two major websites introduced by Andy.

Example 1: HLTV: HLTV is Danish website, which was founded back in 2004. Ever since then it was Counterstrikes leading coverage site in the world. From all the way back in CS 1.6 to now in CS:GO, it basically covers all important tournaments and provides demos of games, results, statistics, photos, videos and much more. Moreover, it always covers the latest news and also provides a clear overview of on-going tournaments, the scheduled time of matches and also where to watch them, by using players of the different streaming websites like Twitch.TV or YouTube embedded into the site. Last but not least, it also offers a forum section, which allows users to engage in discussions. However, it should be said that the forum section is quite “rowdy” and moderated to a bare minimum, so users insulting each other seems to have become a trademark of the site itself.

Example 2: /r/GlobalOffensive: This is a subreddit for CS:GO. It was created in 2011 and has around one Million members. It is also a great a tool to receive the latest news and an overview about on-going tournaments, but the main emphasis lies on the forum function. Thus, this subreddit is the perfect place to have civilized and also moderated discussions about CS:GO related topics. Moreover, it is also a great tool to submit UGC like for example a report, a video or a self-made skin concept and then to receive some feedback.

#### 7.2.1.10 Steam Workshop & Skin Creation

The steam workshop is a place to facilitate the modding of games. Many game publishers within the steam platform allow community developed mods for their games (Lifewire, 2020).

For CS:GO in particular it allows user generated content such as: unique game modes, new maps and also the creation of skin concepts. The creation of skin concepts also comes with a possibility to get user designed skins into the game, and also getting a % of the overall sales of the particular skin. For the skin to make it into the game, it needs to clear the following stages: Concept, Design, Creation, Compilation, Application, Publication (“CS:GO - Workshop FAQ,” n.d.). However, the competition is very tough, so to get a skin finally implemented into the game there is a good amount of luck involved (“From Steam Workshop to the Real Skin |

| Cs.money blog,” 2019). From 2011 to 2015, Valve has paid out over 57 Million USD for its workshop creators (O'Connor, 2015). Our interview with Andy reveals, that he also uses the Steam Workshop, especially to download user created maps such as 'aim\_botz' or to rate designs creators have submitted onto the Workshop (Interview Andy, February 2020, Time 38:09).

### 7.2.2 Extra Content

CS:GO mainly releases new content through updates, which are accessible for all users. These updates can include, for example new skins, new maps or even new game modes. For instance, CS:GO released a new battle royal modus as already mentioned earlier called 'Dangerzone' together with the switch to free to play by the end of 2018(Köhler, 2017).

In addition to updates, CS:GO also implements operations in form of a battle pass format. The latest operation called “Shattered Web” was released on November 18<sup>th</sup>, 2019. These operation passes are widely popular among the community according to our interview with Andy: *“Ah, I enjoy them and so does the majority of our community. They are something special, I really like the unique COOP missions where you can team up with a friend. I also like the unique rewards you can get from them.”* (Interview, February 2020, Time 15:46).

Although the pass itself can be accessed free of charge in order to play the missions, the player needs to buy/activate the pass for 13.25€ (price at release of operation) in order to receive exclusive mission rewards and the upgradeable Operation Shattered Web coin. Moreover, players are earning stars by completing missions, in total 100 stars can be earned. For a set number of collected stars, a player gets a certain reward. Every single week, for a period of 16 weeks total, the pass releases new missions. There is also an option to simply buy the stars. On the one hand this can be categorized as a time saver microtransaction, since the player does not need to wait and play for 16 weeks in order to obtain all rewards. But on the other hand, this can be seen as an investment microtransaction, because due to the novelty of the exclusive rewards, they can be sold for a higher price in the Steam Community Market at the beginning of the operation, since a lot of players will not be able to obtain these items so quickly, which results in an overall increased rarity of this exclusive items.

### 7.2.3 Engagement

The analysis will be divided between temporal and contextual boundaries (H. O'Brien & Cairns, 2016). By analysing the content design of CS:GO, we establish 5 different phases the temporal boundaries can be divided into: Round, a single match, gameplay session, calendar cycle and special events.

First of all, our temporal analysis, will start with a micro perspective of a single round in CS:GO and afterwards gradually move towards a macro view. Before that, we will briefly describe the game start process, because that will serve as a separate point of engagement, based on what happens when a player starts/opens CS:GO.

The player opens CS:GO through Steam, for example from the Steam Library or by clicking on shortcuts. Therefore, the player must sign into Steam first, which prompts a news pop up, and usually informs players about sales or new releases of certain games. After successfully launching the game, the player will receive another news pop up. Since Operation Shattered Web is currently still active, usually the news pop up hints about new missions being available on the operation pass. Once the player, closes the news pop up, the player already lands on the home screen of CS:GO. In general, the home screen can be separated into 4 segments going from right to left. Firstly, the right part of the home screen contains the player profile and lobby with the friend list underneath it, from there, friends can be invited to the player lobby. Secondly, the right-centred part of the home screen, showcases the CS:GO in game player model, the user currently has equipped. Player models have been introduced together with Operation Shattered Web and therefore Valve uses this screen segment to promote player models. Thirdly, the left-centred part of the home screen currently shows an overview of the Operation Shattered Web. The player gets to see his/her mission progress, how many stars the player has currently earned and how many more stars are needed in order to receive the next reward. Last but not least, the left part of the home screen, includes a user interface, with basic functionalities such as options, access to the player inventory etc. More importantly, this section also contains the play button, which the player needs to press to select a game mode (e.g. competitive matchmaking), followed by a specific map (e.g. Dust2) and then finally hitting the 'GO' button, to initialize the match making queue, which searches for a game. Once a game has been found the players have to click on 'Accept'. If all 10 players managed to hit the 'Accept' button the game will connect all 10 players to a server, where the game will be played on.

#### *7.2.3.1 Round*

##### **Point of Engagement**

Due to the nature of being a round-based tactical FPS, it makes sense to start the temporal analysis from a single round, basically the smallest unit of engagement for CS:GO . A round starts with a 15 second freeze time, in which the players are standing in their spawns and are unable to move until this time runs down. The freeze time is used in order to buy equipment

(e.g. utility as in grenades or guns) and discuss strategies and positions for the upcoming round.

### **Sustained Engagement**

Once the round starts, another timer is initiated which runs down from 1 minute 55 seconds (competitive match making mode). Players have to run to their assigned positions on the map and follow the strategies they discussed during the freeze time. Moreover, the players need to adjust their positions by making rotations based on their opponents moves. In addition to that, players have to actively communicate by making call outs in order to let their teammates know of what is going on. Communication as in transferring information to other players, is a key element in a strategic shooter like CS:GO. Once a game objective (see game objectives) is fulfilled, for instance the timer runs down to zero, the round is over, and the next round will be initiated.

### **Re-Engagement**

If a player is eliminated during a round, they get transferred into a spectator mode, which allows them to watch their teammates' point of view. In addition to that, the player is still engaged with the game, since he/she can provide vital information to their remaining teammates or help coordinating their attacks, since the player has an overview over all the different POV's and angles. Furthermore, the player respawns once the round is over, which in CS:GO does not take too long, due to the overall short round times.

#### *7.2.3.2 Single match point of engagement*

The match process starts in CS:GO if all ten players click on the 'Accept' button in the match lobby. If all ten players have clicked on accept, then the players will be connected to the server. Once they connected to the server, they will participate in a so called 'Warm-up'. Essentially, the warm-up functions as five min countdown for all players to load into the game and spawn on the map, if a player does not make it in time, the match will be cancelled. During the warm-up mode the players spawn with 16.000 money in order to buy guns and shot each other, however team damage is disabled during the warm-up. Once all ten players managed to connect to the server and have successfully loaded into the map, the countdown will go down to one minute, regardless of the time it was previously on. Lastly, the match begins once the timer runs down to zero.

### **Sustained engagement**

The match starts with the so called pistol round, since CS:GO is an economy based game, there is not enough money to buy other guns than pistols in the first round of both halves. Therefore, the pistol rounds are also very crucial rounds, since the team losing them, will have

a very limited economy, which usually results in losing the next 1-2 rounds as well, since in order to preserve their economy they will have to 'save' (not buy any guns). Once the game has started, players come up with strategies and make decisions for every single round, depending on their economy, setups, opponent's setup, overall game progression and so forth. The team reaching 16 rounds first, wins. Alternatively, the game ends after 30 rounds, so a draw '15-15' is possible result as well.

### **Re-engagement**

Each team possess one time out, which lasts one minute. If a timeout is voted, the game will be paused and the players can use this time to e.g. grab snacks, get something to drink, fix settings etc. After 15 rounds of play, both teams switch sides. The half-time switch is initiated by a half-time score board, which also indicates a twelve second countdown, once the countdown runs to zero, the sides will be switched, and the game shortly resumes after. The half-time scoreboard provides feedback about how all the players have been performing so far in the game, e.g. it displays statistics like kills, deaths, damage dealt per round and so forth. As mentioned earlier, the first round of the second half will also start with a pistol round.

### **Disengagement**

Once the game has ended, a recently introduced end-of match screen appears which gives out player awards such as MVP, Firestarter and so on, based on the players individual performance. In addition to that, players can also see their player model, while receiving the award, probably a measure by Valve to advertise the newly introduced player models, since CS:GO is a FPS, it is impossible to see your own player model otherwise. Alternatively, the end-of match screen, has a toggle option, so the end-of game scoreboard will be displayed instead, basically the same scoreboard you can see during the half-time switch. Only difference is, the players will receive feedback for the whole game instead now.

#### **7.2.3.3 *Gameplay session***

A gameplay session is basically the time, once a player has started to engage with the virtual world until the point of disengagement, which results in non-engagement in the end. However, if disengagement leads back to re-engagement again, this still will be viewed within the temporal bounds of a gameplay session. In our case, we do not classify that minor breaks, such as grabbing a snack, getting something to drink or taking a bathroom break are a form of non-engagement. We classify non-engagement as an extended absence from the game, e.g. leaving the house to walk the dog or to go shopping. CS:GO promotes sustained engagement during a gameplay session in two different ways. On the hand, through a smooth

transition process into the next game and on the other hand through the implementation of CS:GO ranks. Firstly, once a game ends, the players who queued with each other before, will end up in the same lobby. Thus, all they need to do is press the search button again, in order to start searching for the next match. Lastly, there are 18 different ranks in CS:GO (see calendar cycle), often players want to reach this next rank, before they stop their gameplay session.

#### *7.2.3.4 Calendar Cycle*

The CS:GO calendar cycle essentially depends on two distinct ranks. First of all, there are so called profile ranks, basically there are 40 different profile ranks. Profile ranks are earned through collecting experience, by playing games in various game modes. Once the players reach the highest possible profile rank, namely rank 40, they will have the option to 'receive a service medal'. It should be highlighted that profile player ranks, have no correlation with the matchmaking (MM) ranks, and therefore have no impact on the match-making algorithm.

On the contrary, we have matchmaking ranks. As already mentioned, there are 18 different ranks, which rank players based on their performance in games. These ranks are taken into consideration when searching for a competitive MM, in order to match players based on their skills, to have a fair and balanced match.

#### **Weekly/Yearly Cycle**

The weekly and yearly cycle revolve around the profile ranks. The players are encouraged to play at least 1 competitive MM a week, since every single week players are eligible to get a bonus experience boost, which helps them to quickly gain higher profile ranks. Furthermore, the player has a whole calendar year in order to reach rank 40, to receive the annual service medal. Once the player has received the service medal, there is the option to reset the profile rank again, and climb through the profile ranks from the beginning. By doing so, the players are able to 'upgrade' their service medal up to four times. An upgraded service medal will change colours and these medals in general are displayed on the players profiles, so in a sense it gives the players a feeling of achievement.

#### **Monthly Cycle**

The monthly cycle revolves around the MM rank. In order for players to maintain their competitive MM rank, they have to play at least one game in a month. If they fail to do so, they will be unranked, and their rank will slowly start decaying. Once they manage to win a game again, they will receive a rank again, but it will be lower than the previous rank they originally had.

#### 7.2.3.5 Special events

Operations like Shattered Web (see chapter extra content), can be counted as special events, since they do not follow a fixed schedule, making their release dates unpredictable. Andy recounts: *“I just wish they would be more frequent, we almost waited for like 3 years for the latest operation to come out.”* (Interview, February 2020, Time 15:55).

Secondly, CS:GO Majors are special events as well. Normally, there are two CS:GO Majors in a single year. During a major, a broadcast will be directly implemented into the game to engage player watching it. Moreover, during CS:GO Majors you can also receive drops, as Andy explains: *“[...] you are able to receive nice drops by linking your Twitch account to your Steam account, during CS:GO majors.”* (Interview, February 2020, Time 31:50). As stated earlier by Andy, player can purchase autograph/team stickers, in order to support the esports scene, since 50% of the profit will go to the esports teams directly. The stickers can be also used to participate in the ‘Pick’Em Challenge’, basically players try to predict who wins the matches played at the major, if they pick correctly, they get rewarded in points, upon receiving a certain point amount, they will get a ‘Pick’Em Trophy’, essentially a very similar concept to the Operation Coin and Service Medal.

Lastly, Halloween and anniversaries are also special events. During that time small gimmicks are implemented into the game, e.g. player models wear pumpkin masks or the Zeus (CS:GO weapon) shooting confetti.

#### 7.2.4 Streaming

The most popular form of UGC is by far streaming. Since the beginning of the early CS 1.6 days, streaming was an important factor of the back then slowly developing esports scene. However, streaming was simply limited by the technical capabilities of the past, for instance the internet connections were simply too slow to offer enough bandwidth. As time went on, the overall infrastructure of the internet vastly improved and so did the possibilities for streaming. Platforms like YouTube and Twitch.TV are currently the front runners for UGC. In 2018 on Twitch.TV alone 401 million hours of CS:GO content were viewed (Gough, 2019).

##### 7.2.4.1 YouTubers

There is a huge variety of UGC for CS:GO on YouTube, which can be divided into the following segments. The examples of these YouTube channels were identified through our interview with Andy (Interview, February 2020, Time 34:50):

1. Tutorials: informative videos, explaining specific strategies surround CS:GO for example teaching players specific grenades (NadeKing). In addition to that, Andy also

mentions that, especially tutorials and guides can be really helpful for players who are new to the game, since they explain in detail how these players can improve (Interview Andy, February 2020, Time 25:03).

2. Compilations: compilations of CS:GO professional tournaments highlights (Virre CS:GO)
3. News: talking and analysing newest patches and changes (3klikspilip)

We also took a deeper look into CS:GO related content on YouTube and were able to identify one more level of segmentation:

4. Commentary: the game itself is not in the focus, the focus is set on what the YouTuber has to say while the game is playing in the background (Fitz)

#### 7.2.4.2 Live streamers

Apart from the thriving esports scene, it should be said that CS:GO has become a relative unpopular game for UGC in terms of live streaming. Games like LoL, Fortnite, Apex Legends or GTA 5 are far more popular on websites like Twitch.TV. Apart from professional players and esports broadcasts from tournaments or Twitch.TV celebrities in general, it is hard to pull decent numbers in CS:GO nowadays. Andy concludes that the reason for that trend is: *“I think CS:GO in general is a bad game to be streamed on Twitch, since the Streamer has to mainly focus on the game and cannot really interact with its community.”* (Interview, February 2020, Time 34:18). Through our research we identified another reason for the decline of the overall non-esports related viewership on Twitch, namely the gambling ban. CS:GO live streaming numbers were sadly at its peak, when most streamers were simply live streaming how they gamble with skins.

Esports organizers like ESL, also sold exclusive broadcasting rights to different platforms such as Facebook back in 2018. However, the quality of the Facebook streams was horrendous and resulted in a huge back lash of the community, which explains the really poor viewership Facebook was having (Bennett, 2018). Therefore, most esports organizers simply stream their events on Twitch.TV and YouTube, since they offer by far the best infrastructure. However, it should be again highlighted that esports related content such as esports broadcasts are nonetheless thriving (ref esports chapter).

#### 7.2.5 Esports

With the big division of the Counterstrike community into two parts, namely CS 1.6 and CS Source things began to look dire. The price pools were getting smaller and the viewership numbers lower. Things took a drastic turn, once the remaining professional Counterstrike teams finally transitioned to CS:GO and with Valve's release of weapon skins. Moreover, due to popular streaming websites such as Twitch.TV the professional matches were very easy to access. Some lucky viewers who linked their Steam accounts to their Twitch account were rewarded with in-game loot crate drops called "souvenirs", which exclusively drop during CS:GO majors (Valve sponsored events). In addition to that, Valve also implemented special esports loot crates and later on sticker capsules of specific team logos, which could be applied to weapon skins. A portion of the made profits was given to the participating esports teams in the CS:GO major. For example, teams participating in majors currently get 50% of the proceeds of the sales from the sticker capsules. It is also said, that the betting on CS:GO matches also increased viewership numbers, since viewers would become more engaged in the matches. This led to a healthy esports scene, shared by multiple third party esports organizers such as ESL, Dreamhack or RFRSH etc. In total there has been 92.389.662 USD price money awarded from 4787 Tournaments ("Counter-Strike: Global Offensive Top Players & Prize Pools - Esports Tracker :: Esports Earnings," n.d.).

As a result, the viewership numbers are stable on a relatively high level, which again attracts sponsors for example Corsair for peripherals such as keyboards, headsets etc. Therefore, the overall number of tournaments and also their price pools is slowly increasing. In addition to that the production value of the tournaments is also becoming better for either the viewers at home watching the stream, or the live audience in the stadium.

Another key factor, why CS:GO out of all games has become so popular is the fact that Counterstrike has successfully fulfilled a generational change, since the scene has been around for almost 20 years. Nowadays, we have for example fathers you used to play back in 2000's watching games with their sons. Further, Counterstrike as an esports is relatively easy to understand and follow.

Also, a fast flick in a FPS (First person shooter) game like CS:GO is easier to appreciate compared to some 3-4 heroes spell combo in a Moba such as Dota 2.

In conclusion, there is no denying that Counterstrike has manifested its place as one of the major esports titles in the world and the future outlook also looks bright. Counterstrike as an esports is going to stay for at least a few more years.

### 7.2.6 Twitter and social media

Whenever a new update, bug-fixes or changes in general are implemented into the game, Valve primarily announces that through pop-up notification via the Steam platform, which most of the times link to the CS:GO blog ([blog.counter-strike.net](http://blog.counter-strike.net)), where the newest implementations are described in more detail. Moreover, CS:GO uses a twitter account in order to further engage with its community. As of now March 2020, the account has more than 775.000 followers. It's is mainly used to either retweet the content of the CS:GO blog or to joke around with their community through the usage of memes.

### 7.2.7 Game design for needs and engagement

#### **Relatedness**

We were able to identify two main elements in CS:GO that can project relatedness, namely group play and customization, in form of skins. In CS:GO up to five people can form a lobby and queue together and play against another team. Moreover, CS:GO is almost played in a 5vs5 setting, meaning if people cannot form a lobby consisting out of five members, since they e.g. only have 3 friends online, the game itself will match the remaining people together. However, since the addition of 'near-by' lobbies in CS:GO, people can invite or recruit people who are currently looking for a lobby. Further, people can communicate with each other through voice chat, if players tend to enjoy playing amongst themselves, there is an option to add each other as friends via a friend request. From there social bounds can be formed and usually follow the migration from Steam/CS:GO Voice chat to third party communication tools like TS3 or Discord. Nonetheless, CS:GO also have a lot of elements that discourage relatedness, due to its very competitive nature. For instance, when people get matched with random players through the matchmaking algorithm and they are losing the game, players tend to get heated and start being insulting, which again leads to even more discouragement of relatedness. The second element, namely skins are utilized in CS:GO as a form of self-expression. Through different graffiti's players can engage in minimalistic nonverbal interactions. Having good looking or expensive weapon skins can also leads to positive social interactions, especially between lobbies consisting out of friends, in form of positive feedback, which again promotes relatedness.

#### **Competence**

We were able to identify four different elements that promote competence in CS:GO, namely intuitive controls, skill-based match making, wide skill range and post-match feedback. First of all, CS:GO utilizes controls, which are very similar to other games in the same genre (FPS). Nonetheless, most of the players in CS:GO use slower sensitivities for the mouse in CS:GO as opposed to other games, since precise aim is key in CS:GO. Secondly, there is a match-making service within the game, which is a fairly common feature like in most of the games nowadays. There is an algorithm in place, which constantly monitors the players' performance, and displays a rank for everyone in the same lobby, nearby-lobby, friend-list or end of the match scoreboard to see. Moreover, if players perform good, they will get a rank up, if the players perform poorly, they will receive a downrank instead. In total there are 18 different ranks in CS:GO, ranging from Silver I the lowest to Global Elite the highest. When a player queues up and searches for a game, the algorithm tries to facilitate finding opponents based around the same rank of the highest rank of the players' current lobby. This feature should in the end lead to fair and balanced matchups. Thirdly, the overall skill floor in CS:GO is relatively high compared to other games according to Andy: *"[...] when I compare it to other FPS like Overwatch for example, I feel like the skill floor is significantly higher."* (Interview, February 2020, Time 22:02). In addition to that, Andy explains that even though the overall complexity of the game is relatively simple, learning and mastering game mechanics like for example movement or spray patterns of guns can be challenging. Therefore Andy thinks that: *"So I really think that for complete beginners, it might be very difficult to get into the game"* (Interview, February 2020, Time 22:29). Otherwise, he also mentions that the skill ceiling in general, due to the overall low amount of layers added to the complexity of the game, is sort of limited, in regards to the professional players. Furthermore, he explains: *"Overall, on a pro level I think that there is a maximum skill ceiling people like Simple or Zywoo starting to reach and most other pros are maybe not too far from that as well. It's really difficult to be good and dominant on an individual level alone in pro level CS:GO, since due to the set skill ceiling you cannot really get any better at some point."* (Interview, February 2020, Time 23:30). Lastly, there is an end of the match score screen, which provides post-match feedback immediately. The feedback includes an overview of the overall performance of all the players who participated in the game, e.g. in form of kills, deaths, assists, damage done per round, enemies flashed and so on. Finally, in CS:GO there are some elements, which can impact the sense of competence negatively, e.g. through negative feedback from teammates or also by facing cheaters or smurfs (high account players playing on low ranked accounts).

## **Autonomy**

In the competitive match-making mode, CS:GO is based on one main game element, namely a 5vs5 player environment. Since CS:GO is a highly competitive game, freedom is very restricted, in terms of how player should play the game. Moreover, in CS:GO the competitive map pool currently holds seven different maps. Every map in CS:GO, has a completely different layout and overall size. In addition to that players need to take strategic positions and make decisions based on their own information or information provided by teammates. Ultimately, a decision can be good or bad, for instance a player who plays on the CT side should not just rush into the enemy spawn, but rather defend and protect the bomb sites, or other choke points on the map. Therefore, neither freedom or choice are given in CS:GO, since the tactical nature of the game makes the overall gameplay really restrictive. However, some players decide to value their own freedom/choice over the main objective of the game, this usually leads to in-game conflicts between the players, often also referred to as 'griefing'. It goes without saying that conflicts like that further reduce the feeling of autonomy within the game. Through our interview with Andy we got to understand why he only plays with four other friends in the lobby: "[...] since we don't really want to deal with random people who often tend to be like toxic or annoying you know." (Interview, February 2020, Time 25:52).

## 8 Comparison

### 8.1 Valve and Epic

Perhaps one of the most surprising findings is how similar the story of Valve and Epic has been despite more than a decade between their respective rise to prominence. Both used a 'Superstar' game to expand their market and create an ecosystem. For Valve it was Half-Life 2 and for Epic it was Fortnite. Both leveraged these games to establish themselves as game distribution platforms in the form of Steam and the Epic Games Store. The former revolutionised the PC distribution market by creating a digital storefront and achieving a near monopoly in this market, at least in the West. The latter came as a response to challenge this monopoly, eyeing an opportunity to break it. On the back of lowering costs of cloud computing and digital payment solutions combined with huge cash reserves from Fortnite and venture funding, Epic has aggressively undercut its main rival. It offers better revenue sharing with developers, has exclusive distribution rights and gives away free games to attract and retain gamers and shares revenue with influencers and other prominent members of the gaming community through the Support a Creator programme. Whether this will be successful in the long term remains to be seen, as does the fruition of the announced plans to upset the mobile distribution platforms. Both Valve and Epic have unique strengths and challenges, which we will discuss below. To better frame and organize this discussion we will employ the SWOT model

Strengths	
Steam	Epic Game Store
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ De facto monopoly on PC digital distribution</li> <li>➤ Strong user loyalty and lock-in</li> <li>➤ Social network and established community</li> <li>➤ Functionality and curation implemented</li> <li>➤ Streamlined publishing, e.g. through Steam Direct</li> <li>➤ VR and possible Killer APP on the way</li> <li>➤ Potentially very strong cash reserves</li> <li>➤ Market and trading, type 2 but actually type 3</li> <li>➤ Multiple Superstar games</li> <li>➤ Extensive API integration through Steamworks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Young audience</li> <li>➤ Better revenue share</li> <li>➤ Highly visible and simple creator program</li> <li>➤ Cross platform and transmedia</li> <li>➤ Intimate knowledge of Valve</li> <li>➤ Active social media and thought leadership</li> <li>➤ Investor relationships</li> </ul>

Through the BMC we were able to identify the key strengths of the Steam platform. First of all, is their dominance on the PC platform market. They are by far the largest distributor for digital

products for PC platforms, both in terms of products offered on the Steam Store (over ~30.000 games) and also having the most active userbase (over 90 million). Furthermore, Steam managed to create strong user loyalty and lock-in with the help of player profiles, which keep track of the player achievements in the form of badges and so forth. Thus, Steam has an established community, which also creates game related content and also provides curation in form of reviews and constructive feedback. Additionally, due to Steam's ecosystem being designed as a type 2 economy additional lock-in is generated, since most Steam users only purchase and trade items within the Steam ecosystem. The extensive API integration through e.g. Steamworks, opens up the whole Steam platform to third-party services, which in fact can change Steam's type 2 economy to a type 3 instead and therefore facilitates trade outside the platform as well. Added services and functionalities through third parties are therefore another major strength of the Steam platform, since they satisfy user needs.

The key strengths we were able to identify for the Epic Game Store through our BMC are the following: The Epic Game Store targets a young audience, which essentially are the gamers of the future. In addition to that, they also offer a better revenue share for game developers and publishers, which are strong reasons for game developers to choose the Epic Game Store over Steam. Moreover, Epic's creator program, e.g. through creator codes as utilized in Fortnite is highly visible and kept simple. Furthermore, Epic is backed by a Chinese conglomerate, namely Tencent, meaning cashflow is guaranteed, which then again can be utilized for aggressive strategies to gain more market share. In comparison to Valve, Epic makes very good use of social media, e.g. through twitter.

By comparing the strengths of Steam to the one's of the Epic Game Store we come to the conclusion, that the overall strengths of Steam outweigh the one's of Epic currently. Steam is a simply more complete platform and offers many value propositions, e.g. additional layers to the platform in form of a social network. Also, Steam is the home of multiple Superstar games, which build their own ecosystem around themselves and Steam is able to monetize these through the Steam Community Market, which leads to strong cash reserves.

Weaknesses	
Steam	Epic Game Store
➤ Complicated legacy platform - maintenance intensive	➤ Popularity reliant on one Superstar game
➤ Very limited mobile presence	➤ Still many features missing - even basic ones such as a shopping cart
➤ Platform openness led to controversies via third party websites	➤ Weak tie motivation to use platform – stickiness questionable
➤ Limited interaction with community through social media channels	

One of the major weakness of Steam is there very limited mobile presence, which essentially is the biggest market right now. Moreover, the openness of the Steam platform has led to some controversies caused by third party websites, e.g. money laundering scandal through CS:GO items (keys). Lastly, Steam's communication with its community through social media channels like Twitter is very limited. Especially nowadays, where social media marketing is crucial.

The Epic Game Store currently strongly relies on their one Superstar game, namely Fortnite. Let's say if Fornite would get unpopular one day e.g. through continuous bad updates, they would also lose the majority of their Epic Game Store users. Essentially, most users just utilize the Epic Game Store, to access Fortnite. Last but not least, even to this day, there is a great lack of basic features, such as a shopping cart.

Despite Steam's limited mobile presence and limited interactions through social media, we think that these weaknesses can be fixed quite easily. Whereas the weaknesses of the Epic Game Store, such as the intense reliance on Fortnite, is something that they will probably not be able to fix in the near future. Basically, Epic needs to make sure to keep Fornite up and running until the Epic Game Store manages to bring in a further Superstar game title to their platform.

Opportunities	
Steam	Epic Game Store
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ VR as possible key future technology</li> <li>➤ Partnerships</li> <li>➤ Curation and discoverability using machine learning via Steam Labs</li> <li>➤ Dota Underlords to penetrate mobile market</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Mobile store</li> <li>➤ Fresh start</li> </ul>

Steam in general prioritizes the development of future key technologies, such as machine learning through Steam Labs for improved curation and discoverability or VR by developing their own VR Headsets, the Valve Index. Furthermore, Steam also started to forge strong partnerships, e.g. Coopetition with EA and partnership with Perfect World, to legally launch Steam in China. In addition to that, Steams attempt to penetrate the mobile market through their mobile game Dota Underlords, might turn out to be a massive success factor.

Being a new entrant provides some challenges for epic games, but it also provides opportunities to take advantage of new services, such as the extensive IaaS available and is an opportunity to do things better than the incumbent. Epic has benefitted significantly from knowledge gained through extensive data harvesting from Steam platform giving them insights into the platform's weaknesses that the Epic Games Store can seek to target. The plans for a store on the Android platform also represent a major opportunity for Epic if they have the resources to carry it out.

Threats	
Steam	Epic Game Store
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Gambling &amp; virtual currency regulation</li> <li>➤ Epic Games Store</li> <li>➤ Loss of market in China</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Combined response to Epic by other key platforms</li> <li>➤ New entrants seeking to replicate success</li> <li>➤ Deterioration of East – West relationship, Tencent partnership could become liability</li> </ul>

The major threats for Steam are legislations and regulations in regard to gambling and virtual currencies. Back in 2018, Steam already got into trouble for violating gambling legislations of countries like Belgium. As a result, the opening of loot boxes is therefore no longer possible in these countries, and that is one of main type of microtransaction Steam earns a fair share amount of revenue with. Another threat is the potential loss of their second biggest market currently, China. Even though they are currently trying to work together with the Chinese publisher Perfect World in order to launch Steam in the Chinese market in a legal manner, which abides by the rules of the Chinese government, it is still hard to tell how this will play out. Last but not least, the Epic Game Store could evolve to a major competitor, especially if Epic manages to pick up some further Superstar games and improve the overall functionalities of the Epic Game Store, so it also offers more value propositions in general for the user side.

In Epics case, a combined assault on its mobile presence from Google and Steam and EA on the PC platform could spell serious troubles for the Epic Games Store. Beyond that, new entrants might seek to insert themselves into this market. Discord for example already has some game store functionality and a very large userbase. The relationship to Tencent has been a massive strength for Epic Games, but it can also be a threat in a time were relationships between East and West is deteriorating, as seen in the case of Huawei being extensively targeted.

## 9 Conclusion

in the early stages of our research when we were learning about the evolution of Games as a Service, it became clear that many of its components has been around for decades. Experiments with text based virtual worlds existed back in the 70's. The first graphical

representations appeared in the 80's and extensive commercial development of virtual worlds for massive online participation was seen in the late 90's and early 2000's. Second Life and World of Warcraft were arguably the most successful and prominent of early commercialised virtual worlds. Thus, some commodification of these have existed since the beginning of widespread internet availability. The passion for videogames can be traced back all the way to its birth in the arcade halls. Many channelled this passion into playing the games, using hours and hours on end trying to put their name besides the top score. As gaming moved into private homes and programmable devices such as the PC rose to prominence, a subset of gamers poured their passion into creating content centred around their favourite games. This content could range from forum guide on how to complete a game, fan fiction, reviews or modification of the game itself. Ever since, user generated content has been an integral part of the gaming and has contributed greatly to the creation of communities around games.

As such the emergence of GaaS relied less on a sudden technological breakthrough. With some exceptions the technology gradually evolved over a long period of time. Rather it was a paradigm shift within design and business on how to implement existing technologies and create business models around them that greatly accelerated the transition from GaaP to GaaS. Digital payment systems, the iPhone and the associated App Store allowed Apple to create a walled platform ecosystem, setting off the smartphone revolution. Consumers proved hesitant to pay a large up-front price for an app in what rapidly became a crowded market. Instead the freemium model emerged as a new standard for mobile apps. For games, this became known as the free-to-play model, relying on microtransactions, ads and data gathering or a combination for revenue generation. In tandem with smartphone games, social media, particularly Facebook, also opened up for social games on its site. Well known games on these platforms, such as Candy Crush and FarmVille, saw unprecedented levels of financial success and connected with a much wider and more casual audience. Gaming had become ubiquitous. The traditional videogame industry centred around PC's and consoles could not afford to ignore these trends. 'Live-Services', the industry word for GaaS, became readily espoused jargon in investor presentations and business model descriptions.

Having ourselves observed this scramble to transition to GaaS within the traditional videogame industry, we asked the main question of our thesis: '*What are the key factors behind the success of the GaaS model?*'. To answer this question, we scoured academic literature, observed games ourselves, read investor relations papers, governmental and NGO reports, analyst presentations and news stories. We also interviewed a mix of gamers and industry experts, though the lines between these were blurred at times. Part of the answer just described we arrived at through uncovering the history of GaaS: Digital payment systems, user generated content and videogame communities. Other parts revealed themselves later

through observation and interviews. Most notably how videogames have won the battle for engagement in an age of increasingly diverse media channels and forms. We thus arrived at our first sub question '*How does GaaS foster sustained user engagement?*'. As a medium itself, a videogame is highly interactive and encourages a high level of involvement and immersion. Competing entertainment forms such as movies and series can't measure up in this aspect. Videogames on the other hand, infringe on the more passive engagement inherent to these mediums. Watching a live stream of one's favourite streamer can be enjoyed passively, while still being in the sphere of videogames. And interactivity is possible through the chat function, but optional. Esports can replicate the sensation of watching sports on television, though if the urge to participate in the viewed activity arises, it is just a couple of clicks away in the case of esports. For traditional sports, a viewer wishing to participate in the activity will have to find transport to the nearest place to practice said sport, if it is at all accessible to amateurs. The transmedia suitability of videogames is one of the key factors behind their success in winning the battle for engagement. We also discovered the extensive social side of gaming. Though mainstream media have historically branded gaming as an isolated and lonely experience, our interviews revealed how big a part gaming has played for our interviewee's social life. Many of them engaged with the bulk of their social networks through gaming related channels and experienced a great sense of community. Some even played specific games purely because they wanted to play with their friends, even if they weren't particularly interested in the game itself.

Next we moved on to investigate our second sub question: "*How does GaaS monetize engagement?*". We found that GaaS uses a mix of different revenue models, including upfront payment as seen with GaaP. Then we found the two most influential approaches to be advergaming/data selling and commodification of virtual worlds. The former consists in selling the data and attention obtained from engagement with a game to third parties. This is largely the same practice as seen with social media sites. The other approach consisted in commodifying the virtual worlds in which a game is set. Game proprietors have increasingly sought to exert complete control and ownership of their virtual worlds through extremely strict EULAs. This allows them to fabricate a virtual economy, where the game proprietor can implement artificial restrictions to create demand and then supply the means to overcome said limitations. Two of the most important concepts here is that of rivalrousness; the consumption of an item by one player prevents others from consuming it. This ties in to the second concept of scarcity; by making some items very rare, they gain perceived value even if they have no impact whatsoever on actual gameplay. We found that the imposition of real-world market mechanics on a virtual world was not unique to GaaS. It had been used in GaaP games as well. The essential difference however lay in the purpose of this imposition. For GaaP games

it was to create challenge and an internal consistency, though many games allowed this to be broken through optional cheats. For GaaS the purpose changes from player experience to monetization. The latter doesn't necessarily diminish the former, but can actually expand it in some cases, depending on implementation. Games that implement a market for trading for example can make players active participants in the virtual economy rather than just being consumers. If the market is externalised, whether that be as a De Juror or De Facto type 3 economy, the virtual market suddenly blends into real world markets. Virtual goods obtain RMT value and can be used to invest or for more insidious purposes such as money laundering or gambling.

On the topic of gambling, the purchase mechanics of many virtual items are very similar to actual gambling, to the extent that several government bodies around the world has expressed concern. Known as loot-boxes, these mechanics have permeated much of GaaS gaming bringing us to another important aspects of GaaS and monetization; employing psychology to maximise engagement and spending. Virtual currency for example serves to obfuscate the RMT value of virtual items. Loot boxes and their randomization algorithms use the principle of variable ratio scheduling for rewards to optimise spending. We found that data harvesting and subsequent analysis played an important role in optimizing these mechanics. Some patents revealed strategies of tailoring reward schedules dynamically according to individual player data to achieve maximum monetization. The ethics and legality of this is highly questionable, but nonetheless a reality that must be reckoned with. We observed a split in the videogame industry on this question, with Epic Games CEO condemning loot boxes.

With regards to Epic Games, we decided that it would be useful for our research to explore two major GaaS proprietors to see how our three research questions are answered in the context of specific ecosystems. We chose Valve and Epic Games. Valve rose to prominence on the back of the highly successful GaaP game Half-Life in the late 90's and then used a sequel to launch the Steam digital distribution platform in the mid 2000's. Steam evolved to be a large ecosystem of digital distribution, community and content creation. It achieved near monopoly on in the Western PC market. Epic Games itself had success with its game engine in the 90' and has continued profiting on it till this day. However, it was the release of Fortnite and its subsequent meteoric rise in 2017 that the company is best known for. Like Valve, Epic capitalised on a superstar game and used it to launch a digital distribution platform, the Epic Games Store, to compete directly with Steam. Where the latter is focused on retaining customers through its extensive mesh of tools, content and community, Epics Store has forced its way into the market by undercutting Steam significantly and using its large capital reserves to secure exclusive distribution rights to some popular games and giving other games away for free. It remains to be seen whether this will work out in the long term. Comparing CS:GO

and Fortnite, flagship games from Valve and Epic respectively, reveals a very different approach to engagement and virtual economies. CS:Go is very much a competitive game and has benefitted extensively from the esports scene formed around the game. Gameplay is fairly static, with only smaller changes and updates every once in a while. It relies on a core set of mechanics that can be learnt and perfected through constant training and repetition. It is more like a traditional sport or board game such as tennis or chess. Fortnite on the other hand continually varies its gameplay, has special events and new experimental game modes. New weapons are added, and elements of the map is constantly changed. It is much more dynamic in terms of content and changes to gameplay, relying on freshness to keep players engaged. Monetisation is also markedly different, though both games has one thing in common; Neither offers pay-to-win mechanics but instead relies on cosmetics and extra content. Cosmetics in both games serve as instruments of self-expression and status signalling. However, there are fundamental differences in purchase mechanics and design of virtual economy. CS:GO utilizes loot-boxes and ties in with the wider Steam economy. The latter uses a virtual currency, disguised as sovereign currency. Virtual items are tradable in an internal market and there seems to be an implicit acceptance of market externalisation, leading to a significant third-party economy integration and RMT. Fortnite on the other hand has very limited gifting options and enforces a strict type 2 virtual economy. Loot-boxes are not employed in the purchase mechanics.

## 9.1 Limitations

We do not claim that our success factors nor our comparison of games and platforms are comprehensive representations of GaaS as a whole. By the very nature of our ontological and epistemological orientation, we can but explore one limited slice of GaaS as experienced by ourselves and our interviewees. By rejecting the existence of one single objective reality, we must also acknowledge that there inevitably can be many other interpretations of GaaS. While using qualitative interviews allows for nuances and themes to be discovered that might not be evident in quantitative data, it is not appropriate to claim generalisability from a limited data set such as ours. In effect, the research and contribution done in this thesis serves more to provide a usable if imperfect map of a number of GaaS success factors and features of two of the most prominent ecosystems and games. This can serve as a snapshot of the state of GaaS at this moment in time and as inspiration for further research.

## 9.2 Further research

As noted, the challenge to Steams monopoly by Epic Games has only just begun and the outcome will not be clear for some time. It would be highly advisable to update this comparison in a couple of years and take stock of the situation. Perhaps there is now a duopoly? Or maybe

more players have entered the market? Did Fortnite recede in popularity, and if so, did it bring the Epic Games Store down with it? What about the planned expansion into distribution on the mobile platform? Was this the start of a breakdown of the walled gardens? From a political, legal and ethical perspective, the study of virtual worlds, the items within them and their commodification could do with some much-needed attention. Should loot boxes be considered a form of gambling? Would it make sense to hold proprietors of a Type 2 virtual economy accountable for market externalisation done through third parties? Ownership of virtual items could also make for an excellent area of study as there seems to be a gap between legal realities, marketing communications and user perceptions. Continuing along this topic, what might be the usefulness of blockchain technology to establish a decentralised account of virtual item belongings and ownership? Finally, during the writing of this thesis, competition for videogame cloud streaming services broke out, with the giant of Nvidia and Google providing two different takes on this service. This could be the next big thing for the videogame industry.

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## 11 Appendices

### 11.1 Interviews

#### 11.1.1 Christoffer

- 00:00:00 [CH]: Basically, just to make a long story short, it was just my friend who had Counterstrike (CS) on his computer, back in the days when it was beta it was also playing on modems, so he didn't have a connection like ADSL, you were playing with a 56k (56kbit? connection), so you were happy when you had 200 ping you know. 250 was standard, basically 200 was good. So, everything started there, just get hooked on the game, so when I first got my own PC through my mother's job, back then it was popular to lease personal PC's through jobs at home, because no one really couldn't buy them, as they were quite expensive, so we did that and then I also got an internet connection, a bit after, like ADSL and everything was coming to Sweden quite quickly and that was that.
- 00:01:03 [FH]: You always been a bit ahead in Sweden with the broadband technology.
- 00:01:11 [CH]: Yeah, it's been good. I think that's also why we have had some success within gaming.
- 00:01:17 [FH]: Yeah it makes sense, I mean there are quite a few good teams there and you were SK Gaming and Team Nine, and what were you on can you remember?
- 00:01:29 [CH]: Yeah SK and another team we started before that with friends of us, we had many names, we started out as a team called "Too Easy" we were then sponsored by MTV. We were also called MTW, Team Nine.
- 00:02:43 [FH]: And you were sponsored by MTV. Can you recall how you went around getting that sponsorship, were you contacted or?
- 00:02:54 [CH]: Yeah, no that's MTW, that was a German organization, they kind of picked us up as a team. So not the TV channel. Mortal Teamwork was their name. We had our own team and we didn't really have any big sponsors back

then we only had like internet cafes, so they picked us up. If we played under their name and then we had sponsorship from like their sponsors and so on.

00:03:35 [FH] OK cool, then you have been working for a game store if I understand correctly as well afterwards?

00:03:43 [CH]: Yeah exactly, I just started as a part-time employee.

00:03:45 [FH]: And then you have gone into kinda the marketing side of things. I think you worked with Dreamhack?

00:03:54 [CH]: Yeah exactly, before that I worked within media sales. I got tired of the work, working in a store, so I took some studies and I did something within media. It's the same company who now owns Dreamhack and ESL. So, I worked there for like 5 years.

00:04:32 [FH]: What was your role at Dreamhack?

00:04:33 [CH]: I worked with sponsorships. So, all the customers who want to reach customers through Dreamhack, everything from booths to sponsorships of our tournaments that we had.

00:04:50 [FH]: Could you tell a bit about how you connected with those sponsors, how you sold Dreamhack to them, what did the sponsors see as the benefits to them?

00:05:00 [CH]: I think it's different with every sponsor, I mean today we see they are kind of working hard to get into the non-endemic's sponsors like Mercedes and DHL and so on. But I think, us like Sennheiser and Asus and everyone else, they just reach the gaming contacts through these sponsorships. Everything from the logo to get branded with, the right audience, so I mean when you sponsor a DotA 2 tournament then of course you will reach people who are interested in DotA 2 and also some others with peripherals or whatever it is, but also having product placement and commercials in the stream. So, they kind of just tap into that, but a non-endemic brand they kind of want to just tap in into the gaming audience. So, everyone has like different goals. A gaming company will see sales instantly, but maybe a company like Mercedes is just more doing it for a branding perspective and not maybe for sales.

00:06:15 [FH]: That makes perfect sense, so with Dreamhack I usually associate that with CS:GO, is there anything else involved in that or?

00:06:25 [CH]: Dreamhack is built from the festivals that they have. It started in the mid 90's, so everything is built up from there but on top of that they are also producing lots of esports tournaments for basically every esports there is. And all of the tournaments have different brand names and also have a project leader and everything and a broadcasting team that works with the tournament and then you do some of the esports at the festivals like you have, let's say you have Dreamhack Summer or Dreamhack Winter in Sweden, in the schedule you maybe have one of the CS tournaments, maybe one of the Dota tournaments, or one of the StarCraft tournaments or whatever. So you try to move all of these tournaments around the globe so it makes sense, so you have one in North America, Europe, Asia or wherever it is and then you have some standalone tournaments like for CS Dreamhack Masters, which is a complete CS tournament, which isn't connected with the festival. But the festivals are the core of Dreamhack.

00:07:45 [FH]: And you are kind of involved in all of the festivals or just in a specific part?

00:07:50 [CH]: Everything, that could have something to do with a customer. We of course have some people focused on North America. Maybe I did some more of esports activations and also some of the Nordic festivals.

00:08:07 [FH]: From a more kind of game-centric view, we have talked about CS:GO and now you have mentioned Dota2 as well. When you take peripherals perhaps or other gaming sponsors, what are they interested in when they are sponsoring someone?

00:08:29 [CH]: Peripheral brands like Corsair and also Monster, were the biggest partners of Dreamhack and for Corsair, they need to activate themselves, they need to tap in into the esports and gaming audience. People who then are interested to play CS as an example, they will of course buy a keyboard, they will buy a mouse, a mousepad, a headset and so on. So, with lots of activations, having the commercials and then having the logo, they hope that they will get top of mind and that by being a sponsor of these tournaments that people will feel like they are a good brand, since they are associated with CS and so on. But basically it comes down to having people who will buy a new keyboard, they will think of Corsair as well, maybe after they have seen a new Corsair keyboard in the stream and they will be like "Hey I want to buy that one". So, basically it is just about reach for them and reaching the target groups, because it is kind of hard to buy media and try to reach gamers and esports people. I

mean if you want to go through sites and so on, that doesn't really work that well anymore.

00:10:09 [FH]: Can you recall, what kind of metrics, when you are trying to persuade for example Corsair or somebody else, you give them to make look a potential sponsorship deal attractive?

00:10:25 [CH]: It's different for all and also it develops every year for now. So, at some tournaments it basically comes down to the Twitch numbers. Then it also comes down to how many viewers in total, not talking about unique viewers, just the views in total basically. And then it also comes down to how long have each of the people watching the stream been watching in average. So say you have like 20 million viewers for a tournament and then you have an average viewing time of 45 minutes, then you at least understand that, okay these people are just not coming in and watching 1-2 minutes they are actually staying and watching at least a game on average. Some people are watching for a shorter time and some longer and then also sometimes you can have unique viewers, depends on what you can get from twitch also like a geo spread, so you can see which country they come from. And in the development we also had some things with a media company who did some real measurements, what's the value of everything, like what's the value of these commercials/ads in the stream with this amount of viewers, what's the value of this reach and so on.

00:11:40 [FH]: Oh, that's really interesting, could you elaborate on that how that is determined?

00:11:47 [CH]: The own analytics team broke that one down, they basically got reports and then put a value on everything and know what the CPM is for buying an online video, so they did like an average on that, saying ok this is how many people we would reach with the commercial, so that's the value of this sponsorship. Then you have the social media posts and then you have the in-game logo or the stream logo, etc. So, they put a value on everything based on values, when you would buy it as a media. And then they put all the contacts together and gave you like a value, like this is what it would cost to buy this, so this is what the sponsorship is worth. All the endemics sponsors they don't really care, because people who sit in those positions are quite used to esports and gaming, they know what they are buying what's good and not good. But people who come in like non-endemics those type of brands and media

agencies, are used to buying contacts, they are used to buying some metrics, that are not too common in esports today, but I think it is moving there, shortly.

00:13:37 [FH]: In Dreamhack Games like CS:GO you got usually the tournament stickers and so on, do you know if you kind of did in-game items for any stuff in the tournament like drops in streams or something like that?

00:13:56 [CH]: Not anything for just Dreamhack specifically, I mean it always comes down to the publicist who owns the game, who does that. So, you might be aware that in CS it only happens for Majors and in DotA it's usually around TI (The International) and then of course some teams did have their own like items sets and so on, but no we didn't have anything going there, if we didn't have a major. Maybe this will be something in the future, I mean if you're looking for example at TI, which Valve runs themselves, it's so much easier for them to work with the compendium. The compendium is driving so much sales for them and also when you look at Riot with League of Legends (LoL) it's also easier for them to work with in-game items and skins. I think it's hard for like a third-party company to do it like Dreamhack or whatever or another tournament organizer. But in the future, I hope that either the publicist will have a huge gaming and esports department or maybe they're just working very close with the tournament organizer, to do this kind of things. Because that's also something I have been talking about for many years like some people who aren't coming from the gaming scene they're like "Yeah, but these guys or these girls don't spend as much money on jerseys and things like that around the sport", but it's like no, they just use all their money for in-game items. Because that's were you show your colors and also, I think just moving forward it would be so cool if you can have like fan jerseys or fan sets or whatever it is within the game basically.

00:15:40 [FH]: Yeah, I mean that would be really interesting. I mean, just in CS:GO or DotA, it's incredible how much they sell in in-game items to put it mildly. Did you have any contact to the publishers at all, when arranging Dreamhack and so on?

00:16:01 [CH]: Not those types, mostly just with their marketing managers. I think we kind of did it like so-so. The product managers at Dreamhack were the one's who basically met with Valve and so on, when you were talking or pitching for a major. So, it's easy to have less contacts and just build a strong relationship

and then I mostly worked with the marketing managers, when they wanted to do activation through Dreamhack or whatever it was.

00:16:36 [FH]: I see. Do you know anything about the revenue split for Dreamhack? I guess sponsors play a very big part, how does that compare to ticket sales for example?

00:17:03 [CH]: I mean they are still making lots of money through ticket sales, I don't remember the exact number, but I think it's maybe around like 50/50. Maybe the sponsorship split has grown a bit. But it's a good value from just ticket sales. Just looking at like Dreamhack Winter, you have around 6000 people who buy a LAN ticket and they cost from 1000 up to 4000 SEK. And then you have like the daily visitors, which is like 250 SEK, you have around 20000 unique visitors, just for one event. So, the sponsorship is really growing as well, of course if you look at the revenue for the numbers over the past 5 years, I mean it increased incredibly. Because the interest is kind of getting higher from people who want to sponsor it and it's limited of course as you don't let 2 competitive brands do it. If you have a peripheral partner say like Asus buying all of the peripheral's sponsorship, then you don't have Corsair. So, it's basically the same thing for ESL.

00:18:33 [FH]: That makes sense. When it comes down to selling sponsorship and so on, do you have any experience with partners or brands who kind of want specific esports talent or is kind of more just focused on the event itself?

00:18:59 [CH]: I think those customers go to agencies like WeHype and maybe some other gaming related agencies like PopDog, I don't quite remember their sponsorship, but it's the guys who did that with Apex. So, you have the streaming and talent agencies who do that of course, they asked us but I think if we would do it, we would do it through an agency or maybe just try to help them do it, but we didn't really focus on that type of business it was more about our specialties and our sponsorships.

00:19:40 [FH]: Okay, you quite recently moved to Sennheiser or Epos as it is now, what is your role there? You kind of do selling as well there?

00:20:04 [CH]: Exactly, so what I do here is being responsible for the Nordics when it comes to all the customers or resellers who sell our products. So, I have the contacts to the purchasers, who buy our products. I have a distributor, that helps us to move around all the products and also with the marketing, I do the

activations that are local and also trying to just get as many regional buyers of our products as possible. But as you're probably aware from Monika, we had like a huge transition going from Sennheiser and building up to the Epos company.

00:20:44 [FH]: Yeah, she told us that has been quite a big move. It's quite interesting to see how that plays out, because that's completely new, the brand Epos as far as I know, right?

00:21:04 [CH]: And there is still a lot to do. Yeah, I think we will be good in the end and I think also if you look at HyperX, that was Kingston RAM from the beginning. So, I think with Epos, the gaming brand I think will be better, because now we can do things, which are not really need to be connected to Sennheiser. We don't really need, the approval from Sennheiser in any way.

00:21:33 [FH]: Yeah, Monika mentioned that Sennheiser could be a bit difficult at times to work with on the gaming section. Do you have anything to do with the branding and marketing side as well then, I guess?

00:21:49 [CH]: Most things are done on a global level. So, what I do is more activations. So, let's say like I want to be part of Dreamhack here in Stockholm, and then we basically maybe buy a booth or we do some local activations, that I asked to do, but we have global sponsorships, that run everything around that. So, the things I do is to build a brand of course in the Nordics and then of course try to how we can go beginners tracks??

00:22:26 [FH]: When doing activations is there anything particular you kind of look for or what kind of criteria do you use to select what is worth doing?

00:22:35 [CH]: I mean what is important to us as brand, since we only do audio, basically we only do headsets, it's to prove that why are the best and I want people to experience our headsets. So, say we are like a store, for example at Dreamhack Winter, then I want atleast to have a simple demo station just have like a computer to people can put our headsets on and see what they are paying for. Because when they see other brands like Steelseries and Razer and so on, and then they look at ours, and then they look at the price and say like "Hey, but Razer is like half the price and I know them much more than Sennheiser", but when you get them to try them on they understand what they are paying for. So, hearing the audio quality, feeling the comfort and also trying the microphone. So, what is really important is getting people to try our products

like a live experience. If they only look at them it will not help, so we really need to prove our quality. And also, when you look at having activation sponsorships it's being at the right place, where we have our audience. So, going to a place with just random people, is not really effective.

00:24:50 [FH]: No of course not, so that's a quite interesting point, how do you figure out where the audience is, for example Dreamhack is one good place.

00:25:08 [CH]: In the Nordics, we are kind of spoiled with gaming events, because it's been a part of our community for so long. In Finland we have huge assembly, we have there, then we have a gathering in Norway. We have Dreamhack Winter and Summer in Sweden, we have NPF in Denmark, we also have Copenhagen Games, if you want to go there, also in Denmark. So, choosing one of each and do some types of activation and then at least tap in into the local target group, it's not like they have millions of visitors but at least it's something. So, I think that's just kind of what we're aiming at, trying to go and then on top of that of course everything is growing online as well, so you have something like E-Sportal, a more local version of FacelT and then you have the possibility just to do something in Sweden, with the Swedish ladder and so. But basically, the events are the most important one's and then of course also the stores, where we have our products for sale.

00:26:30 [FH]: Yeah that makes sense. Just to round it up a bit, if I could ask you, are you still into gaming yourself like your spare time?

00:26:51 [CH]: It's kind of hard, since I have 3 kids so, I have my hands full.

00:27:07 [FH]: But obviously, you follow the game industry for work. We have talked a bit about in-game items before. What have you seen yourself as trends for revenue drivers, when you consider the gaming industry as a whole like microtransactions, for example like loot boxes do you think these trends will continue to dominate the industry?

00:27:53 [CH]: I think in-game items are really the most driving things for publicist at the moment as people are making the games free to play, just look at Fortnite or also CS is now free to play. If you look at EA's turnover, you can see that they earned so fucking much money from FIFA. So I think the trend we are currently seeing will continue, when you buy in-game items you actually get something that makes you experience the game better and also seeing the prices of the skins in CS, they are not worth it but still the demand is much higher than what's

available, so I think people just want to express themselves with the things they really spent time in and also want to have a like a cool experience. So, I think it will just continue and I hope that the publicists are just smart and develop things that are actually giving a better experience and not just pay to win. For example, like I think there was a big backlash in Star Wars.

00:29:18 [FH]: I think also the whole loot box thing, is kind of under scrutiny at the moment.

00:29:25 [CH]: Yeah and also don't know if you heard about it, but many governments are looking into the loot boxes, since it is regarded as some sort of gambling.

00:29:36 [FH]: Yeah exactly, I think Netherlands and Belgium have already banned them, which probably makes sense.

00:29:42 [CH]: Yeah and I kind of think, it will happen in many other countries, at least they just need to follow the law, I guess. Or just do it in some better way, because now when you buy them or whatever, you don't know the drop rate of anything. You just see what you get. That's the main problem.

00:30:03 [FH]: It's interesting to see how that's going to impact the industry. Have you watched any kind of live streams yourself, do you follow any streamers or esports tournaments?

00:30:21 [CH]: I watch CS tournaments and I also follow TI, but other than that I don't have too much time to look at much else. But CS tournaments are fun, because they are always quite interesting and also of course TI.

00:30:40 [FH]: You have been into the industry kind of long, have you yourself observed how live streamers or famous esports players affect or integrate into the gaming economy? For example, Apex Legends used a lot of streamers to promote the game like Shroud and so on playing. For tournaments you kind of have these signed stickers and signed skins for the famous players. So, have you observed how streamers or esports athletes interact with the gaming economy?

00:31:40 [CH]: I think it's not really a huge pool that's making lots of money on it yet. But I think it will just continue to grow and also with some companies like WeHype for example as a streaming network we can buy activities, it will just continue, but of course Twitch has helped the industry a lot making money for streamers and gamers.

- 00:32:06 [FH]: You are absolutely right, most of streamers don't really earn any money. But from the gaming industry perspective of for example game publishers and peripheral manufacturers, do you have an idea how they see the role of streamers or esports athletes?
- 0032:34 [CH]: It's just reach basically. Just like with Apex, they used the big streamers just to gain reach and then they know that people who will come and play as they see them playing. So, it's easier for them to get reach. If they just do marketing, I don't think they would have real success, because if you buy like a streamer or whatever it is you also get authenticity through them like credibility. So that's also a big reason, but also EA had a huge success at their launch when they paid everyone. I also know that they had the streamers involved during the development of the game, before the release. I think Ninja got like 1 million \$ only from EA. But then they have lost everything, because they didn't have a strategy for the follow-up. So, everything died, basically after.
- 00:33:45 [FH]: That's quite interesting. Especially, we can clearly see that they're aware of the streamers and so on. I think that actually covers a lot of the question I had. Do you have anything else you would like to add, anything interesting you have observed or experiences with the gaming industry?
- 00:34:05 [CH]: It's a lot. But I think just the streaming part is what has really changed. It was the game changer for everything. It has brought in sponsors, also making all the games grow, being not only something you that you play as an esports, actually bring in an audience for people to watch. So, I think this was hugest game changer, we will see what will be the next one. I think we are still at a quite early stage and everything at the moment, and it's fun to see how it will just continue to grow. I hope it's the right companies with the right teams that will just grow the most/succeed. Because it's kind of sad, I have witnessed so many tournaments with just companies who didn't know what they were really doing, but they take lots of money and then they fuck everything up and make it go to shit. And also, something I just love the most with esports is just if you're talented you will be successful. It isn't about pay to win, of course you need a computer and a lot of time, maybe in that sense it is pay to win, but if you are just talented, it doesn't matter if you started playing 1 year ago or 10 years ago, it doesn't matter if you know like all the people in the industry, I don't know how it is in Denmark, or whatever country but if you look at having kids playing football, if you don't have them playing in the right teams, they will never really

make it to the top and you also need to know the right people, basically to get into the teams and so on. But with esports, it's like nobody can see you, it doesn't matter how you look, if you have some disability or whatever it is. I mean if you are talented, you will be successful, that's what I really love about esports.

00:36:27 [FH]: Yeah, it's really a level playing field, which is quite awesome. And I think, not everybody, but at least most people can afford to run games on computers so it's not something like golf, where you need to pay a ton of money to compete. Let us quickly return to streaming again, because could you tell me how you noticed the rise of Twitch and streaming in general and so on?

00:37:03 [CH]: Sure, I mean it keeps continue to grow and we are also starting to see a lot of competition with YouTube and Facebook trying to tap in and also for example Mixer from Microsoft.

00:37:20 [FH]: Yeah that's going to be quite interesting for sure. But when did you notice yourself, that streaming was beginning to impact the industry?

00:37:38 [CH]: Yeah, of course with JustinTV we started to see that there is a possibility right there. I mean looking back when I played, people had to watch through HLTV, so not really a good experience when you were playing in a US tournament and then they used the local connection just to get it out. But it was okay. Everything was kind of dead at the end CS 1.6. But with the arrival of CS:GO and also Twitch, things were starting to take off. And I think it just continued to grow from there.

00:38:44 [FH]: That's really interesting, because I have known Twitch for quite a while but I had not really watched it myself until a couple of years ago, so I haven't really myself experienced that curve of how it went from a niche? to quite mainstream.

00:39:06 [CH]: Yeah, everything was just dead and then it just took off. It took a few years.

00:39:13 [FH]: Can you remember, was CS:GO kind of the major game on Twitch to bring it to new levels or was it more DotA or LoL?

00:39:20 [CH]: I think everything together, but I think CS:GO was kind of the first esports tournament that made it grow again. And then everything basically kind of came after that. So, at the beginning it was just a new game. Around 2012 or 2013,

basically everything started to explode with TI and then everybody else came along. With Riot, the first world tournament they had was a Dreamhack Summer, back then it was just a 100sqm booth they bought. So, seeing world championships today, that they are hosting it's quite a difference, so I think JustinTV and then TwitchTV and everything, I don't know what it was but it was something new that happened and people got interested again. I also know the owner of the site HLTV, they were offered a quite low amount of money, and they were also thinking about selling their website, since they didn't know what was going on back then. But now the company is obviously worth so much more money. But the whole esports industry was on a hold before that.

00:40:58 [FH]: That's quite interesting, because it's one of the things we are trying to figure out with streaming and esports have driving the game industry or if they new games that have been released have driven the streaming *peripheral*?. I am guessing it's a combination of the two.

00:41:24 [CH]: Streaming is growing the interest. For me when I am working, but there is a tournament happening, I can have the stream open in the background and you can see what other are doing. You just feel interested. Somebody else has said once, if you see a good CS game then you want to go play CS right after the match is finished. It's not the same thing when you look at a golf tournament or whatever it's not like somebody says, "Hey let's go play golf". So that's also something that makes everything just really good and connected with the streaming and also the audience and then also makes you want to play yourself.

00:42:20 [FH]: That's true. Finally, can we ask you, if your kids watch streams or do they follow any streamers or esports athletes?

00:42:25 [CH]: Not really, I mean my youngest one's are quite young and my girl she is turning 13 this year, she is not following many streamers, but she has seen through social media and she is playing herself, but not watching any streamers yet. But I think it come soon, if they find much interest for a game I think, it becomes much more relevant for them to watch a streamer, because then they can take tips and see how they can grow.

00:43:00 [FH]: Okay, I actually think I got a lot out of that interview. If you don't have anything else to add, I will say very much thanks for having your time.

00:43:11 [CH]: Thank you for having me.

### 11.1.2 Daniel

[00:00:00.750] - Monika

I am not going to publish anything with your name attached to it without prior checking it with you, whether that's OK.

[00:00:18.360] - Monika

Could you first start off by introducing yourself? What do you do? How old you are , that kind of thing?

[00:00:25.330] - Daniel

Yes. So my name's Daniel, I go by Vrax online and I'm 15 years old and I produce content primarily on the game fortnight.

[00:00:34.400] - Monika

OK, great.

[00:00:35.940] - Monika

How did you get into Fortnite and what made you want to play it?

[00:00:41.640] - Daniel

Back in season one when the game was still small and had just been released to open beta. It was just something that caught my eye. I was like, let me, you know, mess around with this because I had just been back and forth between games and when I picked up Fortnite, it just really had me hooked. It just kind of I don't know what it was.

[00:00:57.870] - Daniel

I think it was just that new battle royal feel of the game. I just really had me hooked in. And ever since then, I've been playing it.

[00:01:05.130] - Monika

Did you start streaming immediately Fortnite? Was Fortnite basically your entrance way to streaming?

[00:01:11.640] - Daniel

Yes. So when I started playing fortnight, I had a not so powerful computer at the time. And over time I wanted to play Fortnite on stream like I would always play it off stream. But when I first started streaming, actually streaming a mobile game called Brawl. Sorry. That's what I started with. And then it wasn't until about three or four months before I actually bought myself an actual computer that I found a way to start streaming Fortnite

[00:01:41.220] - Monika

And you are streaming on Mixer?

[00:01:44.220] - Daniel

Yeah, I am streaming on Mixer.

[00:01:44.460] - Monika

Why did you choose Mixer as a platform?

[00:01:47.710] - Daniel

Yes. So when I started with Twitch, everything was fine. Everything was going great. I was seeing amazing growth for the time being that I had done it. But a big thing for me in a platform when I'm streaming is I want to feel safe. I want to you know, I want to know that I'm safe when I'm streaming. I want to know that, you know, I can draw myself without reason to worry about my security. And that was something I wasn't feeling over on Twitch. I had an incident actually a couple incidents, whereas having my personal information thrown into people's chats, including my own chat, and I was getting no help from Twitch at all. So I had a friend over at

Microsoft contact me who kept seeing these problems like, hey, look, if you want, I could possibly get you a contact over at mixer. Would that be of interest? He was like, let's see what we could do.

[00:02:32.460] - Daniel

And after like three months of back to back with Microsoft, we finally signed off on everything. And I mean, the switch over there.

[00:02:39.060] - Monika

Great place. Really good reason.

[00:02:52.220] - Monika

I also like watched you do for a while already, like you're growing with that I mean your following. How did you build a following? Is that something you did like on purpose? Did that just happen?

[00:03:03.090] - Daniel

So some of it. I don't know exactly what I did. Whenever my dad like whenever somebody asks my dad about this, he always comes back and says like that. He's a natural at. This is the answer my dad always gives to every person that asks. It really is. I just you know, this what I love to do. So I put all my free time into it. I put any little dollar that I make right back into this.

[00:03:28.200] - Daniel

And any, you know, anything that I get or make from streaming goes right back into streaming. So everything that I'm doing, you know, I I devote my life to doing this because I love it and I enjoy it. And it's what I enjoy doing. And obviously, it's helped a lot and that my parents support. And, you know, I just, you know, use social media as a big factor, because without social media, I wouldn't have a lot of this right now to a big part of it, social media.

[00:03:56.790] - Daniel

That's the biggest part for me, just growing my name through like Twitter and all that and getting my name out there. Yeah.

[00:04:02.760] - Monika

So you do use social media to interact with like fans or followers and other Fortnite players as well. I mean you do on Twitter, obviously, I know that you also have a discord channel. But do you also like Snapchat or other platforms or?

[00:04:20.850] - Daniel

I use Snapchat a little bit.

[00:04:21.990] - Daniel

It's kind of just as a way for me to, you know, sort of connect with my following a little on a more personal level. So I set up a Snapchat aside my personal account, just like, you know, interact with my community a little bit more. I also have Facebook, which is my Facebook is just my Instagram and whatever from my Instagram is directly there. And let me think. And also YouTube, because YouTube is also a big part of it, too.

[00:04:49.190] - Monika

OK. When did you get a creator code for Fortnite? And what do you think of the creator program?

[00:05:03.180]

I had gotten a creator code. It was ...They had just announced the program, I believe it was a month after they announced the creator code program. I got mine. And I think it's a really good thing that Fortnite had broad into their game because it finally gave creators a way to actually get monetized for promoting the game. So thats something a lot of games didn't do. And you now see a lot of games you starting to do. Now, but I think it's nice because, you know, it finally

gives a spotlight on the creators who are actually helping the game and, you know, they can in turn a profit.

[00:05:34.460] - Monika

Did you have any contact with EPIC or the Fortinet team? Like in person and.

[00:05:38.760] - Daniel

No. No. OK. Do you feel that you have somehow a relationship with them in a way through the creator program?

[00:05:50.030] - Daniel

The great part about is that they give us priority support. So we have like especially e-mails, we email as creators and we get you know, they tried to get us in as quickly as possible and dealt with. Which is a very good positive thing. But as for like personal connections over at EPIC, I feel isn't that a lot of the creators who have codes don't get. But I think the priority support is a big thing for especially for creators who, you know, need to get stuff figured out a lot quicker than, you know, some of the people just know to just the community.

[00:06:22.760] - Monika

How important is for you the social aspect and the community of Fortnite?

[00:06:29.410] - Daniel

Yeah. So the social aspect is a big part for me, because me being someone who can just ramble on for ages and hours about the game, you know, it's a big part for me 'cause I like interacting with people. I like meeting new people. And I love just, you know, sharing my thoughts and ideas with other people in the community because it always, you know, like sometimes you'll talk to people in the community and they'll have this one idea and then you bring it together with something else that you thought of.

[00:06:53.660] - Monika

And it really just like expands your mind on how the game is and your thinking and knowledge of the game. So I think, you know, being able to connect the community as a whole is big because the community we all think on, you know, we all have the same thinking when it comes certain things like when Fortnite makes an update for something, a lot of us already have the same idea in our heads. So it's really cool that this community was built up that kind of shared the same mindset for the game.

[00:07:23.000] - Monika

What do you enjoy most about playing Fortnite?

[00:07:29.540] - Daniel

I think when I had first thought of playing it, the biggest thing for me was that it was a new genre that was kind of on the rise. And there wasn't there wasn't really a lot of games that were out there besides PubG at the time. In PubG was kind of a more, you know, explicit, I guess you could say it in a Fortnite it is I think a big thing for me was the cartoon feel of it, because me, you know, growing up just watching cartoons every single day when I saw a game that had like this cartoon feel and it's a new genre that I had never experienced before, just getting into it was a lot more easier because of that cartoonish feel and also because it was something new.

[00:08:10.550] - Daniel

You know, a lot of mechanics were new. I had never, you know, tried to play game competitively before, before Fortnite. And, you know, overall just this kind of threw me into the, you know, the loop of like competitive e-sports and realizing that it exists. Yeah.

[00:08:31.580] - Monika

What do you think about the skill floor and skill ceiling in the game? And do you think it is easy to get into it at this point? Is it still sufficiently challenging at the top?

[00:08:41.870]

I think it's a very broad skill range. So you have the players that are just gonna be casual and that's with every game. You're always going to have the people that are casual and they won't go above and beyond to get these high placements. And then you see that there's these players that, you know, will go above and beyond to get their first place spot no matter what it takes. The skill gap is so large because it's always changing the meta in the game's always changing.

[00:09:08.960] - Daniel

You know, what people need to know about the game is always changing with the game updated changes, how the whole game is played and how people see the game. So, you know, one week you'll have player A on the top of the charge and you may not see him up there until, you know, for like another five matches or something because the game's always changing. So one week something's powerful, the next week it's not. And that could determine whether, you know, someone's in the top or someone's in the bottom.

[00:09:41.000] - Monika

Do you like the battle pass and what do you think makes it good or not good if you don't like it?

[00:09:47.570] - Daniel

Yeah. So I really enjoy the battle pass because it really gives the user something to actually grind for and, you know, to get back into the game. Obviously the pricing, obviously that's a little annoying having to pay for it in every, you know, two months. You know, they have to make money somehow. But I think I think in return you get enough where the price pays off with what you're getting. I like it a lot because you know, those days and I'm like, OK, I got nothing to do.

[00:10:19.010] - Daniel

What am I going to do today? It's like I could just be like, oh, y, go grind out the battle pass today and just hop on Fortnite and just start doing the challenges that come with it.

[00:10:28.660] - Monika

How about virtual items such as outfits, dances and back bling? I kind of assume you have purchased some? Do you have any favorite items? And why are they your favorite items?

[00:10:41.840] - Daniel

The biggest thing for me when it comes to items is the Ninja skin. I love them and just get in the ninja set in general because that was just in my mindset. It's you know, it's the beginning to something much bigger. He was one of the first creators to get his own skin in the game. And that's just going to lead to a lot more creators getting their own skins in the games. We basically started something that that nobody else had done yet, which I always respect from Ninja, is that he's been doing that since day one.

[00:11:26.780] - Monika

Would you like to be just in general as a feature, to be able to trade items with other players or sell them for V bucks like as a trading system?

[00:11:37.040] - Daniel

So I think trading would be a good addition, but it would have to be within moderation because we've all seen accounts get, you know, hijacked before and in and trading, you know, could make things. You know, there's got to be limitations on it. Like I know right now with their gifting system, they haven't. So you to have the person added for three days before you could do anything. So a similar system like that would have to be in place.

[00:12:00.710] - Daniel

So if somebody does decide to trade, it can't just, you know, get somebody else's account and then trade right away. I think would be a good feature, especially if you could sell stuff for a few bucks, cause and players can, you know, open up a whole new marketplace for Fortnite and everything. But with the way the game is in the type of situations that have arose from, you know, security breaches and everything on people's accounts, I don't think it would be a good fit for Fortnite

[00:12:28.760] - Monika

What do you think of all the special events in Fortnite such as the Marvel and Star Wars content and the game modes. What did you like and what you didn't like about it? And how do you feel about them in general?

[00:12:41.600] - Daniel

So when it comes to these events, I really enjoy them because as we are all seeing with this coronavirus epidemic, you know, seeing a digital event is crazy. Like a while back when they did the marshmallow concert in game, there was almost, I believe, a million people in the game at that time, which is mindblowing because that's more people that could fit in the stadium. So seeing these scenes digital events, I feel like as a pioneer, too, something is going to be much bigger because now that we have, you know, the sickness going around the coronavirus and everything.

[00:13:17.030] - Daniel

Now the big companies are trying to look for ways to, you know, bring their events into a digital space. And Fortnite doesn't need that cause Fortnite already has that. I really enjoy them. You know, it's like you're there, but you're not. When you get a real like, you know, you're you feel like you're there when you're not. So I feel like there's a big connections that and I really enjoy those events where you.

[00:13:40.020] - Monika

Did you attend the marshmallow event?

[00:13:42.350] - Daniel

I did attend the Marshmallow event.

[00:13:43.670] - Daniel

Was it good?

[00:13:45.210]

It was amazing. It was I believe it was a half an hour long. And then all half an hour straight, I streamed the whole thing. I did the Star Wars event, but to get back to the Marshmallow event. I stream that me and my chat were just we were just, you know, we were just chilling. We were just laughing about it. They had super cool effects in the game for it.

[00:14:05.960] - Daniel

It was overall a very cool event. And I hope they do something like that again.

[00:14:10.760] - Monika

How did you feel about the blackout event?

[00:14:13.700] - Daniel

The blackout event? I streamed almost the whole thing. It was almost a three day thing and it was the most tiring thing ever. Especially when you're trying to stay there because you're trying to sit there and find a black hole and talk to your chat about how, yeah, there's black hole here and that could be here for another month now. But, you know, it was interesting. It was very interesting. I did not expect it at all. And because of that, I think it brought more hype to the game.

[00:14:41.180] - Daniel

But it also killed all the ones people, good people didn't want to sit there waiting like. So when are we coming back now?

[00:14:47.700] - Monika

OK, I've got like three more quick question, because you are going to stream soon, right? Yes. Do you talk about Fortnite offline? And what do you think is other people's attitude towards Fortnite?

[00:15:00.650] - Daniel

I do talk I do talk a lot about Forntie off line, mainly with a close group of friends. Because I'm going back to your question about how do other people look at it when the game at first one getting his popularity. You know, everyone had mixed feelings about it. You know, you had the people that never played a game before playing it. And it was all over. But for people that don't play games daily. See it in the same way that I do.

[00:15:27.580] - Daniel

I see something that, you know, I love to do. I love getting on the game every single day and playing it well for other people and really see that the like. Why would you enjoy sitting at your computer for X amount of hours and not going, you know, outside and doing something? And they just can't see it the same way that I see it.

[00:15:43.320] - Monika

Um, anything about Fortnite that you dislike?

[00:15:49.390] - Daniel

That I dislike? I just like when they put in updates and don't listen to the community for feedback on certain items they have. I remember when they had the infinity sword. The infinity blade come out. There was huge negative impact on that and it took months to get it out and eventually they got it out because it was causing a plane. But there has been other items that have been added to the game that have not been changed. How? And that's just.

[00:16:24.220] - Monika

How about the epic store, what do you think about that?

[00:16:29.130] - Daniel

Like the Epic Games launch or store? Yeah. Yeah, I'm sure. And that one in comparison to steam or do you not use steam? Oh, so I use the. So I use Yapa game store. What I really enjoy that they do is they have these promotions where every month I believe it is they know every week I believe it is actually they give out free games. So you get a game that you would normally maybe paid for, for free.

[00:16:50.840] - Monika

I think that's good because it allows me to, let's say one day, you know, it doesn't the player or something. It gives me an opportunity to try to game that. I would have never tried if I didn't have free, you know.

[00:17:04.280] - Monika

Okay. That's it from my side. Thank you so much for taking the time. I will transcribe the interview and any direct quotes. I will clear with you before it goes public.

[00:17:15.880] - Daniel

Perfect. Awesome..Thanks so much.

[00:17:29.900] - Monika

Thank you. Bye bye.

### 11.1.3 Dean

[00:00:00.180] - Monika

Thanks so much for taking the time for this interview. I hope it is okay for you that I am recording this interview. This interview is for a Master Thesis as CBS. I will be recording you, put nothing will be associated to your name without your prior approval. Is that okay for you?

[00:00:24.210] - Dean

Yeah, that is totally fine.

[00:00:26.370] - Monika

If you could start off by introducing yourself, what did you currently and what do you experience in the gaming industry was.

[00:00:34.160] - Dean

What it is in full or just just recently?

[00:00:38.670] - Monika

Its a long experience, so just a quick rundown with your recent experience, that would be great.

[00:00:41.160] - Dean

So I'm currently I producers at Splash damage. And previously I was a producer rare ltd. Had a short stint at EA, and before that I was a content team leader at Jagex, which produced Runescape.

[00:01:01.770] - Monika

You have a very long and broad experience in the gaming industry. So you must have observed different business or monetization models of games as such. What would you say are? Which ones are you some that you had hands on experience with? So what was that again?

[00:01:24.970] - Dean

So you have Runescape which was free to play . You had the subscription model in place as well. And then during this time as well, insiders mark micro-transactions with some cosmetics and then also elements of loot drop, shall we say.

[00:01:45.850] - Monika

Do you think that the emergence off I mean, loot drops or monetization or in-game item thing is something that developed more in the last years and is quite prominent?

[00:01:59.440] - Monika

And of course you got some controversies on some parts. And do you think these kind of business models have influenced the way video games are being made currently?

[00:02:10.810] - Dean

Yes, definitely. I think some would probably go as far to say and could acknowledge that some companies are probably and definitely using sort of psychologists to sort of extrapolate and prey on even gambling aspects of the brain, I think, and the addictive personality and the nature of some of these mechanics in the games. If you go to the most ruthless ones with monetization, they're quite bad as well, especially as they're so open to children nowadays, so easily accessible and so easy to spend as well.

[00:02:40.750] - Dean

And sometimes you don't even convey the way that you're spending. So you haven't even got a full understanding of what that item or all those currencies you're buying translates in real money, especially if you're a youngster.

[00:02:54.490] - Monika

And do you think that certain business models are more pervasive on certain platforms, hardware platforms? So let's say I mean, mobile gaming or pc gaming?

[00:03:06.910] - Dean

I'll probably say mobile is the biggest one around them. But then some of the P.C. titles have one sort of really high school catchment might say if you take, for instance, like Dota, like there's so many people that play and something like that that you pass with so many levels. I mean, I don't know if you know that data's Belfast mechanics. Yeah. The how and get like they had the baby rush on things. So they go for exclusivity and say they'll send you a model and

then any cost thousands upon thousands upon thousands of pounds and you land your wells with that.

[00:03:40.750] - Dean

But you get a lot of other people as well. You can get caught into that trap thinking they can grind their way along and just spend a bit in here. And for they know they spend loads trying to get it. I mean, it's not the worst one, but that's the P.C. game in the books is some of them are ridiculous like any randomized loot boxes. I really don't agree with I think they're really far more of a fan of if you want to sell science, someone selected them for the.

[00:04:02.780] - Dean

If you want to make it price, make it a lower price. Do not mean people buy it if they really, really want it. But like those whole random chance, one in a million to get this special item, it's not one. They're worse than some of the gambling machines. Yeah..

[00:04:29.080] - Dean

Yes, they resell it in sort of the real world like I. It's a weird logic. It depends how it's implemented. If people are exploiting it and it you know, I mean and manipulating markets and that that's bad. But like I've led the way down to work, I've actually like got money on my steam account from Ireland, jobs and stuff like that from rewards. I just cleared out. I had probably I mean, I've got six and a half thousand hours playing Dota.

[00:04:54.780] - Dean

So yeah, I played it a lot. So I had loads of items that anyways had just dropped him in. And I am 70, 75 pounds. That was just my junk items. That's not my top tier items, but because I have spent a lot of money on those.

[00:05:07.310] - Monika

So yeah, it's I get it. I mean it's quite easy to do that. So just to just to go into that. I mean right now the buzz word that also people that I'm not familiar with the industry might have had is

live services and games as a service. How would you generally define that and what is your opinion on that?

[00:05:32.530] - Dean

I would say that it's an ongoing game. So if you take a normal game as a box product, sort of ship it. And so we're selling snippets of the thing. The game, the service is an ongoing thing to basically keep your player base that you want to keep a higher player base with the gaming or service. And normally that monetized in some form, whether that's a subscription model or a sort of buy your cosmetics or pay to win games, which again, I don't like too much.

[00:05:58.600] - Dean

But yeah, if you can just pay to be better than everyone else back then, guys can make a lot of money as well. But you normally see regular content drops to sort of keep retention high like the games, like sort of Warframe Runescape game. They'll use it with story quests as well. So there'll be an overarching story theme that you can continue to play. So the game is never over in that sense, which is quite good. I do play a lot of them myself as well.

[00:06:24.400] - Monika

How do you think that from a producer's perspective and what do you think is important to keep the attention of users and keep them in that game and life as a service? And what have you experienced as a player yourself? What?

[00:06:38.500] - Dean

Oh, yeah. I mean, I grinded Runescape hard and really like spend hours. These games. It is a tough one. I think you need luck because your playerbase is going to be broad dependent on your numbers and so what your game style is. But if you take something as broad as an MMO, there's so many different PSUV not to pigeonhole players because some people like everything but somewhat like they quest their story out, someone like their combat or their raids.

[00:07:04.090] - Monika

The boss in someone like Liv's Skillern, you know, there's a mine in that woodcuts in and crafting sort of elements of the game. So you need to give a varied amount of content. These I think you need to have a strong theme to keep the men as well. And with the long grinding games, if you like, and the same moves at warp frame, you need to vary the gameplay like no one likes repetition. If you need to sit there grinding something in 10 hours or whatever to get an item, you need to offer varied content.

[00:07:35.070] - Dean

Otherwise, people would just disengage with it very quickly as well. But the other side of that is trying to increase that sort of social element and get social bonds.

[00:07:45.360] - Monika

So you think that user on user interaction within a game is important?

[00:07:51.620] - Dean

Yeah, definitely. Because let's say, for instance. I mean, I don't know, many games like I'll be sitting out of playing solo and then someone's not speaking to me. And then like, I'll take data, for instance. And then I'll be LA Junior high up. But I was gonna go. So that's that's just kept me around for another one game at least.

[00:08:09.540] - Dean

You'll be at our window. The next thing those five games in. And then we've met another person and then we've got full party and then we don't want to drop the whole party. Then we had each other as friends. And that's that's four more people to invite me and bring me back online and essentially keep me away from another product or another service, whether it be a Netflix or whatever.

[00:08:28.920] - Monika

So you think games as a service do compete and not with other games per say? They do, too, because you have to pick one of them, but it is competing with other entertainment forms.

[00:08:40.400] - Dean

Yeah. I mean, this is what basically everything's competing for. Now is people's time. Like we're so connected nowadays, we could we could pretty much do whatever we want, wherever we want. Especially where we've got sort of cloud service gaming, Cobby and 5G networks. Before you let you play your Expo's games on your phone. So like it is literally trying to keep your personal Petain engaged. And and as as you see with these social platforms, the best way to do that is with social groups.

[00:09:07.260] - Dean

If you've got Mitsou more followers on Instagram or you or you your Facebook or whatever. That's the one you're going to go through the most. You don't mean you can have more interactions with that, bringing you back to that. And that's going to be taking more of your time. Therefore, you've got more chance to make money for more people.

[00:09:21.920] - Dean

So, yeah, so, so and so just to condense it. So it's easy to cut that. It's like.

[00:09:32.170] - Monika

So would you say that in the more that designing elements and so so bringing people in vital for monetization of the game with social animals.

[00:09:46.920] - Dean

Yeah. Say for instance so it's like an MMO as an example where you can have a lot of players in say congregate and within a bank scenario. Yeah. So everyone standing around and what do people like to do online show off their wares. You know there is a E-A as a fame who's got the top tier gear. You know, I mean on the most expensive gear, I mean, again, another example load cell phone data. I've got an item for one of my most played heroes.

[00:10:11.910] - Dean

It's worth about two hundred pound Ho-Sang and always a gold version. Literally gold. And it's that gold zombie's and sort of normal looking.

[00:10:19.670] - Dean

So it's. Yeah. And that's how you do it. And I mean it's partly because I played so many hours, I didn't want the money too and giving them something back. But at the same time it's about yay, like guys. I'm like, you know, I've played this guy. I've had fifteen hundred matches with this guy. I like to go on it.

[00:10:38.920] - Monika

And if you look at and how do you say you would keep up with the industry as a whole? And Marcus, what kind of platforms or publications do you go to?

[00:10:55.590] - Dean

What do I read up on? I mean, I normally just continually look at daily news feeds on mobile gaming sites and stuff. To be honest, I'm I'm normally quite good at just sort of stand on the forefront of stuff and having a good prediction stuff like, say, just from Fil-Am polygon, euro gay bear where wherever the New Yorkers may be, RSS feeds coming up on my phone or design web, they are just constant spamming me with the latest news from games.

[00:11:23.130] - Dean

But I also go on to a lot of the sort of games I play. I play the games myself. So I'm always on their news sites, which is normally the best place for their social media platforms to get the stuff as I follow loads people on Twitter. So I'm just constantly getting feeds of information, whether that be wolfram's is update moonscapes, status updates, see if these they have a latest update.

[00:11:42.500] - Dean

I was on the cusp of it, you know, when you worked at Rutan's cable later. And I mean, data is quite important and developing as well. I see whether that goes right.

[00:11:55.910] - Monika

And where do you think or what do you say are most important sources of getting day data? Is that the games themselves? Is it streaming platforms?

[00:12:05.530] - Dean

It's a mixture that I think nowadays isn't it obviously. I mean, you stream streaming platforms. You want to see how many people are streaming it. How many people watching you watch your streams if you want strings in the studio and stuff and keep in that loop of life. Do you not mean because if you're in top ten twitch, you're going to get more traction with people looking at your product? So I decided. What was the actual question?

[00:12:27.110] - Monika

No, that is actually that was the question you were on. This is basically where do you get the data from? Why so?

[00:12:33.870] - Dean

Yes. So you've got that aspect for the views and stuff like that. Obviously, you have your KPI as if you're looking at sort of the monetization aspect. Looking at revenues and stuff like that. The game data is critical nowadays. You want to be beat, you don't want to overanalyze you and just be drowned in data.

[00:12:49.470] - Dean

That's not giving you a. The right value or enough value. But you need enough to ensure that you know what your players are doing and love like places they're driven development. I'd much prefer the term assisted development because what you want to do an MMO is a fascinating game. People do crazy stuff that you wouldn't even think by. And they carry on doing it as well. And the game is changing, constantly evolving. So you need to see if what you're doing is having the right sort of impact of what you want and that vision for the game and also for you or your business.

[00:13:24.630] - Dean

It's only right since perhaps that.

[00:13:29.130] - Monika

What do you think just from your experience and business KPI is that you would say are relevant to gaming business, KPI of the revenue for users and stuff?

[00:13:43.260] - Dean

I'd definitely say sort of reach on social platforms now whether it be Twitter or reach out which twitch sort of daily active users, monthly active users. You know how long people will play in the session like that? How long are they sitting on your game for you? Are they doing it daily? Because ideally what you want to do is you want to have people on a long, long time or at least coming back frequently in your game that you games, you can have enough bite sized moments or do that were escape.

[00:14:15.700] - Dean

Old-School Re-inspect recently put it on mobile so people can interact with it wherever they go. If they leave the house, they can still interact. If your.

[00:14:27.030] - Dean

Is also I mean, I guess data also helps identify quite dramatically to give me two seconds.

[00:14:33.090]

I would just go in.

[00:14:55.080] - Monika

But I heard from other people that I taught you that when it comes to viewership numbers from e-sports or that kind of reporting, that that data is sometimes a little bit questionable because there is no unified measurement of how you see how many people watch it and that kind of stuff.

[00:15:18.560] - Monika

How do you oh, what is your experience with reliability of data in the data ecosystem within the game industry as a whole?

[00:15:28.700] - Dean

Yeah, I mean. Well, yeah, it depends if you. Fair. Easy. It was some question ability and some of the data sources and the big accuracy of that. So I mean that's always gonna be tougher and I haven't got that much experience with that, to be honest. The best part is the game side of it. Way. If you're doing in time and in your own cohorts in a known sort of way, you're going to put those data points for analysis.

[00:15:54.050] - Dean

That's that's the best thing to do.

[00:15:56.480] - Monika

What do you think is key, how to balance in game economies with like to get, of course, maximum revenue? Because at the end of the day, it's a business while still retaining users. What do you think is the key point there?

[00:16:11.570] - Dean

I mean, you you do to me like say, for instance, you're going to make new games. You do need to have a good beta phase and use a lot of sort of user testing and back that up with the data. So you want to sort of make sure we xpeke apps, for instance, in your resource earning rates, if that's so be monetized as well as big rideable if you like. Burnable through gameplay, then you need to make sure that you measure that sweet spot.

[00:16:34.760] - Dean

So that matches the sort of user feedback that we'll get to the baseline of where you want people to be and be spending. So players don't feel that they're being forcefully wronged in Maine or into the moneymakers. Yeah, that's the thing as well. There's a psychological element as well. If you if it starts feeling like that, then you're not going to engage with it.

[00:17:20.780] - Monika

Like for.

[00:17:21.620] - Dean

Yeah, no problem. Just five tracks. Yeah.

[00:17:24.020] - Monika

Yeah, I would just message you like, hey, I found this and this, but I have to transcribe it fast to see that I missed something. No problem. Okay. If you have any trouble understanding anything I said, I'm sure Poppy can translate.

[00:17:38.660] - Dean

Thank you so much. Thanks and have a lovely weekend. You too. Bye bye.

#### 11.1.4 Jacob

[00:00:06.580] - Monika

So. Thank you, Jacob. For taking the time for being interviewing you for my master's thesis at CBS. And we're looking at games as a service. And you have, of course, experience with sponsorship and that direction and you have loads of insights to the industry as a whole. I'm gonna record this interview, and I will of course attribute nothing to your name without asking you prior.

[00:00:59.160] - Monika

Let's just start off in a bit more general way. How did you become interested in gaming and e-sport? Part of gaming in particular?

[00:01:07.890] - Jacob

How did I become interested? I think I always loved gaming. I loved when I was a little kid to read books, watch TV. And I think gaming is another way of escaping, which is probably the more interactive way of doing it.

[00:01:25.980] - Jacob

One of the first experience I have was that I had Sega when I was not a very big kid.

[00:01:34.890] - Jacob

Got it for Christmas one year.

[00:01:37.260] - Jacob

And then later when P.C started to come around, I really loved that. I had a friend take me to a cafe and tried a lot of different games, strategy games. And somewhere along the way, Counterstrike. And that was the new and shiny thing. And I think that part of it, kind of introduced me to the world of esports. So one thing I always like is to try and solve games. And obviously for multiplayer game, you cannot really do that, but you can check out what the best people are doing and try to learn from that.

[00:02:10.980] - Jacob

So I think that's kind of how it started. Looking up replays and articles about how to best play these games was how it started.

[00:02:22.170] - Monika

So for this you watch replays, I guess YouTube would be a platform that you were using?

[00:02:27.720] - Jacob

That was way before YouTube.

[00:02:29.220] - Jacob

Okay. But back then it was in client. So for example, for Warcraft 3, you had to you could download replays of different websites of famous players and then you could play them through the game and then you could control the actions and see it.

[00:02:47.360] - Jacob

Yeah. So everything here was before YouTube and when I actually started watching esports, it was also inside the game.

[00:02:54.780] - Jacob

You had join like a link and then you had to find another link for sound which you would then put into your winamp and you had to sync them up so you would see the replay.

[00:03:09.930] - Jacob

At the same time as the commentator was going, that was really the early days of shout casting in esports.

[00:03:15.680] - Monika

That seems like a like a long process for it.

[00:03:21.000] - Monika

So if you watch the streams or esports now, what kind of titles do you watch and where do you watch it?

[00:03:32.230] - Jacob

I'll say my main game is Dota 2 and that's an extension from watching Warcraft 3 back in the day. I'm going on to playing Dota and Warcraft 3 then watching Dota 2. When that came out lot, still do that. That's mainly on twitch. Could be on my work PC home PC on the phone sometimes, depending on the time of day, but then I do follow quite a bit more as well. I also really like CS:GO and that one I watch is a little bit more varied.

[00:04:07.300] - Jacob

So it's actually showing quite a lot in TV. So very often if I'm at home and I know there's something on I might turn it over just to because I think it's pretty funny that you can see it on TV.

[00:04:18.690] - Monika

So so you would say the platform that you watch on is very much dependent to the situation that you're in. So if it's a tournament like you seek that out actively and then have it on wherever.

[00:04:29.850] - Jacob

Yeah. So if it's a bigger Dota 2 or just go tournament, and especially if we have a team included or we are somehow involved in the tournament, then I will actively seek it out very often. If it's during work hours always sort of running on the secondary screen so I can follow the action, follow sponsorship integration.

[00:04:50.580] - Jacob

If that is, if it's not during our time, then, oh, I don't get to watch it. Then I follow up afterwards as Twitch or watch it on YouTube. But. But yes, sometimes I will be at home, Blast is on then, I might be just doing something or being with my wife living room, I might turn on the TV. Could be that I'm just chilling. I watch it on my phone or that I would actually be around my PC for gaming and then I would have it running in the background on my PC.

[00:05:19.450] - Jacob

So it really depends on where I am and what I do.

[00:05:24.490] - Jacob

Sometimes I do follow other esports, but that's more when I get we have a sponsorship with the tournament or we have a team participating that I will tune in for some of their games.

[00:05:37.560] - Monika

I have a couple of questions about game industry, business models. What you know about what you heard about them.

[00:05:44.920] - Monika

What would you say are business models or monetization models or however you would say that you've found or that you're aware of ?

[00:05:56.560] - Jacob

Well the classic one is premium.

[00:05:58.840] - Jacob

I think it would be called now, that you sell the games at a premium and then everything is free. These days there's also the you sell everything at a premium and then you can buy cosmetics and you're even.

[00:06:12.100] - Jacob

But I think that's the model that is most frowned upon these days, is that you sell things at a premium and then there is pay to win mechanics.

[00:06:19.390] - Jacob

So I would say that's very rare. that we see that, especially since that usually gets a lot of negative press. Free to play with only cosmetics. That's one thing that's also different free to play models with subscriptions. Dota 2 has a version of that. I know. And a lot of the other games, a lot of other games have the same where they, have these seasons or battle passes that you can sign up for some you have to buy individually each season and for others you can sign up for like the full year and you maybe get a discount.

[00:06:56.800] - Jacob

So I'd say that's that's kind of a that's a lot of variations in between how you do it. But I would say that the two big ones is probably still a premium and then the free to play. And then in between there are some variation.

[00:07:15.220] - Monika

Do you think or if you think that's true, do you maybe have an example, how do you think this business model has influenced games being made? Do you think that changed the way games are made, like the free to play model, for example, and the success of?

[00:07:33.670] - Jacob

Oh, massively I think. I think that maybe at the moment there's still two different ways of doing it. But I think many games are today being created with the business model being as big as a part of how you develop the game as actual gameplay, story driven content, things like that. So I think it's very much true. I think a lot of game developers will look into what kind of mechanics can we do what can we do to monetize these? So I think these days it's all about monetization and it's very much about shareholder value.

[00:08:13.720] - Jacob

And I think more than before, in the last years, you've seen games being praised for generating a lot of money. Even the community will do that from time to time, which is very different from before where it was obviously you paid a premium that was to stand up and then you got the game and everything else was.

[00:08:34.720] - Jacob

Then you could talk about how many games did they sell.

[00:08:37.200] - Jacob

And that was the positive. But I think these days, actually, people are praising them for how well a company robbing them off their money.

[00:08:48.430] - Monika

Would you have from a business perspective? From the business perspective of a representative of a brand. Do you have any reservations about sponsoring or being associated with games that are using gambling mechanics? I mean, they called them surprise mechanics. Like loot boxes, like FIFA Ultimate Team, CSGO?

[00:09:18.650] - Jacob

Yeah, I I wouldn't know as long as something think that it's not an essential part of the game.

[00:09:29.020] - Jacob

I think it might become something that we need to be aware of in the future, especially as it becomes more and more integrated.

[00:09:37.870] - Jacob

But I think for what's important here is that you can play the games and get the full experience without this and that these are optional. That gives you some additional ,usually mainly cosmetic content, Fifa is a little bit different, but in general it's a very different gameing genre.

[00:10:03.410] - Jacob

But I would be very. Always be very wary of the kind of mechanics that the game have.

[00:10:16.020] - Jacob

So I think it's very important for us to know upfront and know in detail how the game works so that we don't go into a game and try to be quick, join something that actually has the predatory spending mechanics, because then there will be a backlash.

[00:10:36.140] - Jacob

And I don't think it would be positive for us being connected to that kind of gambling, even if I think it would be a through a kind of proxy connection.

[00:10:49.220] - Jacob

But I think for me it would more, at least at this point in time, be because I would be afraid that our investment would not turn out pretty great because usually such mechanics will very quickly generate a lot of negative feedback.

[00:11:06.920] - Monika

And what is your view, or your experience, opinion on gaming streaming service like Stadia or that what Nvidia is trying to launch. How do you see them?

[00:11:23.000] - Jacob

I see I see them failing for a few more years and maybe for the next five years, I think it's for me, it's it's a similar thing to VR. People really want technology to succeed these days and feel like it's futuristic. But I don't feel like especially with Google Stadia, it seemed like the technology was almost there.

[00:11:49.310] - Jacob

But then they somehow wanted to rush it so that the platform itself was not ready. There was a lot of bugs. There was a lot of issues, a lot of functionalities that were promised was not included. And I think for something like this to really succeed, it needs to be successful immediately. And I think they need to find a business model where you don't have to purchase

a game specifically for that platform, um, which I think is really the key part to have bigger access and then you need to find other ways to monetize.

[00:12:25.580] - Jacob

But I think it's right now it should be about platform adoption and then later monetization, which is probably too cost intensive.

[00:12:35.600] - Monika

It's a bit of a jump but it's just about data now. What data do you use to keep updated on the industry and the markets? Like what are metrics that you think are important whether you use.

[00:12:55.500] - Jacob

That's a very good question, because most of my data is connected to sponsorships, so very often I look at viewership metrics. One thing I really, really like is that now a lot of the big tournaments organizers have started to use Nielsen for measuring. And that means that they used now measurements that can be a little bit compared to regular sports. I still wouldn't do that because it's such a different still dynamic. But at least you can compare the esports to each other, which I think is going to be key going forward.

[00:13:31.140] - Jacob

That's a lot of metrics out there that gives parts of the story, but that's no real metric that will give a full picture.

[00:13:39.150] - Jacob

So it's really, really difficult, especially since it's not very clear always how companies calculate some of these metrics, like the player base, monthly, unique, active users, things like that.

[00:13:59.520] - Jacob

And sometimes they just come out with random numbers that are really, really big, but it's not related to the usual number. So I think that then the industry is still very young here. And until we find a common way to track something, which I don't see being in the short term, I think it's about gathering information across and then try different metrics and different types of insights and then trying to paint your own picture of what you believe is true.

[00:14:33.480] - Jacob

Because right now it's gaming is in a place where they really like to come out with huge numbers that really makes gaming look nice or at least esports look nice, but not doesn't really have a lot of comparison in them to other things.

[00:14:49.500] - Jacob

So it's like a half truth. I think very often what is reported.

[00:14:56.820] - Monika

So you would say you receive data or you get data from a multitude of sources.

[00:15:01.710] - Monika

So from the platforms itself, from what is provided,

[00:15:08.940] - Jacob

Platforms themselves could be tournament organizers, but they reported could be different platforms online like esports charts as one that tracks viewership at least that you can do from comparisons, something like social blade, if I want to look influencers, different industry Websites, which does their own kind of tracking and reporting on things like NewZoo when Nielsen comes out. For now, I think Nielsen is usually the one I treat the best in terms of how reliable the data's.

[00:15:46.260] - Monika

So you would say reliability of data is an issue sometimes,

[00:15:51.820] - Jacob

yes.

[00:15:53.020] - Monika

And if you get a number and you want to validate it, if you want to validate the data, I'd say tournament X where that says, oh, we've got that much viewers and we've got this on this and you've got a gut feeling that that can't be right or that that isn't so.

[00:16:12.810] - Monika

Do you then have a way to check up on it or do you go with your gut feeling that that doesn't like?

[00:16:20.400] - Jacob

It's very difficult because they don't do viewership splits when it's reported. So what you can do and what I would usually do is to check check something like the esports charts, at least you get a sense of the direct comparisons, which is usually twitch or might be also across YouTube, things like that.

[00:16:42.780] - Jacob

Those kind of platforms, for example, Riot for Worlds said they had an average minute audience of 40 million. The next biggest thing was until then, Overwatch league 1.1 or something. But you have no idea what is the demographics? Where does the viewers come from? Is it 70 percent China could be, then is that really valuable? How do they come? Like so it's really, really difficult to see behind the numbers. And obviously, they just wanna show you the big number that's gonna be exciting, but they don't show you what's behind it.

[00:17:20.760] - Jacob

And while forty million is really, really good, but if it's 80 percent Chinese, then maybe it's not really relevant for me if I'm not doing a lot of business in China.

[00:17:34.290] - Monika

You have written a thesis of a metric for branding and marketing. What metrics do you use to evaluate the success of marketing activities?

[00:17:43.980] - Monika

Are any of them particular to the gaming industry?

[00:17:47.820] - Monika

Like did you take any of that or you grow and say like that really wasn't?

[00:17:53.940] - Jacob

While nothing in the thesis was really related to the gaming industry at all, and what I do now, I would say is very different, probably some of it relates like an overall perspective to what I did before.

[00:18:10.180] - Jacob

I still believe that the overall idea of how you do it is correct, but my thesis was just like one or half of it, even less. Yes, before the online part really took off, and it was much easier than to actually find numbers to measure on it, which was the problem beforehand.

[00:18:32.360] - Jacob

So yeah, obviously I've changed with with the times as well and as esports as something specific, I try to use some other more common measurements that could be CPM, but also like cost per engagement or other things which I can then compare across the different things that I do. And my different partnerships could also just be general engagement levels, not necessarily related to cost, but things like that.

[00:19:04.580] - Jacob

So I think it's about taking some general stuff and applying it across your needs and then comparing things within your segment of what you do first and foremost, and then you can always try to look for benchmarks outside. But it's really, really difficult. It's really, really different across industries. And the numbers you see online as benchmarks. It's really difficult to validate. Is that really relevant in most cases?

[00:19:34.210] - Monika

And so if you look at that, I mean, it's a bit in that in your capacity as marketing coordinator in the past and now of Esport specialist?

[00:19:53.600] - Monika

How do you did you decide which streamers to engage with to let into the affiliate program and events and that? What was that based on?

[00:20:04.370] - Jacob

It was more for streamers. I think it's also just a bit of it's a bit randomly who approved, who reached out to us and whether we see some kind of following player base. And to be honest, in many cases also who was using our product already? Because if we get them onboard, even if they are low, they will always promote our product and that's no cost to them. So I would say that's mainly this often random chance. Maybe once someone online and like them and then thought, hey, there could be an opportunity and wrote them.

[00:20:38.960] - Jacob

We saw an opportunity. So very personal tastes or other recommendations within the team, but also people just reaching out to us and seeing fit. So a few of the bigger things streamers we worked with was through agencies that reach out to us and then we tried to get like a good price and deal and things like that. But there was no clear structure around that. And it was mostly based on who came into us rather than actively seeking them out.

---Part 2-----

00:00:02.430] - Jacob

We're back.

[00:00:03.320] - Monika

We're back for part two. Thanks again for taking the time. I have some question now towards you as an esports specialist concretely?

[00:00:19.020] - Monika

What role do you see e-sports playing in the gaming industry as a whole?

[00:00:25.100] - Jacob

I say in the gaming industry, yeah. Well, I think it has a big role as I guess, the platform for competition, but also as a marketing and entertainment platform.

[00:00:40.550] - Jacob

So it's in many ways similar to what the Premier League is for football or anything like that.

[00:00:53.850] - Jacob

Bsically something like the top competitions in any sports. That's kind of what e-sports is for gaming. So gaming is usually what you do at home and esports is professional, competitive, if I would say there are always some distinctions, but I think that's basically it.

[00:01:11.320] - Monika

And what do you see are main branding or marketing opportunities that esports offers. Maybe to games, but also to peripheral companies or non-endemic brands. And where do you see the value of it? I mean, there's a lot of talk going on that the prices might be inflated like like. But where do you see the value of esports in that construct?

[00:01:34.890] - Jacob

Well, I think there's a lot of value in esports. Some years ago, there's probably enough value in esports that you could just slap a logo somewhere and you would get a lot back in return for very little investment. I think that's not true anymore. But I think esports is probably still a very good investment compared to regular sports. You have to pay less for the exposure that you get. So in that way, it's good.

[00:02:01.830] - Jacob

You can say that the difficulty with esports is that you as a brand probably have to drive and do more compared to regular sports where they will probably be better at activating you and supporting you in that regard. You have to be the professional partner in esports in many cases. Obviously some of the biggest teams tournaments and those kind of properties do have some experience and expertise in advertisement and promotions for brands. But in general, I would say that the key thing to really get enough value in these sports is also to understanding how to drive value.

[00:02:41.130] - Monika

Specifically, yeah, that is a good point and leads into my next question. How do you think it compares or how can it integrate with other marketing activities that you do as a brand?

[00:02:55.590] - Monika

Like for us, it's an in-depth brand. Of course it's a bit different, I guess then for a non-endemic brand?

[00:03:00.390] - Jacob

Well, I think the thing that sponsorships and sponsorships within esports the same as that you can create some engagement that you probably that's not necessarily a very easy to create without it.

[00:03:12.150] - Jacob

And you can create some brand attachment through working with key partners.

[00:03:17.460] - Jacob

Some of those engagement could be, could, could evolve, usually revolve a lot around events so that you bring you people that know your brand to events that are fans of the team or the tournament or the game in general, the sport, and create a lot of experiences around your brand related to the sport when it happens. So I think that's one thing. Another thing could be creating experiences at events or let's say we sponsor an event that we create a lot of activation and experiences at events.

[00:03:51.490] - Jacob

We make sure that people that went there get a good feeling about how we as a brand have a positive affinity to us and maybe remember us closely linked to the event or the sport. So I think those are some of the opportunities definitely that's quite unique to sponsorships.

[00:04:09.900] - Jacob

I think sponsorship can also do a lot of other stuff and can be a good link in many ways on how you take the fans of EA Sports, fans of teams and tournaments of the follow tournaments and connect them with a retailer.

[00:04:26.240] - Jacob

So so we can kind of be the middleman here and help through our sponsorship, drive people to one of our retailers and give them a lot of customers and attention. They will be happy. They will help us more.

[00:04:38.520] - Jacob

And we will obviously be happy because we now have a better position towards the retailer. And because we will again do something exclusive and activation around our brand.

[00:04:54.210] - Monika

How important do you see esports for particular games? I mean, there are some games. There are not e-sports, but?

[00:05:06.210] - Jacob

I think esports are over rated at the moment, at least in some ways. So I think it's esports can be very important, especially if you have a very competitive game, then it's a very good marketing tool for your game to have a new sport because it a lot of people that play the game will then follow the sport and consume more content around your games . Thats what you want when they're not gaming, they will maybe follow these matches. Things like that, which is more relatable then traditional sports. I think that's a really, really good way. And some of these big events will attract people that are not that don't know about your game and get them to have a first view and your game, because a lot of people watch Dota when the International is on a watch League of Legends around world. Well, so maybe they have 10 times or 40 times more viewers in that period and that's a good vehicle off giving a first impression and hopefully driving people into.

[00:06:06.880] - Jacob

It's also a way for, you know, the game to drive an additional again, engagement with players outside of the game to create content around it and create a world. So I think it's it's very, very important. But I think it's it's in some ways overrated because everybody feel like they have to do it.

[00:06:28.110] - Jacob

And for you to be at least perceived as successful from the outside, you kind of have to be the best. How it is right now in gaming and esports, it feels like that's one winner and a lot of losers in general, which I don't believe to be true. I think there's a lot of people that do a lot of good

things, but that's very often how it's phrased by communities and outsiders. But I think it's it's a very important part of it.

[00:06:56.530] - Jacob

It's proven, and I think you can more or less grow games around esports scenes. So I think it's it's a very useful tool, but I think it. It's not a tool for everyone, and that's, I guess, a general thing.

[00:07:21.000] - Monika

I mean, we talked about it last time a little bit, but just now more concrete in terms of esports talents or team slash events. What I mean in the past was a little bit who approached us and then we find one.

[00:07:38.370] - Monika

And I know that. But changed a little bit but or maybe changed a lot. But what are criteria when you get something in or how do you find it? And then what is something where you go like, oh, I think this is a good space for us to go into. What our criteria to look for.

[00:07:56.640] - Jacob

I think we've. Yeah. With such upon this a little bit on something that's ever changing. And obviously right now we're launching a new brand. So that means that we have some very specific requirements right now. I think more than ever. It's very important for us that we have some of the biggest teams because they have strong brand equity that we can that can be linked to us through the partnerships so that our brand gets lifted up and noticed more in the community and gain some some more.

[00:08:31.490] - Jacob

Well, most you can say established status in the community. So that's that's something that's really important. Obviously, we want a lot of eyeballs. So a lot of attention that could be looking through.

[00:08:44.430] - Jacob

How many tournaments are they participating at? What kind of games do they have? Game titles are always important for us because not in every game title audio is important. And obviously we want something that's a good match for headsets. So it's important for us that they always have a shoot or mobile game.

[00:09:02.240] - Jacob

And then the professionalism, I think you can pretty quickly look at an e-sports team and see how does their branding look? Do they look professional? Does it look a little bit low quality, things like that? And usually that will really also reflect in the way they work and how professional they are in terms of producing content. And the less professional they are, the more work you have to do. So obviously, you want to minimize that and find strong partners that can.

[00:09:32.160] - Jacob

Where we are the smaller partner and we can grow based off of them right now, especially with the launch of the new brand. That's really important. So I would say so. Those are some of the key things. There's a lot of different things that go into it. There's also things like what is our key region? Obviously, everyone, teams and tournaments that have exposure in our key regions for most parts. We also wondered a little bit inside on who's their fan from a world perspective to make sure that they match somewhat with with the kind of target group that we have.

[00:10:08.730] - Jacob

And that's something that's all the time developing. But I think those are really some key features right now that we want a lot of eyeballs and we want a strong brand that we can kind of lend to. Yeah, for the whole brand quickly.

[00:10:28.320] - Monika

How do you view influencer marketing as a whole?

[00:10:34.530] - Monika

Like what's your professional opinion on an influencer marketing?

[00:10:39.150] - Monika

I think it's at a state where it's weirdly enough underrated and overrated at the same time. So I think in some areas it's definitely overrated. I think especially when fashion and things like that influencer marketing seems to be everything these days. But I also think in terms of gaming and for us specifically, it's underrated and we still have a long way to go in terms of how we utilize it. I think influence our marketing can be really, really effective in terms of driving conversions and driving more real interest.

[00:11:13.920] - Jacob

So even smaller campaigns we've done have seen actually really good results, especially on YouTube when we work with influencers that create content around our products.

[00:11:26.720] - Jacob

And I think it's something that's gonna be an important part going for what esports in general is now maybe a little bit less. But it used to be that people mostly followed teams based on the players, and if the players moved, the people followed them.

[00:11:42.210] - Jacob

And I think in general, us as a society today, we tend to more follow individuals a lot and probably teams and organizations a little bit less. And I think that's true equality across all major sports as well. So, yeah, I think influenceers is really, really important.

[00:12:01.470] - Jacob

I think a lot of people will be very affected and. Have such a fandom towards individuals that they respect him enough to. Yeah, but purchase what they advertise for if they do it in a good way.

[00:12:18.020] - Monika

Yeah. What do you think makes a good influencer like not just what do you want to work with? But in general, what do you think is important for a person to be successful in that space from a commercial perspective.

[00:12:48.630] - Monika

what do you think makes a good influencer?

[00:12:50.970] - Jacob

Well, I think actually that that he's interested in the sales of brand building side of things.

[00:12:58.950] - Jacob

So looking at someone like Ninja, maybe it was a little bit of a coincidence and maybe he was one of a few that could have taken a huge leap forward with the fortnight launch. But he was very good at. Taking these opportunities, he was always there. He was, I think, very, very good at just approaching and making sure that it was always relevant.

[00:13:22.970] - Jacob

I think a lot of things can seem random from the outside, but like who he was playing with everyday, these kind of details. I think it was very thought through everything he did. And obviously on the brand side of things, he's not been afraid to sell out in a good way. So he's made a lot of big partnerships because he's willing to do a lot of this stuff. Like a lot of influencers. Do you like to sit at home and play?

[00:13:47.040] - Jacob

There's still a lot of those out there and they don't want to sell. So they can if they like the product, they can use it and maybe talk about it once in a while.

[00:13:55.610] - Jacob

But not a lot of people actually know how to promote these brands or willing to do it or interested in doing it. And once you don't have that interest, it's usually gonna shine through. So I think he's a good example of someone that's really taking things to the next next step because he sees this as a career and he sees this as a way of life, a business for him.

[00:14:17.780] - Jacob

I think Dr. Disrespect is another good example. And he was one of the very first fully character driven streamers out there. And that also meant that with the over the top character that he had, that he could be extremely pushy. From a commercialization point of view and. Without him losing any credibility, so I think that's another good example of kind of forming your character so that what you do in terms of marketing will be believable.

[00:14:49.730] - Jacob

I think on the esports side of things, that's actually something I talk with people about and really realize when we at esports bar, a lot of the esports players and the esports players are probably the only people in this world to this day and age that could the easiest be influence stars and live off like social media and was zero interest in it. Like these guys don't want to do it, especially in CS:Go, especially in Dota. But I think goals and the applications for most of them, a lot of them could build huge personal brands, but no one, none of them want to do it.

[00:15:25.140] - Jacob

They might have 200000 follow us on Instagram and they post three pictures a year, but they could do so much with it and they could grow to become huge stars and influencers. But they just want a game. So.

[00:15:38.620] - Monika

So it is important that they see it as a business in order to be actually successful and take it to the next level?

[00:15:45.800] - Jacob

Yeah, I think so. Well, you can also enjoy that part of it and maybe nothing business minded at first.

[00:15:51.530] - Jacob

But if you enjoy to update regularly on social media, if you think it's fun to create advertisement like video for a product that is sponsoring you because you like it, those things can get you pretty far. But I think you have to be very aware of what you do and you have to think about it and specifically work towards that goal.

[00:16:14.060] - Monika

And we touched on this earlier a little bit again, but it's just to get it a bit more. Well done. How do you determine if an influencer is a good fit for the brand? We touched on it the last time a little bit. But, you know, what are maybe criteria or what is general?

[00:16:33.830] - Monika

Something we say, okay, this one, he will fit to us really well.

[00:16:39.340] - Jacob

And we haven't really we haven't done that before. So mostly it's been based off people that liked and wanted to use our product already who had a good following and usually also a game title where we were not that exposed already. What would be important for us to have some exposure to that community and that we've got a good deal like good. But we perceived those good value for money in terms of the amount of use and what we paid. Let's be honest now.

[00:17:09.140] - Jacob

I would I would look deeper at it especially if we had some more money around it. The to really look at who would enjoy actually pushing us or who would actually like market our products, which games are good fits or who someone that's playing more showed us who's really relying on his headset that can really talk about it. These kind of things. I think product fit that they should like and enjoy our products going to be really important. And I think what's EPOS we have to look at, especially in the early days of the content that we create, that we from what I've seen so far, we focus very much on a specific type of person for a photo shoot.

[00:17:51.290] - Jacob

I think the esports players in many regards are getting more healthy, so they are not they are kind of in the same direction and I think it might be important that we then follow kind of the same thing when we go to influencers if they are on camera kind of people.

[00:18:06.990] - Jacob

Yeah. Yeah. Which I would always recommend. Yeah.

[00:18:10.550] - Monika

So on-camera is also I mean with a headset of course.

[00:18:14.100] - Jacob

Exactly. So you want to see them use the headset.

[00:18:15.890] - Monika

Yeah. Yeah, that makes sense.

[00:18:20.430] - Monika

I mean you mentioned a little bit shooters of course. So how do you determine if a game is a good fit?

[00:18:25.620] - Jacob

Shooter.

[00:18:25.770] - Monika

Shooter?

[00:18:25.780] - Jacob

Shooter.

[00:18:27.710] - Jacob

Well, we've tried many things and I think headset importance is really the key factor.

[00:18:33.460] - Jacob

From the data that I've seen, we obviously don't have any objective data. But we did some twitch campaigns that you saw things like Rainbow Six, Counterstrike. These were really the high scorers in terms of how many people clicked on our head. Yeah. Even if it were not communities, we usually then we did things on YouTube with influence us and then we could have a huge FIFA influencer and a semi sized guy playing a game called Rust's, which is some kind of survival shooter. That I never heard about. Then huge FIFA influencer I would have. Not that impressive click through and very little sales because his fans don't see the need for a headset. Also, because they don't spend that much on the PS4 and the PS4 in the game. They are basically cheaper than the headset.

[00:19:26.720] - Jacob

But these trust people, they care really about the game first and foremost. So it's it's a smaller niche community, but they're very invested. The guys were playing and watching, especially these videos. And as it's a shooter.

[00:19:40.090] - Jacob

Audio is going to be really important that you can hear what's going on around you. So I would say that's that's really a key thing.

[00:19:51.250] - Monika

And I mean, there's. I mean, we I know of one kind of issues. We had one of the guys that was seeded over a campaign. But what do you see are pitfalls with influencer on marketing or sports marketing?

[00:20:10.830] - Jacob

I think it's just not having a clear plan. So I think for influencer marketing, it can be that you just turn it up and say, OK, this way we do more and more of the same and at some point you don't. It just becomes, you know, yeah, a running thing that you don't really focus on. So I think that's obviously it also depends on what you do because influencer marketing can be many things. And you can also say, let's say we could work with.

[00:20:42.660] - Jacob

We could do different campaigns throughout the year with YouTubers and Twitch streamers that were running for smaller periods and then do different ones throughout the year. We could do yellow campaigns or partnerships with influencers again on Twitter and YouTube or social media. Instagram could be an opportunity if we find the right fit to run the full year and that will be somewhat different. But we could also put all our eggs in Ninja and to do something with Ninja and then we have to activate it a lot and there will be more of a hero campaign towards our brand.

[00:21:18.890] - Jacob

So I think influencer marketing can be many things it can also be micro influences that say, OK, we sent something to 10000 Instagram accounts and then we get some clicks to our websites back on to retailers or something like that and see how what this has to say is going to be. So there's many different levels.

[00:21:45.330] - Monika

Have you ever sponsored or created an in-game items as a brand?

[00:21:52.380] - Jacob

No, I don't believe so. We tried it, but I think that's extremely important. So from my understanding, if I assemble that a lot of people that purchased some of the steelseries stuff for Dota 2 and Cisco is because you purchase, let's say, a mouse for 50 U.S. dollars, then you get a good mouse for 50 Euros. The last thing you get an in game item. Let's say that item at the start has maybe a value of twelve and a half US dollar euros,whatever. But over time this will grow. So a lot of people will actually buy the product one because they get a unique in game item that not a lot of People have but also be because they hope that the popularity of this item will grow, so they will become more expensive over time. So I think that's that's something that can kind of. Make people buy a lot of products without being too interested in the product.

[00:22:54.780] - Monika

You mentioned it, but have you worked together with any streaming platforms on like campaigns or

[00:23:00.670] - Jacob

You mean Twitch or Youtube for example?

[00:23:04.980] - Jacob

No, we haven't worked with we've had with run ad campaigns on Twitch. We've run an ad campaign on YouTube and we've worked with those agencies that have. Run campaigns for our brand and products, which streamers on Twitch and Youtube, but we haven't done something with the platform itself in terms of that. I'm not sure in some levels it's probably possible to run some kind of campaigns like that, but that's not something that we've done that specifically.

[00:23:41.050] - Monika

How would you like more top line evaluate these kind of campaigns and how that that the importance of that and how that went?

[00:23:53.770] - Jacob

I generally like YouTube much better because there you can put, let's say, a 30 second product integration and start off the video and everybody that starts that will get it.

[00:24:07.780] - Jacob

Yeah. Obviously, people can skip through it, but actually quite a lot of people will watch something when it's only 30 seconds to half a minute.

[00:24:15.900] - Jacob

It seems to me that, um, so that what's we usually did.

[00:24:19.310] - Jacob

And then a small reminder in the end, just that it now you watched it and then it was the whole video. Then again, just remember to click the link below to see this new headset. Just to give people. And I think that worked really, really great. I think the problem which twitch is that and I've seen different solutions from companies working in different ways to try and fix that. But it is that you present something.

[00:24:43.080] - Jacob

I just got this new headset from Sennheiser. It's amazing.

[00:24:46.180] - Jacob

Blahblahblah. Talk about it. Put it on you do something for, let's say even a few minutes or five minutes and talk about it. And the people that are there will may be very interested. Let's say

you have a pretty good viewership, so you have five hundred concurrent. And if you do it when you start the stream, maybe people even didn't join you.

[00:25:04.180] - Jacob

And then you put it down and then it's just passive for the rest of the video. But everybody just dropping in throughout the the weight will. Will not see that. So they will only be exposed to the more passive branding, maybe a logo in the background, maybe a title of this dream. Maybe there's something running in the chat. Maybe they will see that. But of course there is ways of reactivating it from the streamside, but also people that will then go in.

[00:25:33.710] - Jacob

Let's if you go in and watch the the bod on twitch. Usually a lot of twitch streamers start up and then before they actually start playing, there will be a lot of runtime where as YouTube. The video is cut to "This is when I start. This is when I finish." So that's it. Does something from the start and twitch, maybe there will be a couple of minutes before the streamers ready to jump in and start talking about doing things.

[00:25:57.320] - Jacob

So that means people are skipping until the action. Yeah.

[00:26:00.530] - Jacob

So they will not see because maybe they're not that interested in what the stream was talking about before they're going to play. So far I liked Youtube better, but I've seen some overlay integration ideas that could work for Twitch in ways of promoting the brand more continuously and just to them very shortly.

[00:26:23.260] - Monika

Not very subtly, but still gets more towards esports. Do you? How do you see users being engaged with esports and do you think that differs from the way they engage with normal streaming content or with regular sports?

[00:26:42.170] - Monika

Do you see there a difference or where?

[00:26:45.170] - Jacob

Well, there's absolutely differences. I think esports is somewhere in between regular sports is. Right now, I think something where there are obviously a lot of viewers TV and the thing is still very much linear TV or linear TV streaming services driven. I think Twitch and influencers as a very community driven sort of usually on this year, one of the biggest. You will have your medium sized you will have a very hardcore following of people that are very engaged, you and who you are.

[00:27:20.600] - Jacob

There will be more of you are a friend to them. Kind of feeling. I think esports is somewhere in between. It's it's it's definitely closer to real sports and there's a lot of comparisons, but there's also a lot more opportunities of what you can do for viewership.

[00:27:38.180] - Jacob

I think in terms of the opportunities of twitch, how you can integrate within the game. So I think that it's also publisher driven. Very often esports. Gives some unique opportunities and I think that's something that's really unexplored. That you have, you know, in regular sports, the pyramid is that you have a huge amount watching. And then how many is playing, how many is engagement levels that goes down? That's actually the opposite. On esports, you have these guys, you have the small amount of viewers on top and you have a lot of players in the bottom and naturally that you want to get more people to view, right?

[00:28:16.880] - Jacob

Yeah. So it's it's about getting the players to do it. And I think that's a lot of opportunities in terms of incentive integration and things like that, a different kind of incentives that you can do from watching and e-sports stream, which I think is something Overwatch League has done.

[00:28:31.610] - Jacob

We have done that. If you watch something, then you will get some unique skins, items ingame. I think that's a lot of things that they can do in terms of that.

[00:29:47.500] - Jacob

Yes, I think people like to feel that they're part of it. So I think that it's you know, it gives them some sense of community that they can spam something random in the chat.

[00:29:58.430] - Jacob

But I mean, it obviously that's just obviously maybe you want to discuss the game, but once it gets over. So. Yeah.

[00:30:04.370] - Jacob

Well, then there's so many people that it will always become somewhat spammy. Yeah. And I think it's just a part of the fan experience. That's the same in the stadium. You might do a little bit of discussion on that guy, but at General, it's it's more about, you know, shouting at the players or trying to shock your team for what that's like that.

[00:30:23.380] - Jacob

And I think it's it's that's a lot of the same thing that you see on Twitch Chat whenever something like a meme starts to pop something like spam, Spam this flower to give this guy power, something like that.

[00:30:37.900] - Jacob

Yeah. And then people just copy and paste and spam. It's a way of, you know, engaging with the players and trying to spur them on. And the way of feeling like a fan. Yeah. Yeah. Cool.

[00:30:50.640] - Monika

Thank you so much. That was it from my side.

#### 11.1.5 Jennifer

[00:00:01.010] - MB

Hi Jenny. Thanks for taking the time! This interview is for a master thesis at CBS about digital platforms in particular about streaming. This will take about 15 to 25 minutes, and I will record the interview if that is fine with you. Nothing will be published mentioning your name without explicit permission from your side.

[00:00:38.063] - Jennifer

Yeah sure, that is no problem.

[00:00:41.790] - MB

Can you tell me a little bit about yourself? How old you are, what you do, etcetera?

[00:00:42.280] - J

Hello. So. I am Jennifer Meyer 28 years old and I am an English and Biology Teacher.

[00:00:45.250] - MB

Let's start off with your media consumption. What kind of mediums do you watch? On what kind of platforms? I mean do you mainly watch TV or do you watch more Streaming, or YouTube, or Netflix? How much time do you think you spend on it?

[00:00:56.780] - J

I don't watch a whole lot of TV. I mean yes, a documentary here in there. But I mainly watch Amazon Prime. I listen to quite a lot of radio, actually.

[00:01:19.230] - J

Sometimes I do watch TV, but then it's a documentary or something. Also, when I am really tired and exhausted, I sometimes just want to switch of my brain, and then the choice off like Netflix of Amazon is just too much. It's just I cannot decide, you know.

[00:01:21.690] - MB

Totally, it feels like just nothing seems right, so it's easier to let the TV decide, or just mindlessly skip through the channels.

[00:01:23.690]- J

Yes. That's exactly it.

[00:01:30.690] - MB

So, and that's why I interviewed you, I know you also game yourself and watch streams?

[00:01:31.590] - J

Yes, I do. I mean not as much as I used to, but I do. You got to keep up with the kids. And also, I really like to.

[00:01:35.800] -MB

Anything In particular? And specific platform?

[00:01:35.800] -J

League (league of Legends) all the way. And, don't tell any body also some Dota. Like if we are honest, they kind of similar.

[00:01:39.100] -J

You should maybe like strike that out of the interview or people will come for me.

[00:01:40.350] - MB

But it is for science. Don't worry. Your secrets are safe with me.

[00:01:46.250] - MB

Do you remember the first time you came across streaming, and what was that like? Maybe when? Was it League or?

[00:02:10.740] - J

No, I don't remember when exactly I started. It has been a while. I remember that I actually started off with watching Minecraft, I played that too for some time it's kind of relaxing. I wanna say maybe 10 years ago or something? But I am not really sure. Is Twitch even that old?

[00:02:19.250] – MB

It is from 2005, so it's like 14 years old?

[00:02:21.740] - J

Oh wow. This makes me feel super old.

[00:02:23.250] – MB

Yeah me too. It doesn't feel that long ago.

[00:02:25.740] – J

Yeah, so. I think I started watching stuff on Twitch about 10 years ago. But I don't actually remember what was the first thing I saw, or whom I watched. Really no Idea.

[00:02:29.250] - MB

That is no problem at all. You said you mainly watch Lol and Dota. Do you watch Streamers or do you watch events? Or both?

[00:02:31.540] – J

Both. But definitely more events or matches than anything. I follow the LEC, and I also watch if I have the time Dota Majors and the international.

[00:02:36.540] – MB

Can you explain what the LEC is?

[00:02:38.120] – J

Sure. I'd though you'd never ask! So LEC stands for league of legends European championship.

It is the European branch, there is also a North American league and so on. There are ten teams in it and they have like a spring and a summer split that each of three or four months of games, and then half finals and finals.

[00:02:41.320] – MB

So a lot of matches?

[00:02:41.520] – J

Totally.

[00:02:44.320] – MB

Do you follow a specific Team? Do you follow personalities? Like why do you watch it, and how did you get started.

[00:02:46.180] – J

Weirdly enough, not really, like of course there is one or the other Team I like more. But for me it's not really like football- I think it is cause I played it as well a lot, now just occasionally, and then I would watch tips and tricks and then got interested in watching matches. Like to see how really high-level plays look like, and then you get hooked

[00:02:51.380] – MB

Do you also watch individual Streamers? I mean, like not tournament matches? When they just stream from their place?

[00:02:55.160] – J

Not as much as I used to. Like I said, I kind of started watching it for tips and improve my play, and then I stuck around 'cause I was entertained. But I have a lot less time now, so I mainly just watch matches now.

[00:03:00.130] - MB

Is there any streamer in particular you were watching, do you remember? Or that you are currently still watching?

[00:03:01.510] - J

Doublelift, I watched him quite a lot, and still do sometimes. His whole tragic family situation, and how he is still positive and entertaining to watch. He doesn't seem to try too hard if you know what I mean. His streaming schedule though, is time wise not really fitting into my life any longer, I can't be up all night watching streams when I have to work the next day.

[00:03:04.110] – MB

Do you watch his Stream compilations? On maybe Twitch or Youtube?

[00:03:07.930] - J

I do sometimes, if I am bored. That happens. Not that much anymore though. That reminds me, I also sometimes like to watch a girl with Tourets. Her name is Anita, or something like that and she has some compilations on her YouTube channel. She mainly plays Overwatch, but overall, I think her content would fall more into the Just Talking category. Like it's a lot of that. But with the tics her personality is super fun.

[00:03:16.930] - MB

You just mentioned that you watch compilations is that because like you mentioned earlier, that the streaming schedule is not fitting int your life?

[00:03:18.170] - J

That is definitely part of it. Totally. Maybe even the main reason. I enjoy the like live interaction with the chat, and the opportunity to interact with others, and sometimes interacting with the streamer. It's nice. It makes it more interesting. Thinking about it now, I kind of miss it. It's like minded people, a nice online community.

[00:03:20.270] - MB

You just mentioned community. Is that an important aspect for you, when watching streaming?

[00:03:21.190] - J

Not as much as I used to, but it definitely was. I used to be super active online and in online community, and also other fandoms. I have made a couple of good online friends, that I still meet regularly. I was kind of nerdy, and still am growing up, but I think, looking back, I was lonely and my socials skills weren't up to scratch if we are both being totally honest. So I was super active on like loads of online forums, and chats among them twitch as well.

[00:03:28.570] - MB

I mean that makes sense, I understand that. You mentioned earlier you interacted with some of the streamers sometimes?

[00:03:28.170] – J

If you are a regular with smaller Streamers it happens, and then you talk. And it makes you feel awesome and important. And of course, bragging rights with others. Its like the selfie with Lady Gaga I once got. Like, at the end of the day I don't assume that they know who I am, if I was being honest but in that moment, you think that. And then you fangirl all out. And of course when you donate money or sub, they will thank you personally and then you have the impression they will remember you.

[00:03:30.450] - MB

Ah okay. You donated money and subbed?

[00:03:31.170] – J

Oh yes, and that back in the day got me in trouble. Cause I used my mums paypal account, that she gaven me so that I can order school books over Amazon. She was furious. I spend like 500€ in one month. I might have had a huge crush on a Streamer, and I wanted him to notice me. But long story short, he did not realize that I was the love of his life and we are not together married with 10 children. And I totally did not write embarrassing fanfics about our future together with an obvious Marry Sue stand in for myself.

[00:03:36.450] - MB

Really?

[00:03:37.340] - J

Jep. I mean I did become mod for him, so that counts as a success in my books.

[00:03:38.450] – MB

You will have to send me that link. I need to read it.

[00:03:39.340] – J

Oh hell no. The cringe is too hard. I know you. You would die of fremd schaemen in the corner. I also am pretty confident, that I deleted all traces of the internet. That could link to me. Students are fucking ruthless. So I'd also appreciate if you don't quote this with my name attached.

[00:03:41.370] – MB

Don't worry. I assure you that, that will not happen. You said, you used to donate to streamers and sub to them? Do you still do it?

[00:03:43.340] - J

Not really, no. These people make way more money then I do. Advertising, sponsorship, etc. and I only follow bigger Streamers.

[00:04:05.780] - MB

Do you know about other ways to financially contribute to streamers, then by donating or subbing?

[00:03:48.340] - J

Ah yeah, Merch of course. I used to do that loads too. Then there are those links, that they get commission of, so if you click it and buy something than the Streamer gets money. What are they called again?

[00:03:51.780] - MB

Affiliate links?

[00:03:52.340] - J

Yes. That's the name. I used them in the past, and might use them again. It doesn't really cost me anything extra. So it's an easy thing. Like Amazon Smile. I feel bad for shopping on

Amazon cause they are exploitative as a company, but they are cheaper and when I buy over smile I feel better. It's basically the social equivalent of green washing my purchases.

[00:04:01.780] - MB

You feel bad, for watching Streams and not paying for them?

[00:04:02.230] - J

If you put it that way, no. No I actually don't. But if I can do it, then why not?

[00:05:01.730] - MB

How do you watch the Streams? Is it your main activity or like a secondary activity?

[00:05:06.030] - J

You mean if its in the background while I do other stuff, or if I sit down and only watch that?

[00:05:08.660] - MB

Yes, exactly!

[00:05:10.570] - J

Good Question. Honestly that really depends. I mean. Sometimes I really sit down and then I watch Streams or YouTube. When I come home from work, and eat. Or I might leave on not so exciting matches while I do other stuff. I guess it really depends on my mood and what I have to do really. It's nothing I really thought about, so it is a bit more a background thing maybe? But I also like sit down and schedule it in. Maybe fifty fifty.

[00:05:40.080] - MB

Background activity versus active watching?

[00:06:01.060] – J

Yeah pretty much. That seems accurate. But you also asked about change, and what definitely changed is a the frequency, but also I don't engage anymore in the chats or the fan communities, as I used to. Like yes I might actually read live tweets on the side, or chat with a specific friend. But I stay like of the proper discussions.

[00:06:10.230] - MB

Do you have an explanation, or an idea why?

[00:06:11.060] – J

I guess I grew up? I am not sure, for one too many kids in the chat. They can be super annoying. I just really don't need that extra stress in my life. Like the spamming of emotes and stuff. Also I did develop quite stable relationships offline, partially from online friends, but also just from University, so I don't really feel I need that validation as I used to. I am no longer a fangirl, I'd say. I mean most people grow out of their teenage infatuation, and behaviours and I think that might have happened with me.

[00:06:49.260] – MB

Very interesting! I mean most girls also grow out their obsessive fan behavior towards stars, so that might be similar. Do you think that your interest in Streaming was more of person focused thing, or was it like more based on the content+

[00:07:01.120] – J

Probably both really. I came for the content and then stayed for the personalities and the community, and then I reverted back to the content.

[00:07:01.120] – MB

Different topic, what devices do you watch them on? So PC, or TV, or Phone?

[00:07:21.450] - J

TV and PC I'd say. On the Phone the screen is small, and then you have the gameplay and the person, and all that other stuff going on so I don't really like it. If it's something I am really interested in like a match and I cannot watch it at home, I would probably rather follow a live ticker. Because even when commuting I find it to be too small. So TV and PC mainly.

[00:07:38.120] - MB

Does it make a difference what you are watching, which platform you are on? Does it maybe have to do with whether it is in the foreground or the background?

[00:07:43.700] - J

Hm, I never thought about it. I guess on TV is a more background activity when I do other stuff on my PC it's a pretty conscious choice to then only do that.

[00:07:49.030] - MB

Just to get back to the contributing to Streamers, what about subbing on Twitch? Do you remember anything else?

[00:08:20.870] - J

Totally forgot about that, yeah I knew it was a thing. I would in the past just sub to get like cute emotes. I

[00:08:39.650] - MB

Did you pay for the Twitch subscriptions?

[00:08:47.300] - J

Yes, yes I did.

[00:08:50.100] - MB

Do you still, and would you now pay extra to subscribe to a streamer or creator?

[00:09:20.240] - J

No, I don't do that anymore. Got other stuff to spend my money on, although I totally have way more money then I did when I was younger.

[00:09:20.240]- MB

Would you if you got access to extra content? Or if the content in general would cost money?

[00:09:29.090] - J

Hahahha, like Just for Fans things?

[00:09:30.240]- MB

I mean, why not? Whatever floats your boat.

[00:09:31.020] - J

Are there cute guys on there?

[00:09:32.390] - MB

Not that I know off, but I also haven't looked so. I rather meant something like Patreon?

[00:09:34.240] – J

Poo. I don't know. I mean hypothetically yes, but I mean I don't know. I have not seen anything in a long time, where I was like absolutely yes, I must pay extra to get videos early, or do that.

I mean I used to, with donations and, and all of that stuff, but I have a feeling I grew out of that, I would say. I mean I am repeating myself, but my like complete media consumptions changed. That also comes to Music, and TV and things, like when you get older that changes. So. I mean I am not saying that I will never do it again, cause maybe one day I will find this super awesome youtuber, and then Ill be like awesome. Totally in. But yeah.

[00:10:15.150] - MB

Do you also watch female streamers?

[00:10:19.100] -J

Yeah, I do. I mean I mentioned that girl before, and like also others, like yeah definitely.

[00:11:01.040] - MB

Would you say that the gender split among all the people is even? Like do you watch pretty much the same amount of girls, and guys or?

[00:11:28.310] – J

Pretty even I would say. Like I watch both, of course matches there are mainly dudes there. I mean, let me rephrase that. There are only guys there.

[00:12:01.450] - MB

Has that always been the case like that for you?

[00:12:14.610] - J

No, I think especially when I was younger, I was watching way more guys. I also was totally into that, I am not like other girls thing. So yeah, a lot of the girl streamers where like super girly and really pink, and look at me I am super cute, kind of thing. And I was really not into

that. Maybe subconsciously I felt threatened. You and I had this discussion, about the whole I am not like other girls things, and the rejection of pink.

[00:12:32.580] - MB

Yeah, we did. And I think I was similar in that regard, I just swapped over to the girly side of things a lot earlier than you.

[00:12:30.090] - MB

Different topic. Do you also follow the Streamers you follow the Streamers you follow on other social media? Like you mentioned you follow live tickers, or will tweet about stuff? What about Insta?

[00:12:40.090] - J

Of course. I mean not as actively, as I used to, but I enjoy watching the Twitter banter, and like I also follow Team accounts, and see like behind the scene stuff, and the banter. I enjoy that.

[00:13:02.610] – MB

Do you feel you are closer to them then you are to normal stars? Like actors?

[00:13:38.900] - J

Not really. I mean now I no that you are not really closer to them. It gives you the impression that their life is more accessible, and that they are really closer to you and so on. But at the end of the day. They are also making millions, and are not really your friend. It takes a level of maturity and growing up to realize that. And maybe their accounts are not as carefully curated, and calculated, but like the teams have people that get payed for that. And they have managers just like every other sportsperson or entertainer, and yeah. They seem more relatable initially but by the end of the day they are not really.

[00:14:04.790] - MB

Then why do you follow them?

[00:14:14.000] - J

Purely entertainment. I mean on Insta I also follow like joke accounts, but its for entertainment. And I mean some of the player Instagram accounts look really bad, but they are super entertaining. So you just on stay watching.

[00:14:28.050] - MB

Do you also follow other celebrities on Social Media?

[00:14:42.270] - J

Yeah I do as well of course, big fan of those gossip magazines on the doctors desk as well. It's like cheesy romance novel, guilty pleasure. But its real.

[00:14:46.220] -J

Of course, then there is a whole moral comment to this if you really think about it. Voyeurism into other peoples life, but that would be a whole different discourse. There is a reason it is called guilty pleasure.

[00:15:10.520] - MB

Do you trust the advice of streamers?

[00:15:17.790] - J

In what way? Like life advice?

[00:15:19.790] - M

Sure, but no. That's not what I meant, I see how that question was not formulated right.

I mean advice regarding products, or gaming strategies.

[00:15:33.060] – J

I would say they are two different things. Regarding strategies 100 percent. Maybe not 100 percent. But close to it. It is one of the reasons I started watching streaming videos. How to do certain things, or like what is the best things to buy in game and all that kind of things. I mean they do that for a living, so especially pro players that stream they know it better than I do. I would call them experts. Of course they are streamers who are really entertaining to watch, but that aren't particularly great at the game. But then I watch them for entertainment. There are different purposes, for watching. Like if you watch a tutorial you watch it cause you want to learn something.

[00:16:01.790] - MB

Often. However when I watch makeup tutorials for example, it's not really about me wanting to know how to do the look but just for entertainment.

[00:16:15.630] - J

True. Yeah, and I do watch their product reviews without any purchasing intention too. Probably influenced by that when I am in the shop and I need something new, but yeah true.

[00:16:17.030] - MB

What about gaming streamers, do you trust their product recommendations?

[00:16:21.910] - J

Depends. Like if I think about it probably definitely if I wanna buy something new, and like I need it anyways then I might look at what the pros have. I mean, and then when they have one of those links. Like. I guess I do. I kind of feel embarrassed by it.

[00:16:43.800] - MB

There is absolutely no need to be embarrassed about that. Especially since you admitted earlier to have written stand in fanfiction of yourself before. So. We are good.

[00:16:48.810] - J

Let's never speak about that again.

[00:16:51.580] - MB

Of course. I am taking that secret to my grave, and into my thesis. What about streaming yourself?

[00:17:03.120] - J

Yeah, I did. But never seriously. It was more that kind of dreaming of wanting to become rich and famous.

[00:17:10.390] - MB

Can you elaborate?

[00:17:11.850] - J

Like. I think the best way to explain it is, with that dream as kid of becoming a star, like a singer or an actor, and have fans and money and the whole thing, you know? And I guess I realized along the way that I am not much a singer or an actor, so streaming is content I enjoy and yeah money and fans seem to be appealing. Like I was never properly bullied, but I was a social awkward, often lonely teen. So that idea of being awesome and better than everyone, like that I think is a great motivator, or desire.

[00:17:31.960] - MB

Did you ever? I mean stream?

[00:17:33.650] - J

No, no I didn't.

[00:17:40.520] - MB

Like you don't need to answer, if it's not comfortable. But why?

[00:18:01.520] - J

No, no it's fine. I can answer. I am not sure why. I guess I didn't want it enough, and then life just develops, and I guess being afraid of failing is one thing, and then being made fun off by everyone, if people would find it. You remember that girl from Jennys year? That was filming YouTube videos of reviewing stuff?

[00:18:08.710] - MB

The red head? Wait was her name again?

[00:18:11.730] - J

Sarah maybe? I mean doesn't really matter. But she got teased mercilessly when the others of her year found out. I mean those video were a tad cringe, but most teenagers just do really cringey stuff. But they are also monsters. They are so vicious, and I guess I was afraid. I knew that if people would find it, like I would have a hard time. And I didn't want to be bullied, so just being in forums and stuff, and playing online, like people don't know it's me.

[00:18.43.190] - MB

And later, I mean when you left High School behind.

[00:18:50.730] - J

Are you trying to get me depressed about my life? I mean why does someone not pursue their dreams?

The reality is only very little people actually make money with it and get successful. And now as a Teacher, can you imagine?

I also really enjoy the way my life is right now, and yeah. Like no specific reason. Maybe I should go out there and listen to some motivational books and become this great and mighty streamer!

[00:18:52.730] - MB

Yes, yes! And that is the perfect point to finish the interview! Thanks so much for taking the time.

#### 11.1.6 Jonas

[00:00:01.010]-

[00:00:30.730] - MB

Hi Jonas, thank you for taking the time. This interview is for a master thesis at CBS. I will take around 15 to 20 minutes, unless you got loads to tell me and, if it is okay with you I will record this interview.

I will of course publish nothing using your name without asking for your consent, and you are welcome at any time to say no.

[00:00:31.060] - Jonas

That is no problem.

[00:00:32.790] - MB

Could you please tell me something about yourself? How old you are, what you do for a living etc. ?

[00:00:34.170] - Jonas

Okay. My name is Jonas Pollman I'm 28 years old, I have an finish apprenticeship as a painter and currently work for an event management agency, in planning and executing the physical elements of the event. So for example, you want your venue to look like the inside of a villains headquarter, I am the one building it.

[00:00:51.250] - MB

Great. When it comes to media consumption, what do you watch?

[00:01:01.780] - Jonas

What do you mean? Do you mean TV or listening to music?

[00:01:07.710] – MB

Also yes, or Netflix, or Twitch. Anything of the sorts.

[00:01:09.550] - Jonas

Okay. I do different kind of things. I watch TV too, not that much unless its Football, I watch Netflix and also Amazon. I like series, although I am that kind of person that usually prefers the books to the movie or series.

[00:01:19.230] – MB

What about YouTube and Twitch?

[00:01:23.230] – Jonas

I do watch YouTube when I am on the toilet. Have my peace, take my phone with me and watch a couple of Videos, and then I do my business there.

[00:01:26.270] - MB

How many hours per day do you use on that?

[00:01:28.230] – Jonas

For Pooping? Maybe 25 minutes.

[00:01:28.230] – MB

I mean, also but overall. How much do you watch overall.

[00:01:31.230] – Jonas

All in all between 2 and 5 hours per day. It really depends on the day and what I am doing. On some days, I don't watch anything at all. Especially when I can't sleep I have the TV on.

[00:01:36.930] – MB

Do you also game?

[00:01:40.490] - Jonas

Not much anymore. I had a very unhealthy relationship to World of Warcraft. I was not sleeping and not leaving the house. You know me. I get very competitive. And I cannot stand to lose. So right now I only play some games here and there on my phone. I mainly watch others play now.

[00:01:48.550] - MB

You mentioned before that you also watch Twitch. Do you remember the first time you encountered live streaming?

[00:02:09.340] - Jonas

A while ago. I don't actually remember. I believe that I watched something on Youtube, and then I swapped over to watch them live. Must be several years now. I really don't remember.

[00:02:21.250] - MB

So you would say you discovered streaming by yourself?

[00:02:30.590] - Jonas

Yes. It was a natural progression, I think. Like I was unemployed for some time, and had a lot of time on my hands, and my gaming pc broke down, and I spend a lot of time on the internet, and somehow I ended up watching streams.

[00:02:49.110] - MB

Do you watch Streams mainly about the games you were interested in? Or how do you pick?

[00:03:08.930] - Jonas

Depends. Yes, I also watch stuff about games that I liked to play, like WoW. To see how the story progresses, or in the beginning to get tips how to get a certain item and so on. But I also sometimes watch stuff just for the personality.

[00:03:21.170] - MB

Anyone in particular, and can you explain a bit more about what you mean for personality?

[00:03:31.250] - Jonas

If someone is entertaining I will watch him, even if I am not that interested in the games that he plays. If he is funny, and keeps me entertained I will watch him.

[00:03:49.340] - MB

Anyone in particular? Like is there anyone specific?

[00:04:01.840] – Jonas

I like to watch a Streamer/YouTuber named Gronkh. He is really funny. He always Streams on Fridays at 18:00 and if I have the time, I will watch him.

[00:04:16.510] - MB

So you plan in time in particular to watch him?

[00:04:18.970] - Jonas

Yes. If I go out or something of course then I don't. But if I have no better plans, I will sit down with a beer and watch him.

[00:04:31.300] - MB

Do you also watch other streaming platforms then Twitch? Do you know of any?

[00:04:40.000] - Jonas

I do. There is mixer, and you can go live on Facebook, and YouTube. But I also don't watch anyone really regularly then Gronkh. Like on YouTube yes, but not on Twitch.

[00:04:43.010] - MB

So you would say, you only tune in on Twitch specifically for that show.

[00:04:51.310] - Jonas

Yes, that seems accurate. On YouTube I might watch a lot of random stuff, but on Twitch I tune in specifically for that.

[00:04:59.830] - MB

So you specifically sit down, and watch him on Twitch. It is not a background activity for you, where you do other stuff.

[00:05:10.130] - Jonas

I mean, I might warm up a Pizza or something. Or scroll on my phone. But usually I watch it to watch it. Like a movie. I focus fully on the thing.

[00:05:35.370] - MB

Do you sometimes have the TV on in the background when you cook or clean something? For like background noise?

[00:05:41.070] - Jonas

Radio, yes. TV no. I cant see the TV from the kitchen anyways, and it is a visual medium, so if you don't watch it, what is the point. It is different with Radio.

[00:05:56.690] - MB

You might listen to a podcast or an Audio book, while you are doing stuff in the house, or in the garage or something?

[00:06:02.690] - Jonas

Yes, when I drive I like to listen to audiobooks, podcasts not that much. Or so. But with like chores, or work it is usually Radio.

[00:06:06.060] - MB

So, you said you watch Streams and you watch Youtube videos as well. Does the context when you use each platform change depending on what you are doing?

[00:06:12.230] - Jonas

I think its more related to the content rather then the platform. For example watching the Stream I sit down and watch the long thing, and youtube are short videos. So yeah well maybe that is the same? I never thought about that in that way.

[00:06:39.930] - MB

That is not a problem at all. So what I gather is, that when you watch streams it is usually a primary activity, and rarely a secondary activity such as background noise.

[00:07:02.380] - Jonas

Yes, I think that is correct. I usually don't scroll for Streams, I go there cause I know he goes live at 6. And then I watch it.

[00:07:13.260] - MB

How do you watch Streaming? I mean what device do you use?

[00:07:21.450] - Jonas

My TV usually. I have my laptop connected and then I watch it. The screen is smaller on the Laptop, and then I can just chill on my couch and watch it.

[00:07:40.300] - MB

Do you ever watch it on your phone?

[00:07:21.450] - Jonas

Twitch? No. I don't use my phone to watch longer things, like it's a very quick and go kind of situation.

[00:08:05.030] - MB

Do you know what options are available to financially contribute to streamers?

[00:08:11.110] - Jonas

Not sure, I guess you can buy their merch. And they get money when you watch the adds. I am sorry, I never really payed attention to it.

[00:08:20.870] - MB

Do you know about donations and subscriptions, and how that works?

[00:08:27.240] - Jonas

No. I have admittedly heard of it, but I never looked into it more directly.

[00:08:32.470] - MB

Have you ever bought merch, or contributed to a streamer?

[00:08:36.050] - Jonas

No. Although. No that was a gift, someone gifted me a cup. So no, except watching adds I have not.

[00:09:09.100] - MB

Have you ever considered contributing?

[00:09:20.240] - Jonas

Not really. I watch the adds but no. They have way more money then I do. They get paid to use products etc. so yeah. No.

[00:09:29.090] – MB

What about Merch, you said you got some as a gift. Did you ever consider buying some?

[00:09:43.250] – Jonas

From a streamer, no. Wow Merch yes.

[00:10:13.910] - MB

Why?

[00:10:17.510] – Jonas

That is a good questions. Maybe cause I feel I am getting something out of it? Like why would I want people to know that I like to watch this guy? It is not like a band or something, where then other fans also see that you are a fan and things like that?

[00:10:21.410] - MB

It is not the same for Streamers?

[00:10:42.260] – Jonas

No. Being a total fan of a streamer is kind of embarrassing. It's like if you had the face of an actor you liked, that is kind of weird, don't you think?

[00:11:03.130] - MB

I mean I am not here to judge. So whatever floats your boat. Talking about not judging. Do you also watch female Streamers?

[00:11:21.100] - Jonas

No, not really. Like I am trying to think of any, but non come to mind.

[00:11:35.040] - MB

You know, it is for science and anonymous, I will use no information without letting you know prior.

[00:11:48.310] - Jonas

Don't worry I would not be ashamed, like if I watch someone that is hot, and for that reason I would admit it. But I really don't. Like I do follow some hot girls on Instagram, and it is not for their brilliant and deep messages.

[00:12:01.450] - MB

I mean, that is not what I was necessarily implying.

[00:12:14.610] - Jonas

I kind of sounded super misogynistic there. But what I meant is, I know loads of guys that watch a female streamer cause they think she is hot, like having boobs out and the whole deal. I get it. It's like soft porn, just you can pretend it's not and that you are watching something else. My rule on that, if you see more of the chick and her tits, then you see of the game, then probably the guys are not there for her game play.

[00:12:19.440] - MB

So you did watch some female Streamers?

[00:12:25.590] - Jonas

I mean yes. Yes I did, but never followed anyone. Also the comment sections there are right up creepy!

[00:12:32.580] - MB

Talking about creepy. Are you following streamers on other social media platforms?

[00:12:40.090] - Jonas

Not really, maybe on Instagram. But I don't have Twitter and barely use Facebook. Unless you count Youtube? I don't.

[00:13:02.610] - MB

With YouTube there can be made an argument either way. Do you follow other celebrities on Instagram.

[00:13:21.900] – Jonas

I follow some models, and some sports people, but also not all the time. I like what they put out.

[00:14:28.050] - MB

Do you feel that you are closer to, or know streamers better than a “traditional” celebrity, like a football player?

[00:14:42.270] - Jonas

No, not really. I mean they let you see a bit more into their live, and you kind of are their fan because of their onscreen personality. But I could imagine that it is acting too, and that the real person is very different. So, no not really.

[00:15:08.520] - MB

Do you trust the advice of Streamers, when it comes to products and to game moves?

[00:15:17.790] – Jonas

When it comes to gaming tips and tricks. I started watching because I was looking for ways to get a certain item. So yeah, if someone plays good I definitely watch their advice, even though

I am no longer actively playing. When it comes to products, I don't. I know they get payed for it. Like Daniel, he is not a streamer, but an influencer and he gets money to advertise the glasses. So even if he would not like it, he would still say how awesome they are. But they might get me interested in a product.

Like if I see something on Stream, I might get interested in getting it. But I would read more reviews, and check it out more, before I would go for it.

[00:16:21.030] - MB

Let's say someone that you watch always wears a headset on Stream, and says it's the best ever, would that influence your purchasing decision

[00:16:35.910] - Jonas

I wish I could say no, but probably if it is something, he consistently does I would get interested, but I would research it before hand and not just blindly trust him.

[00:17:07.920] - MB

Did you ever consider streaming yourself?

[00:18:14.580] - Jonas

Hm, no not really. Like talking the entire time in front of the camera, and like being in the foreground that's not my thing. For example I also would not want to be an actor, but rather a cameraman or a director, or something, I don't like to be the centre of attention that way.

[00:18:38.730] - MB

Do you ever interact with the streams when you watch them? Like type or interact with the others?

[00:18:43.520] - Jonas

No. Like its too fast and people annoy me. Also you know what it reminds me off? Teletexts. Like back in the day on the TV, there was teletext where people would text message in and they would be displayed. Or people that call into radio shows. Who does that kind of thing? Like they must be lonely or something in real life. Not my thing at all if I am honest.

[00:18:52.530] - MB

So you are not interested in the sense of community, or the community of a streamer?

[00:19:01.910] - Jonas

No, not really. Like I said, I watch it purely for entertainment. And I watch it similar as I would watch Netflix or TV, so I don't really care about others.

[00:19:10.190] - MB

I think that is all the questions I have for you today. Thank you so much for taking the time.

#### 11.1.7 Julia

[00:00:01.010] - MB

Hi Julia. Thanks for taking the time! This interview is for a master thesis at CBS about digital platforms in particular about streaming. This will take about 30 minutes, and I will record the interview if that is fine with you. Nothing will be published mentioning you by name without explicit permission from your side.

[00:00:38.063] - Julia

That is absolutely no problem for me. Record away-

[00:00:41.790] - MB

Can you tell me a little bit about yourself? How old you are, what you do, etc. ?

[00:00:43.170] – Julia

Would you like to hear anything specific? Also

[00:00:45.340] - MB

No, no anything is fine, really just a little introduction

[00:00:56.250] - J

Okay, so. I am Julia. I'm 30 years old, I am from Bielefeld in Germany. I am working now as Kindergarden teacher, and I like bunnies?

[00:00:58.250] - MB

When it comes to media consumption/TV watching. What do you mainly watch? Do you watch like TV , streaming, Youtube, or Netflix and how much per day do you think you're spending on it?

[00:01:03.780] - J

Uhh, sometimes some TV. But mainly youtube, and also some streams. Although I kind of prefer watching the streams like later on YouTube then live on Twitch. streaming. I also watch like live streams form dungeons and dads. They have that scheduled.

[00:01:08.550] - J

I mean I also Netflix and Amazon prime. Just some series. And im eaven paying for amazon myself. Haa.

[00:01:28.230] - J

But overall probably 3-4 hours a day. Not always like full active. But its on when I like cook or something.

[00:01:36.690] - MB

Do you also game yourself?

[00:01:39.590] - J

Yes, definitely. I mean some of it are like girly games, so like guys might be like that's no real gaming. But I don't like that notion, so yeah I game.

[00:01:42.800] - J

I have like an old gaming laptop I have those cooling things underneath, because that shits expensive. One day I have a good one though.

[00:01:48.250] - MB

Do you remember the first time you came across streaming, and what was that like? Maybe when? What game?

[00:02:10.740] - J

I mean. Maybe. No. No I actually don't really remember. I mean. Maybe like 5 years ago? No, probably longer. No I don't know.

[00:02:38.250] - MB

That is absolutely okay. No problem. It's kind of hard to remember when there is like no big event or something!

[00:02:40.540] – J

Yeah, that's the thing. And I like think also, that it's more like a. When I watch a Stream it's cause I kind of like that person's videos, and then I wanna watch them live, but lot of them are in the USA and then like the time zone doesn't fit, like streaming is bit like normal TV. You know? It's not like Netflix. You have to wait for it to be on and then you work and things, so yeah. Lots of the good ones are like in the USA. I don't watch the German ones not my thing, really.

.

[00:03:01.110] - MB

So you would say streaming is more like live TV and Youtube is more like Netflix?

[00:03:16.930] - J

Yes. Kind of. I think that describes it. Its on my demand. When I want it, I can also skip ahead when there is annoying stuff. Like its not compact, like its kind of messy.

[00:03:28.170] - J

Like yeah you often have the chat, on the side and stuff on Twitch, but damn that is like super fast and stupid, and youtube the comment sections like, you can also discuss things.

[00:03:38.450] - MB

So does the community aspect on Twitch, I mean the interaction with the Streamer does that no play a role for you?

[00:03:49.340] - J

Hm, yeah. Not really? I mean, if I am really into a personality I follow them on Twitter or something. Its just so many kids, and very often its like the comment section on Facebook kinda toxic. Or maybe I am just too old. Like I don't know.

[00:04:01.840] - MB

Ah stop it. You are not old!

[00:04:05.780] - J

Keep giving me compliments! One kid yesterday in the Kindergarden asked if my kids already have kids, and I kind off felt attacked!

[00:04:16.510] - MB

What? Like you were already grandma age?

[00:04:18.970] - J

Sometimes I feel like one.

[00:04:31.300] - MB

Talking about being a grandma. You watched to tube and streaming for a while. You said you didn't remember when you started, but do you remember maybe what kind of content you started with, or what got you there?

[00:04:39.000] - J

I think I mean defineltly started watching Youtube caus of the Sims. Don't really rember which version, but like how to install mods, and how to build certain things. So yeah, gaming stuff kind of brought me to the platform.

[00:04:43.010] - MB

Do you watch that kind of Streamers on Twitch sometimes?

[00:04:45.310] - J

Nah not really, like its not. Its kind of slow. Like prefer the like shortend videos on youtube. Don't like live build videos either. Like if I watch something

[00:04:57.830] - MB

Just to get back to what content you watch in and in what context do you watch streams.

[00:05:06.030] - J

I think its mainly DnD. Channels, its kind of like everything of it kind of matters. Oh and like an event, like Ti or something in Dota, when that kind of stuff is on. Like where the live element matters.

[00:05:23.660] - MB

One person I interviewed said they like to have it on in the background. Do you do that too?

[00:05:35.570] - J

Like Twitch? No. I have like normal TV on in the background.

[00:05:59.080] - MB

Do you watch it when

[00:06:06.060] – I mean you touched upon this a bit earlier. But would you say watching a stream is primary stand alone activity, or is more like a secondary on the side background activity.

[00:06:34.230] - J

That really depends. On the content really. Like an event then it's like a full focus except maybe eating on the side thing, and so it with like critical role. But like, I have more TV on randomly in the background, and like TV acant do Internet things. Maybe it would be different if it could do both. I don't know.

[00:06:49.260] - MB

You already mentioned it a bit. But what devices do you use to watch Twitch or other streaming services, and why?

[00:07:21.450] - J

Mainly my laptop. I also have it on my phone, but like I usually don't. It's a small screen and I can also watch on my laptop, like. Yeah and my TV cant

[00:07:38.120] - MB

Maybe you could watch it on your phone like during the commute or when you travel?

[00:07:43.700] - J

I have like 10 min walking to work, and a really shitty data plan, so yeah I need the data for something else. You know how it is in Germany. Like it's still neuland when it comes to Internet.

[00:07:49.030] - MB

Now getting back to Streamers, or maybe more wide content creators in general. Do you now how to financially contribute, or donate or?

[00:08:12.110] - J

I mean yeah, there is that patreon thing, and I would assume they get money out of there merch, and affiliate links.

[00:08:20.870] - J

Oh yeah, and you can of course also sub on Twitch. Like the streamer gets some money from it. I mean how much I don't know if they get like everything or... but yeah.

[00:08:32.470] - MB

Have you ever donated, or bought something?

[00:08:36.050] - J

To be honest? Most of my life I was waaaaay to broke for that. I mean if I wanted to buy something anyways, and I couldn't get it on a discount I would get maybe over an affiliate link, but.

[00:08:39.650] - MB

You mentioned being a subscriber on Twitch, did you ever pay for that?

[00:08:47.300] - J

I mean define pay. I have amazon prime, and that includes like one subscription per month, so I used that for critical role. I watch their stuff anyways, it doesn't cost me extra, so I subscribed.

[00:08:50.100] - MB

Sorry, one moment, I got a bit lost here

[00:09:10.300]- MB

Okay, would you ever pay extra to subscribe to a streamer or creator?

[00:09:20.240] - J

To be honest? No. I mean, feels kind of bad because I like consume their content but also I think they have more money then me, why would I pay them, without directly getting something back?

[00:09:20.240]- MB

We are not here for judging. I mean I am not. What do you mean?

[00:09:29.090] - J

If you look at a lot of the bigger creators, and admittedly that is what I watch most, with a lot of subscribers. They earn a lot of money. Advertising money. Like they go on nice holidays, and like I don't have that much money.

[00:09:34.240] - J

That's interesting. Is that different to normal media? And lets call it "traditional" content creation?

[00:09:43.250] - J

Like in a way yes. Like if I buy a concert ticket or a ticket to a show, like I go there and they perform there and it costs like money, and is in person. A singer or an actor would never be like, hey give me money to support me creating. They make the money with that particular even, or the add money, and they don't ask people to donate money. I mean its not a charity, that they are running it's a business. And Like, I stopped watching some youtubers cause like they were like donate to me on patron. I mean, and then the "benefits" you get as an patron. – one 5 minute skype call. That would be really weirdly awkward, don't you think?

[00:10:13.910] - MB

I mean, it is not really about what I think, but I kind of agree. You mentioned earlier that you have used affiliate links?

[00:10:17.510] - J

Yeah, have done it before. Like if it's a product I am already intested in, and then I remberd they had an affiliate link, then I can use it, cause it does not cost me extra, and I mean I am consuming the content.

[00:10:30.410] - MB

What about Merch? Did you ever consider that?

[00:10:42.260] - J

Hm, not from a purely youtuber. I like follow rude powl dragrace, and one of the queens also has a youtube channel. I bought some merch from them, cause for one I really think he is cool, but also the hoodie was really cool, so yeah.

[00:11:15.150] - MB

Do you also watch female streamers?

[00:11:19.100] -J

Not really streamers, I mean on critical role it is a cast, that also includes girls. And I also watch some youtubers that are female. Pretty sure they also stream.

[00:11:35.040] - MB

Do you think its even, or more like skewed to one gender, and if yes, why?

[00:11:48.310] – J

Now that I think about it, I think its more girls overall. Maybe cause I watch a lot of simmers. I mean there is def. one guy. But its mainly girls.

[00:12:01.450] - MB

Is that by choice, you think. Or more of an accident?

[00:12:14.610] - J

I think it has purely to do with the game and the content, that there are more ladies in it. But I don't know. I guess one would had to look at how many of each there are.

[00:12:32.580] - MB

You also mentioned that before, but you said you prefer following them on other socials to interact? Correct me if I am wrong.

[00:12:40.090] - J

No, no you are right. Like Twitch chat is so fast, there is so much bullshit, so I prefer like discord or something, with people I already know. I mean I am not beyond arguing with strangers in the comment section on the internet, but yeah I can like think my answer through and

also tumblr, there is a lot of stupid stuff but its like more in-depth, and I like that better. Its nicer. Its more calm, like of course there are dickheads everywhere.

[00:13:02.610] – MB

And with the creator or Streamer directly

[00:13:38.900] - J

Some of them are on Tumblr, but mainly I guess I would like stalk their Instagram or tweet at them. Or something. But I do that a lot less then I used to.

[00:13:44.180] – MB

What do you mean? Can you elaborate

[00:13:55.290] – J

I mean I don't know, like when I was younger I was really fangirling, and I tweeted at that one drag queen and they responded, and I was like soooo hyped and happy, but like I guess you grow out of it you know?

Like yeah, I don't know how to describe it. I guess like teenage girls really being into bands, like being standers like proper ones. So that gets over when you are older.

[00:14:04.790] - MB

Do you also follow other celebrities? Like models or actors, or bands.

[00:14:14.000] - J

Yeah definitely. Just to like see stuff. I don't know

[00:14:28.050] - MB

Do you feel you have a closer connection to streamers because of the social media then to "normal" stars.

[00:14:42.270] - J

Hm, not really.

[00:14:46.220] -J

I mean they are as much like unattainable, unless you pay a lot of money, and then its like with a hooker. Like you pay them money to be nice to you and that's kind of emberassing?

[00:15:10.520] - MB

Do you trust the advice of streamers? When it comes to products or strategies? Or how twos?

[00:15:17.790] - J

Kind off. Yes and no. I know they get payed to promote stuff, but I can also see what they use, and I mean probably it does influence me like. That one dice set they used, I really wanted to have it. But yes tutorials, I totally trust the advice there. Have exchange a dishwasher part thanks to a youtube tutorial so yes. Definetly.

[00:15:33.060] - J

Also, I really like unboxing videos. And I want to have those things, and like hauls. Its something really weird, watching others consumer, but its kind of mindless soothing stuff in a way. Its background nosie, even when I watch it. And probably something of that sticks,

[00:15:51.630] - J

People always say they are not influenced by that kind of stuff. But I think everyone is. So consciously maybe no, but subconsciously probably yes.

[00:16:02.030] - MB

What about techreviewers? Do you trust them?

[00:16:35.910] - J

Not, if they have an affiliate link to that product. Cause then they are bought.

[00:16:43.800] - MB

Different question, have you ever considered streaming yourself?

[00:16:48.810] - J

Of course.

[00:17:14.580] - MB

You say that with a lot of convictions. Why

[00:17:22.120] - J

I am young enough that its kind of a dream job. Doing something you love and getting payed for it. But then there is my voice, I mean who would want to listen to that and then its also insecure and a lot of work, and overall I mean maybe I should .

[00:17:36.390] - MB

I would watch you.

[00:17:38.850] - J

Thanks, but you have to say that!

[00:17:45.960] - MB

Does financial motivation play a role in considering streaming.

[00:17:58.650] - J

Yeah it kind off does. It looks

[00:18:05.520] - J

Like a lot of work, like the technical equipment you need. Then cutting, holding to a schedule, im pretty sure its not as easy as it seems.

[00:18:34.710] - MB

What about company, or the social aspects of streaming? Like interacting with people?

[00:18:38.730] - J

I mean, looking honestly having the idea of having loving fans is interesting too many I would assume. Iman I would love some, but also I am not alone like, I play with friends, and I do play table tops with friends. Like I don't think I really would do it for that.

And assuming for yourself I mean you said of course not being so alone and and you guys are good it and I haven't thus the monetary component play a role just even just slightly in your head like I totally think does cool.

[00:19.01.190] - MB

Thanks so much for your time! That is all I needed from you today!

#### 11.1.8 Melissa

[00:00:01.010] - MB

Hi Melissa. Thanks for taking the time.

[00:00:03.460] - MB

And this is an interview for a massive DC thesis at CBS about digital platforms and streaming in particular. It will take around 30 minutes and I will record it that is okay with you..

[00:00:20.730] - MB

I will publish nothing with your name on it without asking you for permission before. And you are still welcome to say no.

[00:00:28.060] - Melissa

No that's fine. OK.

[00:00:30.790] - MB

Can you tell me a little bit about yourself what you do how old you are.

[00:00:36.170] - Melissa

Anything. Yeah. My name's Melissa. I'm twenty nine. I am student assistant for Sennheiser gaming in product management. And I also study at CBS. Bachelor in business administration and sociology.

[00:00:56.250] - MB

Do you watch like TV , streaming, Youtube, or Netflix and how much per day do you think you're spending on it

[00:01:03.780] - Melissa

I do watch I'm streaming like, some gaming streaming.

[00:01:08.550] - Melissa

I also watch a lot of YouTube and a little bit like Netflix but not like maybe regular TV so this mostly be maybe Facebook videos YouTube and Twitch and how much time per day do you think you spend on it or conscious say per day or per week.

[00:01:25.230] - Melissa

Like probably at least a couple hours a day watching some form of what I would call it all TV but you get some form of that. Yeah.

[00:01:36.270] - MB

Do you also game or do you engage with that kind of media.

[00:01:40.490] - Melissa

Yeah. And I do gaming too.

[00:01:43.890] - Melissa

Lately it's mostly been on my mobile phone and mobile gaming.

[00:01:49.800] - Melissa

But otherwise I would be on P.C. gaming.

[00:01:59.550] - MB

Do you recall the first time you encountered live streaming and what was that like?

[00:02:10.740] - Melissa

I feel like it was it couldn't have been that long ago that I actually started watching it maybe like a year ago. It was a wow streamer Asmongold. And he's the one who I still watch the most. Even if I'm not playing it I just think he's funny but I don't really remember exactly when it was I think it was like a year ago maybe. When I go say three years ago now I'm going to take that back three years ago the same guy.

[00:02:43.250] - MB

Do you remember how you how you encountered him.

[00:02:47.590] - Melissa

Yeah my husband was watching it and then I was like What are you watching. And I watched it and I thought he was funny and I wasn't even playing while at the time but then I started playing it and that gay guy also became more funny.

[00:03:02.110] - MB

Do you think you would have discovered it on yourself or was the prompting by your husband or seeing your husband watch it. That kind of got you into live streaming.

[00:03:16.930] - Melissa

I don't think I want to come across that one myself because I honestly thought why would I watch this. So a lot of times or when he was watching that kind of stuff and then sometimes like if I just caught my attention and then I would I got into it.

[00:03:30.170] - Melissa

I mean I guess I hadn't really thought about it before. But they are good for like helping you figure out stuff in a game or you know.

[00:03:40.250] - MB

So would you say that start watching streaming coincided or when you were starting to game.

[00:03:49.340] - Melissa

No well I'm game for a long time before and then I had just stopped for a little bit and I think I guess they both came at the same time when I got back into it. So I guess yeah in that we could say yeah.

[00:04:01.840] - MB

So I want to ask you a couple more questions about Backstrom.

[00:04:05.780] - MB

You mentioned that Azmondgold

[00:04:16.510] - MB

Is that the only one you watch?

[00:04:18.970] - Melissa

I dont remember their names but I also watch a guy who does Hearthstone sometimes or auto chess which is the mobile game playing a lot on watch plop.

[00:04:31.300] - MB

On what platform do you watch?

[00:04:34.000] - Melissa

They're all on Twitch all on twitch. And do you watch any live streaming on any other platforms like Have you ever looked at mics or.

[00:04:43.010] - Melissa

No I've only ever maybe seen like this one YouTube where I watch has also Instagram and sometimes he does like a live Instagram things.

[00:04:51.310] - Melissa

I don't always watch them OK.

[00:04:57.830] - MB

Just to get back tho whhat content you watch in and in what context do you watch streams.

[00:05:06.030] - MB

So is it like something we're like OK I'm gonna sit down now because I know as one goal Yeah. Is that right. And do you go in like oh I'm gonna watch his stream now because he's gonna be alive from like six to four.

[00:05:20.660] - Melissa

But I said that I you like doing that or is it more like when you're eating or bored or like you want to go to sleep or it's mostly when kind of when I'm bored or when I'm gaming on my phone.

[00:05:35.370] - Melissa

And then I and I'm weird now I like to have the TV on in the background so I'll have it on at the same time for like just to be watching it in between whatever is happening on the game.

[00:05:49.080] - MB

Do you watch more when you're like alone at home or when there are other people.

[00:05:56.690] - Melissa

I think it's the same. I'm not I'm not really home alone very much like a guest. Mostly when also my husband is home.

[00:06:02.690]

Yeah. Mm hmm.

[00:06:06.060] - MB

And OK so that maybe answered a little bit but I'm just gonna ask that question again does the context change with regard to content streaming platform like do you watch a specific thing at a specific time let's say oh if I have lunch by myself or with my husband I would like to watch Peter and then I like to the evening when I play this watch this or does that not like

[00:06:34.230] - Melissa

Well I guess yeah like it is that if I'm playing auto chest and we'll have the almost chest stream in the background.

[00:06:41.930] - Melissa

But because like asmongold he's a little more funny and he talks more and makes more jokes and I might watch him while eating or something so I might pay more attention to him. So that does change that. Like I would really watch out and just sit there and watch it.

[00:07:00.380] - MB

OK so you watch streaming both as a primary activity so you watch a stream actively and also as a background noise

[00:07:08.360] - Melissa

.Yeah so. Or mix Yeah.

[00:07:13.260] - MB

What do you use to watch streaming on do you do it like on a TV or in a computer or on your phone or mostly on the computer or TV.

[00:07:21.450] - Melissa

I think it's like half and half depending on where both watching it or if like sometimes if he's playing dota match while watching something then I'll sit in the computer chair and watch it on the other screen.

[00:07:38.120] - Melissa

And so when you like play on your phone then you would watch it on the TV.

[00:07:43.700] - Melissa

Yeah I guess. Yeah. And now.

[00:07:48.300] - MB

And I'm just I mean I know it but just don't record your computer that you play on and you TV use in the same room. Yeah. Yeah.

[00:08:05.030] - MB

Do you know what options are available to like financially contribute to strip mice on the platforms that you watch.

[00:08:12.110] - Melissa

I only have ever heard of something called Patreon. It's the only one I've ever heard. I've never actually used it before. I don't know if there's something else.

[00:08:20.870] - MB

Do you know about like donations and subscriptions on on twitch and how that works.

[00:08:27.240] - Melissa

No I actually don't know how it works. I've heard them say things before but I don't really get it. Yeah.

[00:08:32.470] - MB

Have you ever felt eventually contributed into a streamer.

[00:08:36.050] - Melissa

No. No.

[00:08:39.650] - MB

I'm also not over affiliate links or buying merch. Have you ever bought merch or something of an affiliate link.

[00:08:47.300] - Melissa

No I haven't. There was only one thing I did but it didn't go directly to them I think it was like it was a really long time ago someone was streaming and like them playing videos for 24 hours for Mario and then they donated the money to a children's hospital to get them video games in the hospitals. I think I donated money. I know I do we donate money then.

[00:09:11.090] - MB

So so it was a charity.

[00:09:13.440] - Melissa

Yeah.

[00:09:16.100] - MB

Have you ever considered contributing to a streamer.

[00:09:20.240] - Melissa

No I don't think so.

[00:09:29.090] - Melissa

I guess some of the ones I had watched or one guy in particular where he has like his whole stream is unboxing gifts and things and I just thought what is my five dollars going to help him.

[00:09:43.250] - Melissa

I think I would make more use of him giving me than me giving it to him and about like asthma can go as we I guess actually we had thought about I had thought about if he had like some kind of merchandise or something I actually would probably buy something of that or to him because I like him a lot. I guess also he guess maybe why not would be like if I don't really feel that connected to them I guess or if I feel like I don't like them I might care about them much.

[00:10:13.910] - MB

So it has to do with how much you like that person.

[00:10:17.510] - Melissa

Yeah I think if even if they were helpful and auto chests or something and I felt they were annoying I don't think I would want to give them any better but I just feel like I'd really like you.

[00:10:30.410] - MB

And I mean I brought up merch as a way of supporting a streamer. Have you considered it that way or like why. Because you said you would consider buying march. Why is that.

[00:10:42.260] - Melissa

Yeah there was all this my husband likes this poker YouTube guy and he does dream sometimes too and he has merch and I was going to buy something for him from that guy because I know he likes him a lot. But it was a I don't think it's like it helps that streamer but then also like you kind of get something in return. It's not just like giving.

[00:11:03.130] - Melissa

Yeah that sounds weird but I don't wanna just give it just a thought. It's perfectly fine for something in return.

[00:11:15.150] - MB

Do you also watch female streamers.

[00:11:19.100] - Melissa

No. I say I don't. I think about it I think the only ones I watch would be YouTube. OK. So now I haven't had someone doing a livestream who was a female that I watched.

[00:11:35.040] - MB

Is there a reason for that like a specific one did you not come across one or?

[00:11:48.310] - Melissa

I think I have not maybe come across one I actually I honestly don't like super actively look for them I guess they'll they're streaming I would watch would be like an. O.G. dota guys.

[00:12:01.450] - Melissa

It's like I also know them and I think I think there's obviously more males who are doing the gaming type of tumors and even the YouTube where they watch they're not gaming the groups OK.

[00:12:14.610] - MB

Do you watch them on other streaming platforms? Like not per say in gaming but female creators?

[00:12:19.440] - Melissa

Yeah they're not gaming. Just haven't come across any before.

[00:12:25.590] - Melissa

OK. Also didn't look for them. No. Fair enough.

[00:12:32.580] - MB

And do you fellows. You mentioned a little bit before but just to. Do you follow streamers on other social media platforms.

[00:12:40.090] - Melissa

Instagram I have them sometimes on Twitter but I don't really use it just sometimes at Twitter Instagram and some of them on Facebook. Do you like why do you follow streamers on other social platforms. Like.

[00:13:02.610] - Melissa

The ones who I follow was like. Well I mostly like oh gee I think you just want to know what they're doing or if they want something or things like that. And also sometimes I just like them I to know what they're doing sometimes I think it's only one one other guy who I really have on everything they feel connected to them in a way that are like trying to keep up with like you that you're interested in their lives apart from streaming or Yeah I think I just like.

[00:13:38.900] - Melissa

I just like like being connected a bit I guess like you say.

[00:13:44.180] - MB

Do you follow any like non streaming celebrities on on social media platforms like really famous people I guess. No I don't think any.

[00:13:55.290] - Melissa

OK I don't know I really I can't I can't even think of anyone right.

[00:14:04.790] - MB

But if you don't you don't. I don't either. I think so. No I follow Chriss Teigan on Twitter but yeah I have a couple of those....

[00:14:14.000] - Melissa

I'm sure you may have some people like that. Definitely. I have Bernie Sanders. Yeah. But you've done before.

[00:14:28.050] - MB

You feel that because they stream and they've got that access of a social media that you have a closer connection to them than to say that they're more accessible in a way than I don't know any football star.

[00:14:42.270] - Melissa

I think so also because.

[00:14:46.220] - Melissa

Of the things that they post and also like a who's like some red bull movie of them I watch there's nothing like it kind of got into some drama and I was like well like they're drama.

[00:14:57.780] - Melissa

And then I started following them on everything after that because I don't know I like being interested in their business generally.

[00:15:08.520] - MB

Do you trust the advice of streamers when it comes to I mean you mentioned that for gaming like just how to play and how to.

[00:15:17.790] - Melissa

Yeah I think most of the time I do or at least like try it especially if I'm watching it for advice. I definitely don't know what I'm doing myself. So I figured I'll try what this person is trying and so you do also actively look.

[00:15:33.060] - MB

For advice. Yeah yeah. When it comes to advice would you ever consider purchasing advice from them like you said you look at that unboxing dude right. Yeah but does he not review stuff. Does he just um box like.

[00:15:51.630] - Melissa

I think mostly what I've seen him I don't actively watch him he's Oh yeah in the background Yeah. You know in Casper's watching it I'm like Why are you watching this guy. He annoys

me. He's like unboxing gifts from his fans. That's where that's where that guy I was like why are people sending you things aren't donating you ten thousand dollars.

[00:16:11.820] - Melissa

No don't eat it too. No I don't think he might review stuff. I'm nervous now do it.

[00:16:21.030] - MB

Have you ever watched anybody like that. Of course we're in the headset business yeah. You and I both. But let's say we weren't right and that guy's like oh this is the best headset ever and he wears it all the time on stream more.

[00:16:35.910] - Melissa

It's a hoodie that he always wears on stream where it's a microphone or a gaming setup that he promotes. So something in his area of expertise.

[00:16:43.800] - MB

Do you think that would move your purchasing decision

[00:16:48.810] - Melissa

. Yeah I think it would.

[00:16:50.100] - Melissa

I think if one of them I really liked was saying that something is really really good. I would I would want it if I was looking for every type of product it is. I feel like maybe I will actually try that one because he's gaming all the time and he's got this many views.

[00:17:05.670] - Melissa

He must be good and it must be good.

[00:17:07.920] - MB

I would assume Yeah. Did you ever consider streaming yourself.

[00:17:14.580] - Melissa

Yes I literally said it last night because mean it would be hilarious.

[00:17:22.120] - Melissa

Oh well then there's this like new mood is to be super boring new mode on auto. Just stupid mobile game playing and then it's got dual mode. So me and Casper played together and we just destroy everyone on it.

[00:17:36.390] - Melissa

It's actually too easy. You know it's like when we get no one.

[00:17:38.850] - Melissa

We have to stream and tell them our secrets but only when we're number one. So.

[00:17:45.960] - MB

So like so since you do consider it now some more questions for you streaming why would you like to stream.

[00:17:58.650] - Melissa

Like what does that connect for you with. Like. Sometimes I feel like.

[00:18:05.520] - Melissa

Maybe I feel less alone when I'm gaining by myself again. I mean it sounds weird but you know because they can interact with you on the side like with the chat. That could be cool like watching the other guys when they're playing and they're like looking at the comments and like it seems like a almost a way to be social without having to actually be social but then it's also really fun. And still playing my game I also like the idea that someone would be interested in what I'm doing.

[00:18:34.710]

And when it comes to social do you feel that you get some social.

[00:18:38.730] - MB

Do you ever interact with the streams like when you watch them do you like are you in the chat.

[00:18:43.520] - Melissa

Sometimes sometimes not that much but sometimes I get really excited or I want them to answer my question yes so I will.

[00:18:52.530] - MB

So do you feel that there is a sense of community and the follower of that streamers do you interact with other fans of a streamer.

[00:19:01.910] - Melissa

I'm normally don't interact with the other people in there. Sometimes I feel like also it gets really like me me. Yeah. You know like in the chats and I don't really get all those all the time.

[00:19:13.250] - Melissa

All from today I will good. So I'm just like I just really want this streamer to answer my question.

[00:19:20.580] - MB

Yeah okay.

[00:19:21.570] - MB

And assuming for yourself I mean you said of course not being so alone and and you guys are good it and I haven't thus the monetary component play a role just even just slightly in your head like I totally think does cool.

[00:19:35.550] - Melissa

And if someone if people would be interested enough in my life to where I could make money off of that I would totally want to do that.

[00:19:41.510] - Melissa

Okay. So so that does does play a role.

[00:19:44.190] - MB

Yeah I think that's everything for today but I for you Thank you so much for your time. You will probably have some follow up questions maybe.

### 11.1.9 NapyDaWise

00:00 [FH]: Hi Napy, if today still works for you, it would be great to ask you some questions

00:00 [NDW]: sure!

00:00 [FH]: Excellent thanks, would now be good?

00:00 [NDW]: yup

00:02 [FH]: Perfect. I'll type some questions, if it gets too cumbersome to answer via typing, let me know and I'd be up for a voice chat and see if

we can understand each others accents :p So, first, can you remember when you started getting in to gaming?

00:04 [NDW]: sure no worries

00:05 [NDW]: My first handheld was a gameboy color with Pokemon Red, and my first console was a N64 with Star Wars Racer

00:06 [NDW]: so 1999

00:06 [FH]: Ah, quite a while ago then! When did you get into PC gaming?

00:08 [NDW]: My steam account says 2007, so probably 2006 at my local cyber cafe !

00:09 [NDW]: during middle school

00:10 [FH]: Yeah, I remember going to cyber cafe's, that was good fun! Can you recall what games you played most back then?

00:10 [NDW]: Pretty sure I started with a mod for warcraft 3 called Hero Line Wars

00:10 [NDW]: this was the rage back then at my school

00:11 [NDW]: I remember not caring that much for the unmodded game, too :v Might be a reason why i'm so much into modding and community stuff

00:13 [FH]: Cool, I think I played that in WC3 as well together with a lot of different TD's and a bit of Dota, so many good mods from that game. Did you do any modding yourself bakc then, or did you first start with the TF2 stuff?.

00:14 [NDW]: While it wasn't "modding" per se, I first started with a free 3D chatroom called VR4All

00:15 [NDW]: it was a bit like second life I think, were people would just chill and chat while building houses

00:15 [NDW]: You had a terrain attributed to you where you could place basic shapes like cubes, spheres, etc, and use a bank of texture to build stuff

00:16 [NDW]: looks like it doesn't exist anymore

00:17 [NDW]: <http://nony1991.free.fr/vr4all>

00:17 [NDW]: that's the only screenshot i could find :v

00:17 [NDW]: but yeah, it was quite fun to just build stuff in a virtual environment

00:18 [NDW]: I won best house at some point

00:18 [NDW]: made a house with a river flowing, it was great

00:18 [NDW]: After that came TF2

00:19 [FH]: Nice! Can you remember if it was the developers that made the house contest or parts of the community?

00:20 [NDW]: It was a weekly contest held by the admins

00:21 [NDW]: ha! webarchive has a snapshot of the site

00:22 [NDW]:  
<https://web.archive.org/web/20070519090316/http://www.vr4all.net/>

00:22 [NDW]: damn the memories

00:23 [FH]: Cool, actually does look a lot like Second Life!

00:23 [NDW]: I think it was a quebecois website

00:24 [NDW]: Second life, but with a tight community and mostly no drama.

00:24 [NDW]: I remember everyone being friendly

00:26 [FH]: Ah, that is nice, games and online communities sometimes have a tendency to be toxic.

00:26 [NDW]: I think back in the day there wasn't that many users, so you just knew everybody

00:27 [NDW]: like in a village where you know the names of all your neighbour, but in a city you won't know who's living over you

00:27 [NDW]: It was like that with TF2, as the modding scene was concentrated on a single forum, Facepunch

00:28 [FH]: Yeah, makes sense, when you know people you tend to treat them with respect. With regards to TF2, can you remember how you got into playing that game?

00:29 [NDW]: The Orange Box was the first PC game I owned

00:29 [NDW]: it contained Half Life 2, with ep 1 and ep2, counterstrike source and TF2

00:30 [NDW]: I don't remember why I bought it, probably word of mouth from my friends

00:30 [NDW]: but I was instantly hooked

00:32 [FH]: Yup, I remember it as quite addictive! I read your interview on Kritzkast and it mentions Polycount, how did you come across that site?

00:32 [NDW]: Ah !.

00:32 [NDW]: So, I was already making items at that time, for fun

00:33 [NDW]: but valve held a contest with Polycount, and the winner would have his items added to the game

00:33 [NDW]: So everyone in the TF2 modding community started to make items

00:34 [NDW]: So I thought I could make some cool stuff and make my ideas a reality

00:34 [NDW]: plot twist, I was kinda shit at it :p

00:35 [NDW]: It was baby's first blender models

00:35 [FH]: Haha, seems like you got really good at it later though!

00:35 [NDW]: Well if you keep trying you'll end up learning something

00:36 [NDW]: my theory was, make the next item better than the last

00:36 [NDW]: Doesn't have to be better on all points, but each items made should bring me something personnaly

00:37 [NDW]: on an item, i learnt to optimise, on another one, to improve the textures, etc etc

00:37 [NDW]: if my item has something that the previous didn't have, i can switch to the next one

00:37 [FH]: Seems like a good way of learning! So you made items for TF2 before the polycount contest then, can you remember when you started and what got you into it?

00:38 [FH]: Well re reading my interview it looks like i might misremember things

00:39 [FH]: So i think the timeline was I never finished any items before the contest, but wanted to participate anyway

00:39 [NDW]: No worries

00:39 [FH]: and actually finished something a bit after the end

00:39 [FH]: Ah, yes that is what the article says.

00:40 [FH]: sounds about right

00:40 [NDW]: So yeah, first item finished, but contest failed

00:40 [NDW]: but there had to be a next one

00:40 [NDW]: And it was something i quite enjoyed making

00:40 [NDW]: so I kept at it

00:42 [FH]: And that certainly paid off, so I believe the first item you had added was "Dead Little Buddy"?

00:42 [NDW]: Yep

00:42 [NDW]: For this, i remember learning about Jigglebones

00:43 [NDW]: basically telling the game to move parts of the item dynamically

00:43 [NDW]: based on how the player moves

00:43 [NDW]: Took a long time to make it look like it floats, but I think it worked out nicely in the end

00:44 [NDW]: It was part of the halloween update of 2012

00:45 [NDW]: I discovered it when I saw the update page, like everybody else. Valve never communicated a lot

00:46 [FH]: Haha, must have been a bit of surprise! Speaking of Valve, how did they engage with the community back then and what kind of support did they offer?

00:48 [NDW]: For TF2, they didn't talk much to individuals back then

00:48 [NDW]: but they did release some amazing tools

00:48 [NDW]: The Steam Workshop was first tested with TF2

00:49 [NDW]: I think that was a gamechanger for modders

00:50 [NDW]: Even outside of TF2, not having to download a dodgy .exe from a random website that claimed to be a cool mod is a massive benefit for the community

00:51 [NDW]: And since TF2 modding became more well known more people wanted to give it a go, and hopefully get paid for it

00:52 [NDW]: So I wrote a steam guide on how to upload items for TF2, because people kept asking that question

00:52 [NDW]: I also wrote a basic texturing tutorial

00:53 [NDW]: I thought, "I need to understand this new system if I want to have an item accepted one day. Might as well take the time to write a guide about it"

00:53 [NDW]:  
<https://steamcommunity.com/sharedfiles/filedetails/?id=148063940>  
Steam Community :: Guide :: TF2 Workshop Import Tools : Gold Stars  
How to properly use the new Import tools to improve your chances to get a item ingame....

00:55 [NDW]: Then you had all the community made tools that were quite difficult to understand, so, along with another contributor, we wrote another guide on how to extract stuff from the game to serve as a reference

00:55 [NDW]:  
<https://steamcommunity.com/sharedfiles/filedetails/?id=149358531>  
Steam Community :: Guide :: How to extract files from TF2 In this guide I will explain how you can extract texture and model files from Team Fortress 2 vpk's. This will allow you to get to the music, voice lines, observe textures or getting those models and

00:56 [NDW]: I think in the end, Valve trusts its community to do a better job explaining their systems than they would do by themselves

00:56 [NDW]: Since they clearly listened, but didn't engage a lot

00:58 [FH]: Yeah, they definitely benefit a lot from the work of you and all the other contributors. Given your experience what do you think is the best way for a developers to create a good environment and community for user generated content?

01:01 [NDW]: Support the community, and don't force stuff on it

01:01 [NDW]: That means don't go after fan games and mods, theses are the things that keeps your game, your universe alive

01:02 [NDW]: Dota 2 was created because Valve saw a modder had potential, where blizzard didn't

01:02 [NDW]: and now it's one of the most profitable game on the planet

01:03 [NDW]: TF2 is still alive even though it doesn't receive any updates anymore because of it's community servers

01:04 [NDW]: The old team of modders are even working on a really big server sided mod that would allow them to add new weapons and cosmetics, keeping the game alive after it's death

01:04 [NDW]: TF2 is 13 years old and still profitable, that's saying something

01:05 [NDW]: Embrace the community

01:06 [NDW]: 8 years later I still get royalties from my items, I can't even begin to imagine how much Valve is making :p

01:07 [FH]: Yeah, it is amazing how much they can make from Virtual Items! They are quite good with allowing users to create stuff and give them tools as you say, but would you have liked Valve to be more engaged in

terms of communication or were you fine with them taking a hands off approach there?

01:09 [NDW]: There was a lot of information that would have benefited the modding community, but I understand also why they kept quiet

01:09 [NDW]: Can't ask them to release the source code :p

01:09 [NDW]: Most of the time, information regarding modding trickled down from modders that knew employees, but never in an official fashion

01:10: [NDW]: They did communicate with me on one of my item, the Merc's Muffler, a scarf I made for christmas

01:11 [NDW]: They really wanted to add it to the game, but it had issues i needed to resolve, so they told me what i needed to do

01:11 [NDW]: thing is, they told me like 2 days before the update would drop

01:11 [NDW]: Spent a full night working on fixing it

01:12 [NDW]: So I also think the tight deadlines didn't help them

01:12 [NDW]: but that's an industry wide problem

01:12 [FH]: Yeah, got some pretty tight deadlines in that industry.....

01:13 [FH]: Merc's Muffler scarf, that was the one you got a knitted version from a fan right :p

01:13 [NDW]: yep it is !

01:14 [NDW]: That's the story my parents keep telling when they want to explain what I did back then

01:14 [FH]: Haha, that is a pretty awesome story though!

01:14 [NDW]: It is

01:16 [FH]: So gamers definitely appreciate cosmetic in-game items to the extent that some will pay quite a bit for them. What do you think makes them valuable to gamers, like is it the customization aspect or something else?

01:17 [NDW]: That's a good question, and there's multiple answers to that

01:17 [NDW]: Personally, I like customizing my game characters to reflect my personality

01:17 [NDW]: My character is mine, even though it's got the same stats as everybody else

01:18 [NDW]: yet you know who the guy playing with that scarf alongside with that armor is

01:18 [NDW]: It tends to reflect how you play too

01:18 [NDW]: For others, Rarity is more important

01:19 [NDW]: They wear only the rarest, and trade huge amounts of money to have something other people don't have

01:19 [NDW]: Even if the item looks bad

01:19 [NDW]: It's got value as long as it's rare

01:19 [NDW]: In the TF2/CSGO/Dota ecosystem, you can also trade items, so they have intrinsic value

01:20 [NDW]: In a game like Rainbow 6 Siege, items can't be traded, yet they still have value to people's eyes

01:21 [NDW]: A Black Ice skin that only rarely drops from a random pack is seen by the community as one of the best, even though owning one doesn't say anything about you, besides you got lucky at one point

01:21 [NDW]: It's like in real life really, people see value where they want to

01:22 [NDW]: It might be purely economic value, or it can be sentimental value, or just "fashion value"

01:23 [NDW]: Say a friend of yours traded you a TF2 hat one day, and then he died. I think that virtual item would hold as much sentimental value as a real thing

01:24 [FH]: Yup, it has been very interesting trying to discover and understand how gamers ascribe value to virtual items.

01:26 [FH]: Another thing is ownership of virtual items and community content. You mentioned Dota2 which was a mod that Blizzard didn't see the potential of and their EULA actually granted some rights to modders, hence Dota 2 by Valve. I don't know if you have followed WC3 reforged, but the EULA is really strict and essentially means that Blizzard owns all mods and community content.

01:27 [FH]: As a producer of user generated content, how do you feel about ownership of your creations?

01:28 [NDW]: I don't think I own my items, yet I know valve will treat them with respect

01:28 [NDW]: It's not perfect, but it works

01:29 [NDW]: I think blizzard is going the wrong way tho

01:29 [NDW]: You should make people feel welcome in your community if you want them to create content

01:29 [NDW]: And that isn't the way to go

01:31 [NDW]: Give me a sec I need to sort out food for tonight :p

01:31 [FH]: Yeah, no worries, I have taken quite a bit of your time so far!

### 11.1.10 NapyDaWise Part 2

- 00:00 [FH]: How do you find new games and what gets you hooked on a game?
- 01:24 [NDW]: Gameplay is a big part of why I play game, it needs to be interesting and innovative. I'm also really attracted to the low poly artstyle, and tend to enjoy more colourful games. Constant updates like in R6 or TF2 back in the day is a great hook, and the constant speculation about what new thing could come is probably one of my favorite pastime :p
- 01:26 [FH]: You mentioned your first game being Pokemon on a Gameboy. How do you feel about the different hardware platforms now, particularly Consoles, PC and smartphones?
- 01:27 [NDW]: I think consoles either need to innovate like the switch, or they'll die soon with the advent of streaming. Even if there's input delay and framerate problem that would upset a high end PC gamer, I think the tech is "good enough" for the wider audience, and being able to play anywhere is an invaluable option. That's why i view the switch as the perfect companion for a PC nowadays, it's got very good exclusives and you can play wherever you want, and you still get your PC for the big long gaming session with the lads. Smartphones games however are a different category, as they don't really attract the same crowd. I haven't found a smartphone game I enjoyed more than a day
- 00:45 [FH]: Is it important what distribution platform they are on (Eg. Steam, Epic, Uplay etc)?
- 00:45 [NDW]: This is a wider problem than gaming, it's the same problem with any kind of TV Streaming, like with Netflix, Amazon prime, Hulu etc. Media platforms should fight only on user experience and not content. Games, TV show, movies, etc should be available on every platform,

and the only choice the consumer should have to do is "do I want to be on X platform that offer this experience, or Y platform that offer a different one". Exclusives are killing the game industry, because the more exclusive store we have, the more people will tend to go the best option available - piracy. Gabe Newell said it in 2011 : "The easiest way to stop piracy is giving those people a service that's better than what they're receiving from the pirates." Steam does that very well, where Epic fails hard. I've skipped many games that became exclusives to Epic just because, as a consumer, I have no trust at all in Epic. Uplay is fine as it integrates nicely into steam, if you want to. Origin recently updated with a steam partnership too. I tend to think that if you need exclusives to make people come to your platform, you don't have a good platform.

00:53 [FH]: How important to you is a games community?

00:53 [NDW]: This is a trick question because while i love communities like Knockout.chat, the successor to Facepunch, I absolutely hate reddit. I think that in order to have useful information and meaningful discussion, you need to cut the fat with a hard moderation. Reddit is impossible to navigate because people keep spamming the same shit over and over again for karma, and some random posts get more visibility than a well thought argument just because the first one has a big woman's ass on display. Systems like reddit don't bring people together. Hard moderation like knockout does, because you have to put a little effort into your posts. And I think this system brings a community together. It's basically walking in a city where people litter everywhere vs a city where people put their trash into the bin. One require a little something from everybody but ends up nicer. Communities around a single topic is also a bad idea in my opinion, as it forces you to see everything through the lenses of that single topic. You will not have a nice opinion of Dota by just looking at fortnite posts.

00:53 [FH]: What communication channels do you find useful (Discord, reddit, Steam etc.) and why?

00:53 [NDW]: I think good old forums do the job well enough, as they are the easiest to search for information. Steam works nicely to keep up to date with game updates and new releases, and with discord you can setup bots on your server to deliver the info you want, so that's nice too. I think it's important to diversify your communication methods as a dev, even if it might end up as a fulltime job.

00:53 [FH]: What do you see as the developers role in shaping these communities?

00:53 [NDW]: I think the best communities are the ones that built themselves, separated from the devs. They'll be able to critique bad things, and speak more freely. But it's also important for the devs to watch theses channels, and also participate if possible. But i'd be wary of a community where a dev is also a moderator/admin.

#### 11.1.11 Olivier

00:00:00 [FH]: Can you remember how long you have been gaming for?

00:00:14 [OC]: Probably since I was ten

00:00:18 [FH]: So quite a while

00:00:20 [OC]: Yeah, it probably started off with my brother playing HL1 and then I would just watch him play and help him out as a spectator in some ways. And it just went from there really

00:00:38 [FH]: Was that, did you have your own computer or was that a family computer?

00:00:40 [OC]: It was initially a family computer that just about managed to run HL and then we discovered shortly after that that we wanted our own

computer. Then we put together a cheap gaming pc that my brother and I shared for the next few years.

00:01:02 [FH]: Since then you have been gaming quite a bit. I can see on Steam that you have 1813 hours on record on TF2, that is quite impressive. When did you start playing TF2?

00:01:11 [OC]: Yes, I didn't start playing it as soon as it came out because I was always an avid TF classic player. I actually ended up getting TF2 for free in the HL2 bundle. At that sort of point my brother and I used to share an account on Steam and that's where we started to split things up where we would actually have our own account. I actually only started playing TF2 strangely because my powerful graphics card at the time ended up dying, so I couldn't play the games that I wanted to play and ended up going back to games that were less demanding to run, which one of them was TF2, and I just started trying it out and thought this is pretty cool, quite like this, and then 1800 hours later I realize that actually it is probably my favourite game of all time.

00:02:34 [FH]: So TF2 is a multiplayer game, was it mainly with friends you played initially or random matches online?

00:02:52 [OC]: Initially when I first started, I was entirely on my own I think I was one of my few friends that actually played TF2 on a regular basis. And I racked up most of my hours just playing online on my own but on like a handful of servers that I knew and I kinda knew some of the players, we would chat in the text chat in the server, but I was never in any Teamspeak or anything like that. But when I really started playing with my friends was when the Man versus Machine mod came around, which enabled you to all play on the same team versus waves of bots, that was really good fun.

00:03:42 [FH]: Can you remember when that mod came out and how did you learn about it?

- 00:03:50 [OC]: I can't remember exactly when it came out no, but I do remember that it was a point where a lot of us slowed down playing TF2, and then it was like a breath of fresh air this new thing that they introduced and my brother was also a quite keen hoster so when he realised he could host this server himself and get all his friends to join on the same server and we could just have our own rules, you know, set our own server up with its own settings and limitations. That's when we really started to power through the hours in MVM.
- 00:04:30 [FH]: I see. I remember you said mod, can you remember was it introduced by Valve or was it a user made mod?
- 00:04:45 [OC]: Honestly, I don't know, I think it is Valve. I believe so, it is pretty legit, like it is part of the game and really well done, so I'm pretty sure it is a Valve thing it is not something that we went online on like a forum and downloaded it just came with a Steam update. Whether it started off as a mod and then was introduced officially, I don't know. We only ever got it when it was officially downloaded with the update TF2 that everyone got.
- 00:05:19 [FH]: So I am sure you are aware of it, hats that are quite popular in the TF2 and can you remember when hats was introduced and how they made their way into the game
- 00:05:35: [OC]: When again, I don't know but I do remember it very much it very much not being part of the game at all and then all of a sudden hats and you know different costumes and everything you could think of was suddenly the hats craze being the main one I even remember one my favourite servers that I joined changed it's name or had the original name and then put hats hats hats after the server name all in capital letters trying to entice people to join because somehow trying to trick people thinking that there is more drops of hats in their server than any other one. Which was nonsense but yeah it was a big part of the game and one of my close Steam friends NP he's designed quite a lot of hats and other wares in TF2. It's all very interesting to us because we like to talk

about it and he shows us his material before it goes out and stuff it's definitely a topic of conversation usually when we played because he'll join in his self-made character like all this this like this new hat new scarf new outfit new boots that no one's ever seen before and it's quite amazing.

00:07:12 [FH]: That's pretty cool. Do you know if he has submitted any of that to steam Workshop?

00:07:21 [OC]: yeah absolutely yeah he's submitted most of it and it's extremely successful. In fact he's still getting a small income from it today. And in fact it is just by doing that that enabled him to move out of his parents house and get his own apartment solely thanks to designing hats and scarves on TF2. It's a scary amount of money just by doing hats. So he would do the design and then his other friends would be like a graphical designer he would do a lot of the texture work on it so I think they kinda split the winnings

00:08:01 [FH]: That makes sense, so was he one of the first ones to join you in Team Fortress 2 as well?

00:08:10 [OC]: No because I don't know him from my own childhood I going through friends of my brother so it mostly started off with my brother and I playing and then my brother's friends playing with me and then they're friends join in and then when we all realised that we had a mutual interests in TF2. We would just love to like four or five of us join a server and just dominates everyone. Because we would all be on voice chat at the same time. We'd have a you know one person in each class not each class you'd have like a medical and an engineer and what not. You're working like a proper team and before you knew it you turn the game around and you were top 5 in the on the scoreboard. Yeah it's great fun.

00:09:05 [FH]: Was it steam voice chat you used at the time?

00:09:10 [OC]: Yes, steam voice. I know some of my friends used, I think TeamSpeak but just the ease of steam voice was too difficult to ignore. People like me it's fine but I do have friends that like to game but rather not have to install this separate application for a voice chat instead two clicks and you're speaking to them with their application is so much easier. So that is what we did despite its issues.

00:09:43 [FH]: Can you remember did you trade any hats, buy any hats?

00:09:52 [OC]: I never bought anything with my own money it was always with in-game currency which was essentially the scrap metal the metals so you'd get loads and loads of drops of low quality stuff, sometimes good stuff, but mostly low quality stuff, and you would progressively refine it into these metals that you can then combine and then get yourself a really rare item and then if I was ever sick of that item or wanted something new, yeah I'd just put it on steam market and it would sometimes sell for a couple of quid or something and then I just use that towards my next Steam Game purchase.

00:10:42 [FH]: So you managed to buy games by essentially playing a game?

00:10:47 [OC]: Yeah, yeah. CS go was a better one for that for sure. Uh, but the same sort of along the same sort of lines.

00:10:54 [FH]: Yeah, let's have a quick chat about CS:GO, can you remember when you started to play that?

00:11:10 [OC]: No, I was quite late to the whole CS go, um, thing I was a, I only really play, there was a CS go after the original .6 was it condition zero, something like that. Yeah. I only really started playing it then. I think. I don't think I played much of the 1.6, I think it was. Um, and it was only really CS:GO that I started playing. Mmm. Lots of it. Uh, I'd only really start playing because my friends played it. It wasn't really ever something I thought, yep, I want to turn on my PC and play CS:GO with strangers. It was always a game that I played with, uh, with friends.

- 00:11:50 [FH]: So in CS:GO I believe it is what, drop boxes, keys and you can also buy skins as far as I remember?
- 00:12:05 [OC]: Yeah, yeah, yeah. So exactly. CS:GO wasn't always like that, but like TF2. And um, then they introduced all these crates and drops and whatnot. Um, and obviously it went to free to play as well. Mmm. Yeah. Okay. It's much, much the same as TF 2. I think it started off first on TF2 and then they saw quite how successful it was and then they, as far as I know, it went to CS:GO afterwards. Uh, but that was great as well. You could get some really nice looking weapons and it was great. I personally never spent, uh, uh, any money on it. Um, it was a, or if I did, no, I think I did, but I only ever spent money that I had gotten by selling Mmm. Items that dropped and I don't think I've ever spent more than 50 P or something on a skin. And like some of my other friends have spent stupid amounts of money on skins.
- 00:13:07 [FH]: Do you know the friends you had that buys skins, did they buy expensive skins or lots of cheap skins or?
- 00:13:15 [OC]: Um, they know they just, they just buy a few that they really like, but it's always the same. It's this, this, this, this one guy in particular he does that in most games. He does that in TF2 as well. He just saw an awesome costume he likes. Oh, I like that. And he just buys it. And then he will justify it by saying, well, you know what, sunk a thousand hours into this game. What's a, what's five quid? Uh huh. Which is true. Again, it is, I don't have anything against it. If you've got the money for it and it makes you happy. Why not? But, um, because it doesn't give you any advantage at all whatsoever. Yeah. I don't.
- 00:13:57 [FH]: Rocket League is another game quite high on your list I believe you have 417 hours on the game/ CS:GO was 395, so Rocket League is your second most played game. How did you stumble across that?
- 00:14:18 [OC]: I don't really remember. I think I was one of the last ones of all my friends to get rocket league because I've never been interested in games

like FIFA and, all those sports games because I'd rather just play them then I'd rather just go out and kick a football around than play on the a PlayStation, or PC, whatever. Uh, so I know a lot of my friends had it and I ended up getting it because they all had to, and there were sometimes playing it together and I got it on a steam sale as per usual. So I think I got it about 50% off and I started playing it and I was absolutely terrible at it. Just like everyone is in the rocket league, um, and its insanely infuriating when you start, um, but progressively you get a bit better and it definitely has a technical, uh, aspect to it where you can't just mash the buttons and hope for the best. You really have to, there is a lot of, of a, there's a lot to the game, especially when you start considering you have solos duos, uh, trios and uh, quads as well games and just the dynamic of the game changes completely depending on, uh, how many players you got and it's just, it's great. Mmm. It's one of those games that you have to play quite a lot to really get into, but when you do, it's quite, it's very satisfying.

00:15:57 [FH]: Did you get a rank in the game and do matchmaking?

00:16:08 [OC]: Yup. So this, there's the usual formula now, you can either do like a casual, a casual game, which kind of puts you against anyone. So yes, you tend to play against people that are either really good or really bad, so it's not great. Um, but for casual game is quite fun. If you don't mind losing or not being challenged. And then you can do the ranked, the ranked I think is quite good in Rocket league because it puts you against people who are, they are a very similar, uh, rank as you. Um, so it's, it's quite good to challenge yourself and then if you haven't played for a while, obviously you lose your rank, so you're gonna have to build it up again. Um, so yeah, it's, it's quite, it's quite good, I've done that with, uh, uh, CH quite a lot and it works quite well when you haven't played for a while, you just start from the bottom and then, uh, we work our way up

00:17:00 [FH]: Can you remember what your max rank was?

00:17:05 [OC]: I've no idea, cause it resets after every season. Mmm., I couldn't possibly tell you

00:17:12 [FH]: So turning to streaming, can you tell me when you started to kinda either watch streams or stream yourself?

00:17:32 [OC]: So I remember quite well. Uh, it was probably about five years ago, ish. Um, when I had a flatmate who is the biggest CS:GO, Mmm, addict slash fan I've ever seen. And we were living together. And instead of putting anything on TV, he would put CS:GO streams on TV. And I thought, that's weird. I like playing CS:GO but do I actually want to watch someone play and bit of time to get in to it. But then when I realized how much better these guys are playing compared to how good I was, uh, and the, the whole cinematic because it's in like a big stadium, you've got the commentators. Um, it's actually really fun to watch, especially when you can, when it's a game that you've played before. Mmm. And then that's kind of when I started watching the streams. And ever since then, I don't watch a huge amount of streams. I probably watch mostly is, um, uh, Rocket League streams, again it's just something I quite enjoy watching because people are so much better at it than I am. It gives me an idea of what I can kind of work towards and it's quite impressive to watch see these guys to what they do in like these massive competitions, these e-sport competitions, like the big bucks. It's a really quite fun.

00:19:19 [FH]: On Rocket League, can you remember if you watched streams of that before you started playing or only after you started playing?

00:19:35 [OC]: Yeah, I think it was only after. Yeah. Uh, it wasn't, this, eh, is the only thing I've really watched on, on Twitch was CS:GO stuff. And that was with my flatmate. Um, when he was watching, it wasn't something I would tend to watch on my own until I started playing rocket league and then found some channels, uh, rocket league channels that were quite good to watch. Mmm. Yeah. Mmm.

- 00:20:05 [FH]: With CS:GO, when you started watching the streams, did you ramp up your gaming or did you play the same amount?
- 00:20:19 [OC]: I don't think I ramped up anymore. No. I just, I think I would just keep playing the same amount. It didn't make me play more. Um, it was just cool to watch. Um, and again with, with living with that flatmate who's a big CS:GO fan, we'd often play together. And then, uh, I played with my brother who'd host the servers and we play against bots again, which we really enjoy because we can host our own server, make our own rules, host our own maps. And then, um, yeah, that's, again, most of my hours on CS:GO are playing on my brother's hosted server, not on official ones versus versus players.
- 00:21:04 [FH]: Have you ever gotten drops while watching CS:GO, like items and stuff?
- 00:21:20 [OC]: No, I've I've never, I never have, um, mostly because I don't understand how, uh, I know that nappy. Yeah. So my friend, this guy that does the, uh, TF 2 skins, uh, he would watch some Don't Starve Together, uh, official streams, and he would get drops. And I think you have to watch them for quite a long time. Mmm. To get stuff. But I've never actually figured out how to do it. And I've never had any drop. I've never managed to do it.
- 00:22:00 [FH]: So you've viewed streaming, when did you start streaming yourself?
- 00:22:17 [OC]: So once I knew about Twitch and the streaming thing, I quite liked the idea of a, streaming games. I don't know why. Just a, it was, I thought it was quite cool. And then, um, I think when Steam introduced the, uh, broadcasting again within the platform in two clicks, you can start, you can start sharing your stream with some of your friends. Um, that was really good. And then Mmm, it was mostly again my brother who would often want to watch my streams. Um, and I wanted to get into, um, more streaming. But I was at the time limited by my, um, CPU performance,

CPU power, um, to do proper Twitch streaming. Um, so until I got my new PC, I only ever did steam streaming with my steam friends. When I go to the new PC, I discovered, um, OBS and that's when I really liked the idea of being able to tweak everything. Steam streaming is quite limited on quality and uh, frames a second OBS, you've got so much customization you can do, you can adjust the bit rate resolution, frames per second. Um, so many good things to do with that..It just started off as a, as something just to test out mostly because it was a good benchmark for, uh, for the new PC. And then my brother and some friends could watch. And then before I knew it, some randoms would start watching. And then that started to be an interesting thing cause I'd never really thought that that would happen, but somehow some randomers sometimes watch my streams and uh, yeah, they sometimes chat a bit and are quite friendly. And then I realized that actually there's quite a big audience for streaming, as long as you put out the right content. So, um, the biggest success, uh, for streaming and for me anyway has been the multiplayer games that you can play through one stream, that everyone can play on their devices at home. Uh, those are great.

00:24:50 [FH]: What games?

00:24:54 [OC]: There's Jackbox and some other ones that are quite popular like, um, uh, Drawful as well. That's I think is a standalone game as well. Again, it's just a drawing game that you have to try like an online Pictionary sort of thing. It's a it's quite good and it gets everyone involved.

00:25:13 [FH]: How did you come across Discord?

00:25:27 [OC]: Okay. Uh, I was introduced by my group of Steam friends. Mmm. I think it was, again, mostly our friend nappy that, um, that started it. Mmm. I think he created the, erh our Discord group. Actually going back, actually this, discord group is called ESC and might wonder where that is from, actually, ESC is something that my brother and I, we made years ago on steam, we created a group, an ESC group, which stands for while

it was our school, European School Calum was our school. And then we would schedule events on that group and then they'd go and get notification saying, right. MVM uh, seven 30, Sunday night. Bring your A game. And ever since ESC has just stuck as being our, our kind of our tag. So I don't know how nappy came across discord, but he's, yeah. Again, with all his connections, two, uh, the world of crates and all that sort of stuff, you know, design stuff. And in fact, he's working on a Rainbow Six Siege loot website at the moment which is doing really well. In fact, it went so well that it crashed when they first put it up. So I think discord is a good way for him to get the word outs and then also join other channels and um, communicate with other people in the same sort of domain as he is, and then he just created this group, invited his friends and my brother told me to install Discord and I was skeptical so I was like, Oh, Steam chat works fine. Didn't really want to have a third party app just for chatting. But uh, he, he sold it to me when he said, Oh, you got loads of voice settings and quality settings and you can individually select the volume of each, each user and whatnot. You have different chat rooms. And I was like, yep. Sold. And it's also free. So I was yup. Okay.

00:27:54 [FH]: So you are quite technically interested.

00:27:59 [OC]: Yes. Yup. As you probably realize. Yeah.

00:28:03 [FH]: So Nappy the Rainbow 6 Siege guy, could you tell me a bit about that?

00:28:10 [OC]: Okay. Yes. So he, um, and one of, uh, our school friends who's actually living in a Copenhagen at the moment, um, they're pretty avid Rainbow Six Siege fans and Rainbow Six Siege again, just like any other game has this model of Mmm. Skins and charms and helmets. Everything you can think of is customizable. But it got to a point where there's just so much stuff. I know it's really hard to keep track of because I think they've also got different levels of Mmm rarity, which again it was quite difficult to track. So they just thought, well, we're just going to make

a websites that everyone can use and find out if their new headgear or their new skin that they received is good. And or basically, what is it? And you can search by rarity by name, by class cause they also got something like what, 20, maybe more, 25 different, um, uh, classes now I like a guys in Rainbow Six Siege, you know, all the different TF2 you got nine and Rainbow Six Siege you got something like 25 now. They keep updating them. So, um, yeah, they update things regularly and so they just wanted to make a site that's easy for everyone to, um, uh, to get info from and it's done really well so far. It was quite funny because it was all in the main chat. They were talking to us as it was going live and they posted it on a, on Reddit actually. And then, uh, I don't know how. It just somehow on some page on Reddit it got lots of traction and they could see all the traffic and there's loads and loads of traffic from Asia, loads of traffic from Asia. And before they knew it the low end package that they had gone for, for the server hosting was insufficient and they had just crashed. So they had to put more money in to get a higher, um, our level of server hosting.

00:20:24 [FH]: Do you know if they can make money from the site?

00:30:27 [OC]: Yeah. I'm assuming that that's the plan. Um, I don't think the site is, I don't know, I'd say it's probably still in beta. Mmm. Because they basically put it up on Reddit and asking for people's suggestions and most of it was very positive. Uh, I could see some of the, the suggestions, many people were like this is great. We needed a website like this. And there was just a few suggestions. So I think they're still building it up. And then, uh, I'm assuming once they have a solid player base, they might start integrating ads and hopefully to make a bit of money back because they've had to screenshots, I don't know what it was, is like something 10,000 different items, you know, from the, yeah. It was a crazy amount of, of work. And so, Mmm. Yeah. I think, uh, the guy in Copenhagen was working more on the coding side of things, then nappy was working more on the, uh, screenshotting and putting things into the right spot. Mmm. Kind of work.

- 00:31:29 [FH]: Nappy, is he working or does he study or?
- 00:31:41 [OC]: yeah, he, he works, um, as a, uh, architect. So, so sort of like an architect, but he, he loves using all these Mmm programs, you know, 3d programs, think he does a bit of 3DMax work. Mmm. And I think his, his job right now is very much based upon what projects they currently have running. So you, sometimes it's very busy and sometimes not at all. In fact, he sometimes sends pictures or like sends messages in the chats showing him and five of his colleagues playing videogames at work whilst the boss is away. Um, so yeah, I think he uses it a lot at that time also to work on. Mmm. The, uh, the Rainbow Six loot page.
- 00:32:34 [FH]: You have a lot of contacts and content on steam, can you remember how long you have been using it for?
- 00:32:41 [OC]: Steam? Uh, I cannot remember, but if there's a way to find out, I could try and find out. But, um, uh, I think ever since it, okay. In really early days, radio, early days, uh, we were one of the, one of the first few to start using steam. And I say we, because it was my brother and I's account. Um, so, uh, we had to share it account for quite a while because we played the same games. There was no point buying, there was no such thing as steam family sharing back then. So we had one computer. So what's the point of having two accounts, paying for games on two different accounts. Um, so it was more by my brother started steam way before I did, but it was back in the days where I don't know exactly when, but we didn't have broadband so what we had to do is when we updated a game or how to game, we then had to put steam into offline mode to make sure to initiate any download. Cause as soon as it started doing it down though, you could play the game. You couldn't just say, no, I don't want the download. Um, you had to finish the download and then put it into offline mode to be able to play the game. So that was kind of how long ago we started using it.
- 00:33:35 [FH]: So you kinda build up a network on Steam, such as the ESC network.

00:33:51 [OC]: Uh, and again, I think my, I was probably one of the first ones in my class to really get into steam. Um, because I was younger than my brother. He was obviously already gave me with his friends. I started using it again one of the first ones, to start using it in my sort of um, age group because my brother is already playing with his, with his friends on steam and I just sort of tagged along and then, um, before I knew my friends one by one, started to get into the gaming scene I told them to get steam because it was awesome. And then instead of being on MSN, like idiots, we join up on steam and start to start chatting, um, primarily and then start to start gaming. Um, and it just went from there I suppose.

00:35:15 [FH]: So you used MSN before Steam then, it must be quite a while ago.

00:35:25 [OC]: Yeah, yeah, definitely. Yeah. Yeah. But the thing is, because steam also was one of those things where when you were at school, the amount of time you had to yourself necessarily just to game was also it was sometimes really limited. So sometimes steam is basically just a case of, Oh Hey, I'm online, I just started chatting. So like it completely replaced that for me as well. So just on there chatting. Mmm. I wouldn't even necessarily play any games. It was quite a good Social platform.

00:36:15 [FH]: Are you on Facebook?

00:36:20 [OC]: Yes

00:36:24 [FH]: How much time would you say that you spend on Facebook compared to Steam?

00:36:40 [OC]: Uh, a fraction. Uh, I again, I've got Facebook really late, uh, in life. I only got it just to try and stay in touch with people that might not be able to be in touch with. Mmm. I dunno. Like 1% or less. Compare it to steam and discord. Yeah. Nothing, nothing at all. Even less. I think even less and less as time goes on because there's just, uh, there's really nothing very interesting on Facebook anymore either its Facebook or its also my

friends probably. Um, that are just really boring or just posting pictures of their babies and I don't really care.

00:37:21 [FH]: So you actually use Steam as a social network.

00:37:35 [OC]: Oh yeah, 100%.

00:37:41 [FH]: You've played Fortnite as well, can you remember who introduced it to you and your freinds?

00:37:53 [OC]: Mmm. yes. I think it was me. Mmm. It was me because I don't actually remember how I got into it. But I remember watching one of my, actually I remember because it was one of the rocket league streamers. I liked to watch everyone is asking him to play this game called PUBG and I had no idea what the heck this game, PUBG I honestly thought it was something to do with pubs. Mmm. I had no idea. And then he started playing it and it looked quite cool. Mmm. And then it was just this completely new game mode that I haven't really heard of before, other than maybe DayZ similar, but I never actually played that. Mmm. And then before I know it again, this streamer guy he would play rocket league for hours on end and then, uh, he would get requests to play Fortnite. I was like, Oh, it looks kinda cool. Uh, looked a lot easier and less complex than PUBG and lo and behold, it was free. So I thought, why not? And then, uh, I remember I had enticed CH uh, to download it because I described it as a Hunger game. hunger games, hunger games kind of thing where you get the zone, when it comes in and it's the last one standing wins. Mmm. And again, the game is free so you download it if you don't like it, don't have to keep playing it. So, uh, and in fact lots of my friends did do that. Um, Jeremy played a couple of times. Uh, he didn't really enjoy it again because he's just, his level was quite low. He got a bit de-motivated. Then again, a few other of my friends downloaded it and they, um they definitely didn't like the, um, the build aspect to it wasn't their thing whereas PUBG might have been cause there isn't that, uh, the element to it.

00:38:48 [FH]: So you actually came to know Fortnite through streaming.

00:38:56 [OC]: Yup. I think that's the, that's probably the one mainstreamer that I follow. Uh, he played it, I don't know if that's what made me download it, but that's, I think that's when I first discovered it. Mmm. I don't know what necessarily made me want to download it cause I was, I think I was very skeptical about wanting to download it because of having to download another Mmm game store. And that really annoyed me. That really annoyed me.

00:39:24 [FH]: So you had to have the Epic Games Store for that?

00:39:35 [OC]: yep, yep. Big time. Because, um, again I'd been used to steam for years. I wasn't, I'm not saying it's necessarily the best, but all I'm comparing it to was, um, origin, which I had and was rubbish. Aand Uplay, which is even worse. So I thought, well, what's this new game store though? And also the name, like Epic games. I kind of thought what kind of Mickey mouse thing is this. So anyway, I downloaded it and I was perfectly ready to uninstall it, um, and get rid of it on my system. Um, but turns, it was quite a fun game. So I still have it to this day and they keep throwing free games at me. So yeah, I actually prefer it now. I've gotten used to the layouts and everything and I prefer it to, to uh, to Uplay and Origin.

00:40:23 [FH]: So you don't like Uplay and Origin?

00:40:30 [OC]: No, especially Uplay, god I hate Uplay, especially since they've, um, claimed to have cloud saves and they don't even work. Uh, so yeah, their support is terrible as well, so I just, yeah. I'd rather avoid them.

00:40:45 [FH]: You have then I guess the majority of your games on Steam?

00:40:53 [OC]: Yeah, definitely. Vast majority, probably at least 85% on steam easily. And I will go out of my way to try and find if there's games available both I will, even if it's cheaper on one than the other, I will usually wait until it's on sale as long as I can have it on steam.

00:41:11 [FH]: Do you ever watch streamers for game reviews or what do you prefer for that?

00:41:24 [OC]: Mmm aye. I often use, uh, streams to see what game is like. Mmm. But usually just to see what it's like. Um, more than anything. Aye. I'm kind of old school in the sense. I actually quite like to read reviews on games. Um, one of our, sort of go to magazines, CustomPC that we've been subscribed to for years. They do, they have a few pages on new game releases and um, they tend to, um, do quite a good job. Mmm. So that's usually what I go by. And also I can usually get good feel I am quite picky with what games I, I like to play and not play. So, uh, even if a reviewer says it's great, it doesn't necessarily mean I'm going to, I'm going to get it. Um, it has to be a certain game type that I like.

00:42:23 [FH]: Have you read reviews in that magazine and then gone on to Twitch to see the game?

00:42:31 [OC]: Uh, yeah. Yeah. I think I'd say so. Um, again, I don't really know what specifically. Mmm. But I've definitely discovered some stuff on Twitch. And again, I think it's also sometimes when you're when I'm watching a streamer that's saying that they're playing one game and they end up switching to another Mmm. Mid stream, while still technically, um, it's labeled as being the game that you're wanting to watch, but it they're actually playing something else. I've found that sometimes a good way to discover other games. Mmm. But it's definitely not my go to place. I think also it's, it's quite difficult to watch a YouTube video or a stream of a game, especially if it's a game you think you really want to learn and not get loads of spoilers. Whereas usually when it's a written review, it's far less. Well, you don't, actually see the game play. You might see a couple of screen shots, but that's about it. So it's up to you to discover the game.

00:43:44 [FH]: So I guess multiplayer games that aren't story driven would be better for streaming as there aren't spoilers.

00:43:50 [OC]: Yup, yup, yup. Absolutely. So, yeah, like rocket league for example. Absolutely. Yup.

#### 11.1.12 Poppy

[00:00:05.580] - Monika

Thanks for taking the time. I'm gonna ask you a couple of questions in this interview. It's for the master's thesis at CBS. Everything I record, I record obviously, so I can transcribe it. I will not use your name or a quote from you without prior permission. If you want to remain anonymous about some of the things you say, that I can do that too.

[00:00:28.800] - Monika

So, nothing will be published attached to your name without you knowing about it.

[00:00:32.850] - Poppy

Okay, that sounds fair. Yes.

[00:00:35.400] - Monika

If you could start just so I have it on record. Could you introduce yourself to me a little bit what you do now? What did you do in the past and your job history.

[00:00:44.220] - Poppy

Sure. My name's Poppy Byron and I am head of global PR at EPOS and their company that makes gaming headsets.

[00:00:54.510] - Poppy

I've worked here for almost a year and I currently manage a number of teams across the world, PR teams, agencies in Germany, France, Benelux, UK, Nordics, North America and also Australia soon to be China and Japan as well.

[00:01:14.580] - Poppy

So yeah, I'm responsible for making sure that all of these teams know exactly what we want to communicate and when. Things like product launches and just general information. Our company goes through a lot of change at the moment. So, the world needs to know. I come from a background doing PR in social media at various other companies.

[00:01:35.370] - Poppy

I used to work for a mobile games company on the most downloaded mobile game in the world Subway Surface.

[00:01:43.590] - Poppy

Before that, I worked in an indie games company making games for PC and PlayStation and also X-Box. They made one of the big indie hits of 2014 Surgeon Simulator, and before that I worked for six years as a community manager, training forum moderators and in-game player moderators on the game RuneScape.

[00:02:12.000] - Monika

Thank you so much. What would you say in your current role is your relationship to the video gaming industry?

[00:02:19.440] - Poppy

So, I think at the moment my role is vital. I need to know. I need to have a really, really deep understanding of the video games industry. First off, a lot of people separate tech and hardware from actual games.

[00:02:35.670] - Poppy

They are totally wrong. You need to know how people are going to be using your products, when they're going to be using them, what's important to them, what's not important to them? You need to know who is using them.

[00:02:48.720] - Poppy

You need to know all about their lives, what they love, what they hate and what they're doing. So, keeping up to date with all the latest games and all the latest trends is absolutely essential when making gaming hardware.

[00:03:02.610] - Monika

And what would you say that concretely in the case of EPOS or back in the day Sennheiser communication as it was or still is to some degree? What would you say is the role of esports in that?

[00:03:19.170] - Monika

What role does that play for hardware and peripherals?

[00:03:22.220] - Poppy

Esports is a massive part of peripherals, especially audio peripherals.

[00:03:30.270] - Poppy

Gaming tends to be separated into a number of different sections, obviously have mobile games and then you have kind of deep immersive games and then competitive games.

[00:03:40.140] - Poppy

All of these, need really great audio, but for different reasons. But for Esports, when you're playing competitively with other players, the difference between having a decent headset and a pretty, you know, standard one is huge. You know, hearing competitors footsteps creeping up on you, hearing the sound of gunfire and being able to pinpoint where that's coming from. All of that is absolutely vital. And it can mean the difference between, you know, a win or a loss.

[00:04:11.220] - Poppy

And, you know, when you're playing esports competitively for prize money. That makes a big difference. You know, it makes a huge difference.

[00:04:21.840] - Monika

And what you say the other way around, that ambition to win and become a pro player does that.

[00:04:28.710] - Monika

Do you feel that that has an impact on purchasing decisions, comparing like regarding to peripherals?

[00:04:36.570] - Monika

Does that dream of esports, does that play a role, would you say?

[00:04:41.240] - Poppy

Absolutely. If you were an athlete in the gym, you would buy protein shake. She would make sure you had the right kit. You'd make sure you have the right shoes. He would probably try to aspire to go to a fancy gym and training classes. I think it's the same here. I think if you're serious about esports, then you will do everything within your power.

[00:04:59.950] - Poppy

Not just to train, but to make sure that you have all of the equipment needed to give you that competitive advantage. And that's where we come in.

[00:05:08.350] - Monika

And if you look at game titles in general there, of course, that the standalones and one of. And as you worked at Sybo, you know and I've got some questions for that coming up. But games as a service model, do you think that also plays a role for peripherals that, that kind of

influences how that industry is going with games that understand themselves more as a service than a standalone title?

[00:05:33.130] - Poppy

How do you mean exactly?

[00:05:36.010] - Monika

It's hard to be not suggestive with that question that I don't want to put words in your mouth. But let's say I mean, we hear about the Fortnite effect, obviously, and Fortnite is a game that's free to play.

[00:05:45.550] - Monika

But has this add on...

[00:05:51.460] - Monika

so maybe the question would be better formulated.

[00:05:54.880] - Monika

Do you think or do you see a difference in purchase behavior regarding hardware or do you think that there is a connection between that and these kind of games that engage the user for a very long period of time?

[00:06:09.340] - Poppy

I honestly think it's not necessarily down to games as such. It's down to where people are in their lives. If you have younger players, they're not going to have the money to be able to afford, you know, perhaps some of the better quality stuff.

[00:06:22.690] - Poppy

They're not going to have the knowledge about what's better, whereas I think some of the older players, you know, have been exposed to more brands, to more advertising and such.

[00:06:32.980] - Poppy

What we found in many cases that people don't really know what good gaming audio is and they don't know until they actually can compare side to side. You know something that's not so good with something that's good. I think anybody who plays these kinds of games would obviously want the best equipment, but there's a lot of aspects to take into it, like the way that these things look, you know, where they can buy them from, how easy it is and price.

[00:07:00.250] - Poppy

So, I think that games are the only thing to take into consideration here.

[00:07:05.080] - Monika

Let's take it a little bit away from that and let's move on. You previously mentioned you have to work for Sybo which does seem to use a free to play model. How do you view this business model?

[00:07:23.660] - Poppy

Do you know if you do it right. It works. You know, free to play is really, really difficult to get right. You know, you really can't just release a game and expect to make money off ads. You know, there's a whole lot of factors that come into play. You know, are you going to use micro-transactions? Are you going to be using ads, you know? Are the ads going to be too intrusive?

[00:07:44.200] - Poppy

How can people end goal? Is it not pay to win?

[00:07:48.280] - Poppy

So, if you get the right game and you get people who really love that, you want to come back and experience new content all the time, that's great, you know? But I've seen so many free to play games, you know, fail after their first year because somebody hasn't sat down in the background and made the spreadsheet. That figures out how many players you need to get playing, how many need to watch the ads, you know how much money you're going to make.

[00:08:14.860] - Poppy

It's a difficult model to crack. But, you know, if you get free to play right, you can make a whole lot of money.

[00:08:23.080] - Monika

And you touched on this a little bit. I just want to condense this question a little bit, because that's my next question. Presently, Sybo has a job posting for Economy game designer to help the F2P micro transaction kind of situation, at Sybo games. Do you know and you mentioned some of them, what kind of considerations are made when designing in-game economy?

[00:08:45.160] - Poppy

You know what? That's a really, really specialist role. And it needs somebody who has a lot of experience and a lot of love of mathematics. That is not one I would know how to answer. I am in awe of these guys who know how to do that, to be honest.

[00:08:57.010] - Monika

No worries.

[00:09:06.070] - Monika

Do you know, are you at liberty to say something about how the revenue is split between ads and in-game purchases?

[00:09:14.830] - Poppy

I can't tell you that. I can say, though, that for Subway Surface, at Sybo. Most players don't spend a whole bunch of cash. And you can tell that that's open information from looking at the app. Any statistics for the games with most revenue versus most downloads. They're at top of the most downloads, but not the most revenue.

[00:09:40.240] - Poppy

There are a lot of games out there that monetize a lot better than that. Jagex make Runescape, which is a free to play game, that's not mobile. That's an MMO. That's a totally different case. They have a subscription model. A lot of their content is available free to play. In fact, a huge part of the map is free to play. If you want to access different levels, different weapons and the rest of the map. Then you pay subscription and you can also buy weapons and other micro-transactions things such as gold.

[00:10:11.490] - Poppy

They've been running for nearly 20 years now on that model and they do pretty well.

[00:10:17.010] - Monika

So you would say from your experience that not a whole lot of players buy in-game items at Sybo for Subway Surfer?

[00:10:29.520] - Poppy

I think enough to.

[00:10:31.250] - Poppy

Certainly. When you've got a game that's been running that long and you have diehard fans, they want to get everything you know. You can earn currency in game or you can buy, you know. Obviously, some regions of the world pay more than others. You know, obviously United States. You know, Europe tends to pay more than Indonesia and India and such. But I guess that's why you have the ad revenue.

[00:10:56.700] - Monika

And leading into it and maybe not connected to this, but just generally because, you know, a lot of people in the industry, I mean you will have heard about the concept of whales I assure.

[00:11:07.880] - Poppy

Yeah, of course.

[00:11:10.110] - Monika

Can you if you play a game or do you know about certain design features. Or do you know about these features in general, what is used in the industry to basically trigger those people?

[00:11:22.200] - Poppy

Yeah. So, there's a certain type of player that wants to collect everything. So for example, you have a collection book with twelve stamps and only two are available for purchase. Certain people will not be able to let that go. They will want to complete their collection. And as time goes on, especially with their MMO's, the longer you've played, if you've played for seven or eight years and you have every item up until that point, the thought of missing one is just terrible.

[00:11:55.710] - Poppy

I've seen that with holiday items where somebody who's missed something and freaked out. So if you can monetize that, that's really cynical, actually. But that is what happens. You can monetize that that drive then. Sure.

[00:12:09.150] - Poppy

And also, some people use this as their primary focus of enjoyment. And so perhaps spending fifty pounds a week plus on it doesn't really seem like that much to them. You know, it all depends on how much you earn, you know.

[00:12:30.360] - Monika

So, you would say from experience that there are a lot of free to play or some free to play games that implement specific techniques to trigger these kinds of people to spend money.

[00:12:47.040] - Poppy

Oh sure. Absolutely. Yeah.

[00:12:51.630] - Monika

You were a community manager at RuneScape?

[00:12:56.430] - Poppy

Yeah.

[00:12:58.710] - Monika

How did you engage with the community?

[00:13:03.090] - Poppy

Back when I worked there. This was before the days of Facebook, before Twitter. These were very new. They were just starting to get off the ground. YouTube wasn't really a thing. So we had the largest gaming forums in the world and that's where we engaged with players. So there were forums separated into different skills just off topic. There were ones where you could buy and sell items. You could do all kinds of things. And we had a team of 200 volunteers for moderators, which we trained to look after the forums for us manually.

[00:13:40.980] - Poppy

So to mute people, remove any spam and such. That was the main place where we engaged with people. Of course, in each game world, people could talk with each other then. And when I started there, they didn't have a way for you to talk across worlds. But then they introduce friends chat and then clan chat where you could join together in a group and then talk there.

We actually had a statistic back in I think it was 2011 or 2012 that half of the people who logged into Runescape didn't enter the game world.

[00:14:13.710] - Poppy

They just stayed in the chat lobby just to talk to their friends. So it was almost like a form of the first social media before social media being able to log into Runescape where you kind of knew each other from game and could just talk to people.

[00:14:45.960] - Monika

Do you think with the introduction of more platforms that cater, so social media platforms, also something like YouTube and Twitch that has a little bit watered down or dissolved because there are more options for people to communicate with people nowadays.

[00:15:04.710] - Poppy

It has diluted it somewhat. Now a lot of people will use their discord to talk.

[00:15:13.230] - Poppy

I think the issue is, is that because RuneScape had, you know, they had to keep their players safe. You know, they couldn't allow players to give out their personal details on that platform because they're in trouble. They can allow people to share photographs. They didn't want to create an environment where anybody you played was in any danger.

[00:15:36.420] - Poppy

A lot of players would then move outside as a platform to add each other on Facebook where they could talk without being banned, to talk about things, you know, to share pictures and details.

[00:15:48.270] - Poppy

And so I think that had a big effect. And also the technology people were busy trying to build the game rather than building a social networking platform. So when there were features that you couldn't get here, you'd move somewhere else.

[00:16:03.480] - Poppy

And also, as players grew up, a lot of them were a bit embarrassed about playing video games. So they didn't want to be on that platform anymore.

[00:16:22.020] - Monika

How have you interacted with streamers and streaming platforms throughout your career?

[00:16:27.240] - Monika

So streaming is not a thing when I worked for RuneScape. You couldn't do it. The Internet wasn't good enough. The platforms didn't exist. YouTube existed where you could upload videos.

[00:16:38.770] - Poppy

But for the start, when I was there, then it was Justin.TV before it was YouTube. So, when I was there, it was very much in its infancy. So live streaming wasn't a thing. Where it did come into play was when I worked at the indie games company Bossa Studios. Their massive hit, they created search simulator that started off as an indie game that was made at global game jam. The team made it in three days.

[00:17:05.940] - Poppy

It was all put together. And we put it up on the Web site for love because it was quite funny and PewDiePie got ahold of it and he played it. And then suddenly from there, all of the massive YouTubers all played it. And we were getting millions and millions and millions of views on that.

[00:17:27.150] - Poppy

So then we made it into a full game in three months. And from there, people would livestream the game. Roosterteeth, a big American influencer group, actually made an esports out of it, at their big event in Texas.

[00:17:44.520] - Poppy

They had a whole load of people playing and the screens all put up there. And that was on a live stream from the event and such. So, it's been really, really exciting to see a video game world from where there was no content of people doing anything to suddenly it was everywhere and then watching how it changed from simple YouTube videos to live streaming as everybody started to buy their own kit and then pushing it even further, you know, into emerging gameplay where people decided how they were going to play the games the way they wanted to. I mean, making an indie game into esports is pretty big.

[00:18:28.080] - Monika

What do you perceive is the role of streaming in video games or the video game industry?

[00:18:36.960] - Monika

Where do you say that fits in?

[00:18:40.110] - Poppy

I think that a video game is your passion and it's what you like to do. You can't do that all the time, you know. But when you're, you know, busy working or sitting at home doing something else or, you know, you don't always want to watch what's on television. I mean, digital TV has totally changed the way that people consume television, because you would sit there, you would look at your calendar and say, right at six o'clock I'm gonna watch this.

[00:19:07.140] - Poppy

That doesn't happen anymore.

[00:19:08.330] - Poppy

But now, if you're a bit tired or you know, you can't be bothered to play something, you can watch it. Just like most people aren't going to go out and play tennis, but they'll watch it. Most people aren't going to get into a Formula One car and drive it around, but they'll watch it. And I think that it's a really, really nice way to kind of find new celebrities because, you know, you always have your favorites with personalities and they'll be doing something that you want to watch them doing rather than, you know, on some crappy TV show that some boomers have thought of in a in a room somewhere.

[00:19:44.130] - Poppy

So I think that, you know, consuming the sports media like this isn't new, just like watching sports in stadiums isn't new. I think that, you know, it's just taken a while for this particular sport to catch up. And it is a sport. I mean, it's something that you need to train yourself in in order to succeed. You know, whether that's with your hand-eye coordination or your muscles. You know, that's by the by. I think it's the same thing.

[00:20:10.840] - Monika

So would you say your stream is the equivalent to your general TV presenter or comic?

[00:20:22.360] - Poppy

I think that they're a unique mixture of entertainer, athletes, sportsmen, friend, person you can rely on. People can relate to streamers a lot more than they can to celebrities because they're just people. They look like the guy next door. The people who go to school or college with, you know, they look like people that you could approach. They're not being surrounded by paparazzi unless they're really big. And also, I think it's totally aspirational for a lot of people because they believe I can do that.

[00:20:58.310] - Poppy

You know, not everybody can be Johnny Depp. But everyone can be Ninja, you know?

[00:21:10.930] - Monika

So you would say that relatability is an important characteristic of a streamer?

[00:21:17.110] - Poppy

That, being able to relate to the person is important, but also the fact that you can interact with these people.

[00:21:24.130] - Poppy

Celebrities are very well behind with this. You can perhaps talk to celebrities occasionally on their Instagram comments, but streamers will make videos where they talk with the audience. You know, in real time they'll look at the questions and answer them. You've got a real bond that you know that you just don't have with traditional celebrities.

[00:21:46.930] - Monika

Do you think there's a different audience of users you can reach through a streamer that you cannot reach with traditional media?

[00:21:56.930] - Poppy

Yeah, absolutely. A lot of young people now don't have a television box. You know, they will just watch YouTube. They will just watch Twitch. They watch Netflix as well, but they won't consume media in traditional ways. So if you're playing an ad on daytime television, you're not going to reach new people.

[00:22:18.650] - Poppy

You just won't.

[00:22:21.610] - Monika

So you mentioned a couple. What streaming platforms in general would you say you're familiar with?

[00:22:29.260] - Poppy

Twitch and YouTube.

[00:22:50.020] - Monika

So if you look at like YouTube and Twitch. There is data and research showing that, I think it's over 80 percent, of all gaming footage it's watched on YouTube more than on Twitch rather it's not the livestreaming although that too, but it's the videos on YouTube as the majority of video game coverage that it's been watched or video game content. Where do you think that comes from?

[00:23:21.700] - Monika

Or do you have an idea about that?

[00:23:23.080] - Poppy

People will record their twitch streams and put them on YouTube because even though YouTube have a streaming service, it's very seen the place to watch videos. They've got their new paid full service now and then Microsoft has got their own with Ninja now as well. But yeah, Twitch is very much all about the live stuff, isn't it.

[00:23:44.270] - Poppy

Yeah. I mean so is YouTube. But, Twitch doesn't really have the the vibe of being a place where you would go to watch videos. It's not a platform for that.

[00:24:12.010] - Monika

Do you get any data from or provide any data to streaming platforms?

[00:24:17.560] - Poppy

Personally, yeah.

[00:24:19.100] - Monika

Or in your work?

[00:24:22.310] - Poppy

No, no, I don't.

[00:24:26.540] - Monika

But you do look at streaming numbers, right?

[00:24:29.880] - Poppy

Yeah, absolutely. I mean, you'll always look at the audience analytics of what you've done, how many people view it. When they stopped watching, when they started. What's interesting. Then you use that for your content for next time. Everyone liked it, when I leaned back and looked upwards. I'll do that again. No one liked it when I ate a sandwich. I will never do that on stream again.

[00:24:57.580] - Monika

I mean, if you're a guy, that might happen. If you're a girl that opens up a whole different world, right, just to go back to Sybo game. If you know some of that.

[00:25:09.920] - Monika

What kind of player base would you say that the game has like age gender maybe?

[00:25:20.240] - Poppy

We were really surprised by gender. The gender split seemed to be pretty much 50/50. So the game's been running since 2012. And when the game was first launched, the audience was primarily in the US and UK and Germany and Northern Europe. As time went on and as they moved towards 6 and 7 years, that audience is now tending to be more in India and Vietnam, in Indonesia. And the reason for that is because Subway Surface, obviously, when it's new, everybody wants to play it right.

[00:25:59.030] - Poppy

But people with older phones can't play a new game.

[00:26:03.950] - Poppy

So, you know, as time goes on, you know, these countries here perhaps don't have the latest phones and such, but it can be played on all the iPhones and all their Android phones. So then the audience tends to move that way.

[00:26:16.550] - Monika

So, player retention is a problem, would you say?

[00:26:24.980] - Poppy

I know that their audience numbers are pretty stable, but a lot of new people find the game and play it. Yeah. I mean, I think they've had like nearly 3 billion downloads.

[00:26:40.130] - Poppy

Whether that number is affected by the fact that I think until quite recently, if you got a new phone, you couldn't move your progress across. So that might have counted as a new person. But the numbers are pretty, pretty up there still.

[00:26:55.390] - Monika

So what do you think is a method that they used or use to attract new players?

[00:27:00.660] - Poppy

So, is a tried and tested method for a lot of the games as a service kind of games and that is regular updated content. So every three weeks, players knew that they could come back to the game and there would be a different level, there'd be different characters, there'd be different items. It would be a totally reskinned experience. And that was something that they've continued the whole length of the product.

[00:27:27.710] - Poppy

So. There's always something new. You know, there's something to do. And also with Subway Surfers, you can pick up the phone. You can play. And then, you know, you can put it down in three or four minutes or longer.

[00:27:41.230] - Poppy

You can be waiting for somebody. You can be playing under the desk when somebody speaking in a school lesson and being boring, you know? It's really easy. It's real snackable piece of content that people can just pick up. And because it's new all the time, it's quite fresh. Collectability, aspects of things as well. Being able to collect characters. Missed one? You know that at some point they're going to revisit that city so you perhaps login.

[00:28:09.670] - Poppy

There's also a lot of things like daily challenges where if you complete a challenge every day, you get multiplied the scores, you get extra things. There're mystery boxes to open where you can win stuff. All of these little hooks or ways to keep people engaged and keep them playing and potentially spend money. Or, you know, keep playing and, you know, the in-game currency and use that buy things as well. Some of the techniques we used as well where you could watch an ad and earn something in-game.

[00:28:42.400] - Poppy

Obviously, the ad revenue goes to the company. So, getting them to do that, those kind of ads monetize really, really well, especially in the countries where perhaps they don't spend as much.

[00:28:58.450] - Monika

Is there any user generated content that Sybo uses or users that add to that?

[00:29:05.490] - Poppy

At present, no. Whether there's plans for that in the future? I'm not sure.

[00:29:13.660] - Poppy

User generated content is something that, we created a poster in order to get influencers to play the next level. We actually named the organs of value after influencers because we knew that if PewDiePie saw that there was an organ called Pewdsball in there he would play that and you wouldn't have to give them a lot of money to make a video.

[00:29:41.410] - Poppy

Do that with six organs, you've got six guaranteed influences to play your game. Yeah, which is pretty awesome. That's not specifically user generated as such. No, so it's using the community in order to get people to play your game.

[00:30:00.880] - Monika

And yet you might not be able to tell that some of it is public record. Some of it is not. Do you know what kind of data they're interested in collecting from the users?

[00:30:15.280] - Poppy

I know that they are very, very careful about what they can and can't collect because of the age of the user base. Further than that I don't know.

[00:30:28.360] - Monika

But would you say that data is an integral part of the business model?

[00:30:34.920] - Poppy

Yeah. I mean, as long as you're not identifying people, then you need to know how often people play, when do they play, if there's a part of the game that they stop at. What is it? How can you get them playing longer? What makes people spend money and what makes people not spend? These kind of analytics can all be built into these kind of games to help shape it. So it has a longer life and obviously more revenue.

[00:31:02.220] - Poppy

And then obviously location data is as well.

[00:31:04.330] - Monika

Yeah, yeah. So that is does stuff that you could get from Google or Apple.

[00:31:11.040] - Poppy

You never gonna get anything for anybody under 13.

[00:31:14.130] - Poppy

Yeah. Even though a lot of people under 13 play. Because you know, the internet says you're not allowed. And also, you know, a lot of people play on their friends phones, mom's phones or whatever. But you know, personal data around people who are under 18. Super careful with that, what you can collect and what you can't.

[00:31:34.770] - Monika

Yeah.

[00:31:44.740] - Monika

Do they also obtain data in a way? Let's say. I mean, we do it partially here, but like, over I guess Instagram or any of their socials or these kind of front later this or something that's collected from there or looked into?

[00:31:59.350] - Poppy

I mean, the standard stuff that social media collects are always useful. Yeah. So, you know, knowing all of your demographics from Facebook and Instagram and Twitter is useful in shaping future content because it gives you insights into your audience that, you know, you wouldn't have otherwise. So yeah, I think the more data that you have, the better. But a lot of people, you know, they'll have this data and they'll just look at it and won't do anything with it.

[00:32:27.250] - Poppy

You need to make sure you've got people on board who know how to decipher it and know how to use it to shape your product.

[00:32:35.410] - Monika

Yeah, and I mean, this is something, you know, also little bit. Now, from the partner perspective, if you are partnering with a video game will they come back and it's not purely about the exposure per say off the headset.

[00:33:01.630] - Monika

What kind of data would you like to know from a video game?

[00:33:08.830] - Poppy

If we are going to be a headset partner with them?

[00:33:17.550] - Monika

Yeah.

[00:33:20.620] - Poppy

Who's going to play your game. Who's aimed at? You know, if it's already released, who is playing your game? What countries are they located in? How old are they? What are their other interests? I'd want to know details about the game. As in you know, is it violent? What kind of game is? What genre it is? How long it's been around? How long do you expect it to be around and need to know information like to make it a good fit with us, you know, is it a crappy little game or is it a premium game you know with a long life in it? We need to make sure that you kind of team up the product with the game. So this is a game about, you know, foot surgery, we are probably not interested.

[00:34:13.970] - Poppy

But if it's a triple A game, you know that's based in a sci-fi future, you'd probably want.

[00:34:20.260] - Monika

Oh, yeah, absolutely. OK. Thank you so much. That's all I need from you right now. Thanks for your time.

11.1.13 Victor

00:00:00 [FH]: Lad os starte med hvilke spil du spiller, så Counter-Strike selvfølgelig

00:00:04 [VC]: Altså jeg er begyndt her for et par uger siden at spille lidt GTA igen og så er jeg begyndt på et nyt spil, eller jeg har spillet det for nogle år siden, som går ud på, kender du Rust?

00:00:15 [FH]: Ja

00:00:18 [VC]: Det er lidt ligesom det, bare en tegnefigurs udgave, og så er der super mange forskellige maps og alt muligt mærkeligt du kan bygge, lidt ligesom en blanding af Minecraft og Rust.

00:00:32 [FH]: Okay, det lyder interessant

00:00:35 [FH]: Hvordan, når du spiller CS er det så mest dig selv der spiller det sammen med randoms, eller spiller du det med en vennegruppe?

00:00:46 [VC]: Det er lidt forskelligt, for jeg har jo min papbror Lukas som bor i Vig og min lillebror Patrick og dem spiller jeg engang imellem noget CS:GO med dem, men ellers er det nok for det meste bare randoms.

00:01:03 [FH]: Spiller du ranked matches i CS:GO?

00:01:08 [VC]: Jeg spiller mest competitive med rank, ja og Wingman?

00:01:14 [FH]: Kan du huske hvad du har af rank i CS:GO?

00:01:19 [VC]: Ja, lige nu har jeg silver elite master, men det er fordi at jeg syntes tit at jeg kommer sammen med nogen jeg syntes er rigtig rigtig dårlige, vi taber altid. Så lige nu der står mine kampe at jeg har vundet, så har jeg tabt, så har jeg vundet, så har jeg tabt, så har jeg vundet, så har jeg tabt, sådan står der for det meste hele vejen.

00:01:32 [FH]: Det skifter kan jeg høre, men det er også svært specielt hvis man er med randoms..

00:01:39 [VC]: Især når de alle sammen kun snakker russisk, så er det lidt svært at forstå engang imellem.

00:01:46 [FH]: Ja, det er lidt et problem i CS:GO

00:01:50 [FH]: Så det vil sige at du spiller med mikrofon så du kan høre dem og så videre

00:01:58 [VC]: Ja, det er meget vigtigt syntes jeg selv når man spiller CS:GO competitive at man har mikrofonen og kan for det meste snakke med dem du spiller med så du kan give info til hvor spillerne er og forskellige ting.

00:02:13 [FH]: Du snakkede lidt om, var det Twitch du så på og hvad var det andet?

00:02:18 [VC]: YouTubeLive

00:02:22 [FH]: YouTubeLive har jeg ikke rigtigt set, hvordan fandt du frem til det?

00:02:27 [VC]: Jeg bruger generelt faktisk rigtigt meget YouTube hvis man går ind og kigger på min telefon og min computer så bruger jeg rigtig mange timer på YouTube hver dag faktisk

00:02:38 [FH]: Er det så også en del deres Live side?

00:02:43 [VC]: Ja, hvis der ikke er nogen for eksempel forskellige engelske YouTubere og streamers som ikke streamer på Twitch fordi de er blevet kan man sige købt af YouTube fordi så tjener de flere penge det lidt sådan det Twitch og Youtube batter omkring, det hvem der kan give dem flest penge for at stream på deres streams og hvem der har flest views og følgere og sådan noget.

00:03:02 [FH]: Helt klart, det går de meget op i.

00:03:07 [FH]: Har du set noget på Mixer eller Facebook Live

00:03:13 [VC]: Jeg bruger ikke så meget Facebook og jeg har heller ikke hørt, eller jeg har hørt lidt om det men jeg bruger faktisk slet ikke det Mixer der.

00:03:21 [FH]: Det gør jeg heller ikke, men de har jo købt, hvem er det, Ninja for helt vildt stort beløb

00:03:29 [VC]: Ja og alle mulige andre store Fortninte streamers og CS:GO streamers og FIFA-spillere og alt muligt.

00:03:36 [FH]: De må godt nok bruge mange penge på det

00:03:41 [VC]: De har også rigtigt mange penge

00:03:45 [FH]: Helt sikkert, har du selv prøvet at streame nogen af dine spil?

00:03:51 [VC]: Ja, jeg har prøvet at streame CS:GO og Fortnite da jeg spillede det meget, det er Fortnite i sær.

00:04:01 [FH]: Lykkedes det dig at få nogen viewers på det?

00:04:06 [VC]: Altså, der er noget der kaldes, jeg streamede så på Twitch på det tidspunkt, der fik jeg på et tidspunkt noget der hedder et host hvor der er en stor streamer eller det er bare en streamer der sender alle hans seere over på min stream. Og der blev der engang hostet en som hed Max som havde 400 og et eller andet views så der var lige pludseligt 500 mennesker eller sådan noget der sad og så min stream. Det højeste jeg har været oppe på det er nok 513 men normalt hvis der ikke bliver hostet så er det nok imellem 5 og 20.

00:04:37 [FH]: Kan du huske hvordan gik det til at du blev hostet?

00:04:44 [VC]: Jeg sad bare i min egen verden og sad og spillede og tror faktisk jeg sad og havde vundet nogle games og så havde jeg siddet i noget der hedder hostet altså sådan hvor at du kan blive hostet. Og så var jeg inde og se, jeg har faktisk et klip hvor jeg sidder med en af mine venner og bliver hostet af ham Max for første gang med 200 og et eller andet viewers han har faktisk hostet mig to gange.

00:05:00 [VC]: Jeg har lige købt nyt keyboard, hvis du kender det der hedder Ducky One 2 mini?

00:05:06 [FH]: Jeg syntes at jeg har hørt navnet

00:05:12 [VC]: Det er der mange der er interesserede i lige i øjeblikket, så jeg købte det faktisk billigt på tilbud til 1000 kr selvom det det ikke lyder særligt billigt. Og så har jeg købt hvor der også er de der arrows med nede i hjørnet så du kan skifte mellem alle mulige ting.

00:05:31 [FH]: Hvor købte du det fra, kan du huske det?

00:05:38 [VC]: Jeg købte det fra Proshop

00:05:45 [FH]: Du sagde du have købt noget andet også udstyr?

00:05:53 [VC]: Jeg har købt her for i nyere tid har jeg købt ny skærm også og det headset jeg sidder og bruger lige nu og så jeg købt en mikrofon sådan en der står på bordet.

00:06:02 [FH]: Hvad er det for en skærm du har?

00:06:07 [VC]: Den hedder en Acer gaming skærm sort og så er det sådan en 27 tommer med 144hz

00:06:19 [FH]: Så det er en rigtig gaming en der

00:06:25 [VC]: Så jeg har faktisk 3 skærme lige nu

00:06:31 [FH]: Er det så den du bruger mest den 144hz?

00:06:36 [VC]: Ja, den står i midten

00:06:42 [FH]: Så havde du headset

00:06:51 [VC]: Ja, jeg har det der hedder et HyperX CloudFire

00:06:59 [FH]: Og har du så købt en separat mikrofon eller bruger du headset mikrofonen

00:07:10 [VC]: Altså lige nu fordi at min mikrofon den blev brugt til noget, vi havde sådan noget film uge i sidste uge hvor vi skulle hvor vi skulle lave film og musik videoer og sådan noget i hele ugen og der brugte vi så den mikrofon jeg normalt gamer og bruger til at optage med over på skolen. Så lige nu der har jeg faktisk glemt den over på skolen.

00:07:35 [FH]: Hvordan har du fundet frem til de her ting

00:07:43 [VC]: Jeg har jo egentligt gået efter tilbud og så har jeg været rimelig meget inde og kigge efter forskellige ting som jeg har brug for, ikke lige

nu og her men som jeg godt kunne tænke mig og så havde jeg jo fødselsdag og jul næsten fem dage fra hinanden ik og der havde jeg mest kun ønsket mig penge så jeg havde rimelig mange valgmuligheder

00:08:06 [FH]: Hvordan fandt du frem til dem, var du inde på YouTube eller Twitch eller spurgte du nogen til råds.

00:08:17 [VC]: Altså der er to fra min klasse der havde det keyboard jeg sidder med lige nu det er Ducky One 2 Mini og havde de så med i skole og så har jeg også prøvet det hjemme hos dem og det syntes jeg virkede meget godt og det andet keyboard jeg havde det er et Sandberg et eller andet som jeg har haft i 3 år så jeg syntes det var på tide at få det skiftet ud.

00:08:41 [FH]: Hvordan med mikrofonen og headsettet var det også tilbud du faldt over eller?

00:08:54 [VC]: Ja det headset her det koster lige nu 550 eller sådan noget og jeg købte det til 400. Mikrofonen den var sat ned fra 1000 til 750 og skærmen den var sat ned fra 2500 til 1700. Det her keyboard det var sat ned fra 1500 til 1000

00:09:10 [FH]: Så keyboardet kunne du prøve gennem nogle venner, mikrofonen købte du den uden at have prøvet det af?

00:09:16 [VC]: Ja, jeg er den eneste i min klasse der har sådan en gaming mikrofon eller streaming mikrofon eller hvad man nu kan kalde det.

00:09:23 [FH]: Kan du huske så du nogen reviews af den inden du købte den?

00:09:33 [VC]: Jeg så mange YouTube videoer med engelske YouTubere der brugte dem i deres gaming videoer og der syntes jeg at den lød rimelig god.

00:09:42 [FH]: Var det så det samme med skærm og headset

- 00:09:51 [VC]: Skærmen syntes jeg var fed fordi Jacob han har sagt at den så rimelig god ud for en rimelig pris fordi den var blevet sat på tilbud ik. Så tænkte jeg han har nok styr på det, sådan en kunne jeg godt tænke mig. Og så er det fordi at jeg faktisk bare altid har drømt om at have 3 skærme fordi at jeg har streamet meget på et tidspunkt og der var det rimeligt godt at have en skærm til at spille på en skærm til at se din stream og en skærm til at styre din enten stream eller musik eller hvad du vil have i baggrunden. De fleste gode streamere eller hvad man kan sige de har 3 eller faktisk 4 skærme.
- 00:10:25 [FH]: Hold da op
- 00:10:29 [FH]: Kan du huske hvornår begyndte du at streame, du sagde Fortnite havde du streamet meget?
- 00:10:41 [VC]: Ja det var faktisk for det meste lige da det kom ud og det kom ud i 17 tror jeg der streamede jeg det rimeligt meget, en gang om ugen måske. Så begyndte jeg at streame lidt CS:GO da jeg syntes at Fortnite begyndte at blive kedeligt. Så tror jeg stoppede med at streame for et års tid siden så syntes jeg ikke rigtigt at det var spændende for der var mellem 5 og 10 mennesker der begyndte at se mine streams. Altså jeg sad jo i flere timer og streamede det og man fik jo ikke sådan noget for det vel, man gjorde det bare af fri vilje, så til sidst syntes jeg det begyndte at blive sådan lidt fordi der var flere og flere mennesker der ikke gad og se mine streams til sidst sidder man der med 3 der sidder og kigger og man sidder i flere timer for at underholde, det er rimeligt svært.
- 00:11:23 [FH]: Gav de dig, hvad hedder det, bits?
- 00:11:28 [VC]: Ja Twitch har det der hedder bits. Der var nogle engang i mellem, jeg havde ikke kørt på det tidspunkt så jeg havde slået min MobilePay til, så det vil sige at der kom notifikationer hver gang de overførte MobilePay. Så jeg tror jeg har fået doneret i alt den tid jeg har streamet der har jeg måske fået en 200 kroner i alt.

- 00:11:47 [FH]: Det er heller ikke så meget i forhold til hvor meget arbejde du har lagt i det, men det er da meget fedt at der var nogen der gad donere syntes jeg.
- 00:12:03 [VC]: Ja, jeg havde på et tidspunkt gold hvor det var jeg sagde at, jeg havde rimeligt små beløb for jeg vidste folk ikke ville rigtig give det store, så jeg skrev 5 kroner, så kunne man joine mit party og tage et game med mig og 10 kroner så kunne man blive venner med mig på Steam sådan permanent og spille engang imellem med mig. Og så tror jeg jeg havde 20 kroner hvor at jeg ville åbne en kasse for dem og så ville de få det skin der var i kassen, så hvis jeg havde åbnet en kniv så havde de fået den kniv. Det var der rimeligt mange der prøvede. Jeg fik så kun dårlige våben. Jeg har faktisk et skin på min Steam account, det koster, min M4A, 12.5 Euro, jeg tror for i alt har jeg nok skins til omkring 50 til 60 euro. Min AK den har jeg i StatTrack og den har jeg jo mange dræbte med, jeg runder snart tusind drab med den.
- 00:12:41 [FH]: Kan du huske, var Fortnite det første spil du streamede?
- 00:12:50 [VC]: Det var nok det første spil jeg begyndte at streame
- 00:12:56 [FH]: Kan du huske hvordan du sådan opdagede streams?
- 00:13:02 [VC]: Det var fordi at jeg syntes at der var rigtig mange amerikanske streamere og sad jeg og så en der hedder MrBeast som havde rigtig rigtig mange penge som sad og fyrede 100.000 dollar af til en eller anden lille streamer med nul viewers og så sad jeg og tænkte at hvis jeg var så heldig ik, så tror jeg godt jeg ville kunne begynde at streame. Det var faktisk derfor at jeg begyndte at streame. Og så efter at jeg havde streamet måske tre fire gange så tænkte jeg det kommer nok ikke til at ske men jeg syntes sku egentligt at det er meget sjovt og så blev jeg ved.
- 00:13:34 [FH]: Hvornår begyndte du at kigge på Streams selv?

00:13:40 [VC]: Det har jeg faktisk gjort lige siden jeg fik min første iPad i 2012 eller 13 eller deromkring. Der sad jeg faktisk engang imellem og så sådan nogle børne streams eller hvad man skal sige. Sådan seriøse spil streams det er nok siden 16 tror jeg, måske slutningen af 15.

00:14:01 [FH]: Det er også et stykke tid

00:14:06 [VC]: Jeg fik først min computer, jeg tror jeg har haft min første computer for fem seks år siden.

00:14:13 [FH]: Er der andre i din klasse der gamer

00:14:18 [VC]: Ja der er faktisk 80 procent af drengene der spiller eller der er to der ikke spiller så meget

00:14:26 [FH]: Streamer de også?

00:14:31 [VC]: Altså, efter jeg begyndte at streame så var der faktisk 2 af dem der også syntes at det var sjovt at side og streame, så da jeg stoppede så gik der lige en måned eller to, så stoppede de også fordi de fandt ud af at det tog lidt lang tid og til sidst så gad man ikke rigtig bruge tid på det.

00:14:52 [FH]: Hvordan med Fortnite, det sagde du at det var du ligesom blevet træt af nu.

00:15:01 [VC]: Ja, det syntes jeg er begyndt at blive lidt for urealistisk der begyndte at komme simpelthen så mange mærkelige updates til det. Da jeg begyndte at spille det der hed det season 1, hvor der var mange steder at lande og du havde pistol og alt sådan noget og nu er der lige pludselig kommet laser guns og der er kommet Starwars tema og der er kommet noget kæmpe, alle mulige mærkelige ting du kan svømme nu og du kan flyve jeg syntes simpelthen det begyndte at blive alt for urealistisk.

00:15:33 [FH]: Der er simpelthen for mange ting?

00:15:37 [VC]: Jeg er begyndt at syntes at realistiske spil er lidt sjovere.

00:15:45 [FH]: Er det primært så pc du spiller eller?

00:15:53 [VC]: Jeg har spillet rigtig rigtig meget PlayStation inden min mor mødte Jacob. Fordi at Jacob han viste mig ligesom computer og så begyndte jeg at spille rigtig meget computer. Fordi at jeg sad jo og sagde at PlayStation det var det bedste i verden ik, så jeg har faktisk en PlayStation her ved siden af og bruger kun til Netflix, den er blevet rimelig støvet, jeg bruger den ikke rigtig.

00:16:19 [FH]: Hvilke PlayStation var det så?

00:16:24 [VC]: Jeg havde PlayStation 2 og 3 inden mine forældre de blev skilt da jeg boede i Sæby der havde jeg min playstation 2 som jeg sad og spillede sådan nogle små Lego spil det var ikke helt det bedste. Så fik jeg PS3 hvor jeg stod op i sommerferien og stod op klokken 6 om morgenen for at sidde og spille GTA hele dagen ik.

00:16:44 [FH]: Spillede du andet?

00:16:48 [VC]: Der spillede jeg faktisk rigtig meget Call of Duty og GTA. Og så da jeg begyndte at spille computer så stoppede jeg lidt med GTA fordi at det kostede lidt mere på computer og det skulle jeg selv betale fandt jeg ud af.

00:17:07 [FH]: Det kan jeg godt se, det er lidt træls

00:17:14 [VC]: For nu bliver jeg også lige heromkring i april efter også min konfirmation der får jeg også arbejde tror jeg. Hvis du ved Havnsø grillen, der skal jeg måske arbejde.

00:17:21 [FH]: Der arbejdede din mor tidligere ikke?

00:17:28 [VC]: Ja.

00:17:31 [FH]: Hvad syntes du om skins i Fortnite og CS:GO, er det noget du har brugt penge på?

- 00:17:40 [OC]: Jeg tror jeg har brugt rigtig rigtig meget, det der er fedt ved for eksempel Fortnite og CS:GO det er at du kan ikke købe så du bliver bedre du kan ikke købe ting som gør dig bedre inde i spillet det er fair og lige for alle. Så derfor er et rimeligt ligegyldige penge man har brugt på spillene men fordi at jeg syntes at de der skins de ser fede ud, det er jo præcis det samme i Fortnite, jeg tror også jeg har brugt omkring 1.000 kroner på Fortnite skins og battlepass og alle de der ekstra ting du kan få.
- 00:18:01 [FH]: Købte du så V-Bucks bundles?
- 00:18:09 [VC]: Jeg har købt et af de der bundles der til 5 til 10 Euro på et tidspunkt tror jeg, dengang at jeg spillede det meget.
- 00:18:22 [FH]: Hvad med de der crates i CS:GO?
- 00:18:29 [VC]: Ja, jeg har nok brugt 20 til 30 euro på crates som jeg ikke har fået særligt meget ud af.
- 00:18:42 [FH]: Ah, ja mange af dem er der ikke noget godt i.
- 00:18:50 [VC]: En af mine venner åbnede faktisk en kniv på et tidspunkt til omkring 2 til 3 hundrede euro. Du kan jo hvis du går in på Steam markedet, så kan man finde knive, lad os se, den dyreste koster 1.620 euro den dyreste, bare for et skin inde i et spil ik
- 00:19:05 [FH]: Det er da veldt, hvad syntes du der er fedt ved skins? Hvordan udvælger du et du gerne vil have?.
- 00:19:18 [VC]: Hvis jeg skal have et fedt skin fx i CS:GO så går jeg efter noget som hvor det selvfølgelig er billigt men også er noget jeg kommer til at bruge meget inde i spillet, for eksempel jeg sælger altid de skins som revolveren i CS:GO den bruger jeg aldrig for der har jeg slået Deagle til så hvis jeg får nogle revolver skins så sælger jeg dem for jeg bruger ikke revolver.

00:19:52 [FH]: Har du prøvet at få et drop mens du så en Stream?

00:20:00 [VC]: Ja det har jeg, jeg har prøvet at få droppet et skin til en shotgun tror jeg til 4 euro som jeg solgt fordi jeg ikke bruger shotgun særligt meget. Ellers får man normalt de der små skins til 0.2 euro eller 0.4 euro ik.

00:20:17 [FH]: Er du fan af nogen esports teams?

00:20:23 [VC]: Jeg vil ikke sige jeg er fan af nogen teams, men jeg kan da godt lide for eksempel Astralis fordi at det er et dansk hold og spiller meget godt og har nogle rimeligt gode strategier.

00:20:38 [FH]: Hvilke Streamere så du da du spilled Fortnite?

00:20:45 [VC]: Fortnite der så jeg faktisk ikke så meget ham der Ninja, jeg så mest, han hedder Tefui hvid du kender ham og Boga og Miss og Quality og alle de der store streamers.

00:20:59 [FH]: Har du prøvet noget af det her betting eller gambling?

00:20:06 [VC]: Ja det har jeg, jeg har faktisk prøvet noget som jeg virkelig virkelig fortryder i dag fordi at på det tidspunkt spillede jeg ikke særligt meget CS:GO hvor det var at jeg var inde og bette nogen af mine skins for jeg tænkte jeg kommer nok ikke til at spille det særligt meget mere. Så jeg bettede fire fem af mine bedste skins og fik faktisk et rimeligt fedt AK skin, det der hedder Bloodspot, til 44 euro eller hvad det nu var. Og der tænkte jeg nå, det var sgu egentligt meget godt og så solgte jeg det og gav min gamle account til min fætter for han spillede meget CS:GO og så sagde jeg at jeg skulle have et gift card til GTA. Så der fik jeg et giftcard der svarede til ca 40 euro og han fik min account til omkring 40 euro ik. Og så det skin han har i dag det der Bloodspot der det ville jeg rigtig gerne have tilbage, for nu er jeg ved at spille CS:GO rigtig meget igen. Så det fortryder jeg lidt, det er nok det bedste jeg nogensinde har vundet i CS:GO.

00:20:53 [FH]: Ah, kan du huske hvilken side det var på?

00:21:02 [VC]: Det er en hjemmeside der er lukke ned i dag, jeg tror den hedder CS:GO Rullette eller et eller andet jeg tror i hvert fald ikke man kan åbne den i Danmark mere.

00:21:11 [FH]: Bittede du så på en Esports kamp eller hvad bittede du på?

00:21:20 [VC]: Nej sådan noget hvor du roolede du satte dine skins ind og så var der en anden der satte skins ind til ca samme værdi ik. Og så vandt du lidt og tabte lidt og så på et tidspunkt hvis du havde noget der var ok godt så lagde du det det ind i sådan en bunke og så ligesom du kan trade nogle skins inde i CS:GO, så lagde jeg fem seks skins ind og så fik jeg det der Blodsport der så heldig som jeg var. Der kunne man også have fået et eller andet sygt dårligt skin til 0 euro eller en kinv til 3000. Der vil jeg sige der syntes jeg selv jeg var rimelig heldig.

00:21:53 [FH]: Lad mig lige forstå det korrekt, er det mod andre eller mod selve siden?

00:22:04 [VC]: Det er faktisk en blanding, først så better du mod online folk og så bagefter så ligger du det ind og så får du noget mod siden.

00:22:13 [FH]: Ah, okay. Du har jo selv lootboxes på din stream, men når du selv ser Twitch eller YouTube live har du så set nogle af de streamers der åbner boxes?

00:22:29 [VC]: Ja er er en dansk streamer eller YouTuber eller hvad man nu vil kalde ham jeg ser meget faktisk en der hedder MarcusHD som åbner han og spiller meget CS:GO og streamer rigtig meget. Han åbner faktisk rimeligt tit knive hvis man kan sige det sådan og han har måske også over 30 eller 40 knive i sti inventory. Han købte også på et tidspunkt 40 af de der Howl M4A4 skins i CS:GO de kostede 1.000 euro på det tidspunkt og han solgte dem videre til 1.200 euro og han købte jeg tor det var 40 eller 42 af dem, et var fuldstændigt vanvittigt. Han tjente jeg tror det var ti eller tyve tusinde kroner.

- 00:23:06 [FH]: Det var da vildt. Er han en af dem der gambler også?
- 00:23:14 [VC]: Ja han har gamblet meget på sine streams, men det er han stoppet lidt med nu for han har lige solgt sin bil til 2 millioner fordi trak rimeligt meget i hans pung ik. Så han havde ikke særligt meget penge tilbage så derfor stoppede han lidt med det gambling der og solgte sin bil og købte en lidt billigere bil. Han havde sådan en Mercedes AMG C63 tror jeg.
- 00:23:48 [FH]: Det er også en meget fed bil, men der skal man vist sælge rimelig mange skins for at få råd til det.
- 00:24:01 [FH]: Du nævnte tidligere at du ikke brugte så meget tid på Facebook, hvis du tænker lidt på social medier og sådan, har du mange kontakter gennem Steam og Discord og gaming relaterede kontakter?
- 00:24:17 [VC]: Ja jeg har faktisk rigtig mange Engelske og Europæiske venner som snakker engelsk over Steam som jeg spiller et par gange med.
- 00:24:28 [FH]: Nogen af dem er det så gennem Twitch du er kommet i kontakt med dem?
- 00:24:36 [VC]: Nej, det er faktisk gennem games i CS:GO jeg er blevet venner med dem og så har jeg siddet og skrevet lidt med dem og spillet nogle flere games med dem.
- 00:24:49 [FH]: Hvordan fandt du frem til Discord?
- 00:25:00 [VC]: Det gjorde jeg for fordi jeg brugte jo Skype for eksempel da jeg spillede Call of Duty med Jacob, der brugte jeg Skype. Men jeg syntes at der var mange af mine venner og mange af dem jeg kendte og mange Twitch og Youtubere der begyndte at bruge Discord. Der tænkte jeg at der er ikke mange venner mere jeg har på Skype, så flytter jeg over på Discord og det bruger jeg så i dag. Jeg tror jeg begyndte at bruge det for måske 2 år siden.
- 00:25:31 [FH]: Det syntes jeg også det virker bedre end Skype.

00:25:39 [FH]: Følger du nogen gaming streamers på Snap eller TikTok eller Instagram?

00:25:48 [VC]: SnapChat der er der sådan nogle MyStories du kan følge, der følger jeg nogle gaming stories.

00:25:59 [FH]: Sender du også dine egne stories ud?

00:26:05 [VC]: Det er mest på Snapchat, men ikke så meget på Instagram.

00:26:17 [FH]: Når du har spillet Fortnite så har du jo prøvet Epic Games Store, men nu er du så tilbage til CS:OG. Hvad foretrækker du egentligt?

00:26:26 [VC]: Lige nu er det CS:GO

00:26:30 [FH]: Ja, jeg tænker mere på Steam eller Epic games?

00:26:35 [VC]: Nå, altså Epic games de har ikke så mange spil eller, de har mange spil men jeg er ikke så meget til, hvad hedder de nu, World of Warcraft og LOL.

00:26:48 [FH]: Så den typer er du ikke så meget til.

00:26:57 [VC]: Nej, men Steam de har de der spil, det er kun Fortnite jeg har prøvet på Epic. Steam der syntes jeg der er mange flere valgmuligheder.

00:27:09 [FH]: Du har vel også dine venner, er de primært via Steam?

00:27:16 [VC]: Ja der er stadig nogen af dem der bruger Epic games når du spiller Fortnite, men vi er i hvert fald flest der spiller over Steam, CS:GO og GTA og Unturned og Rust og alle de der spil vi spiller.

00:27:34 [FH]: Hvordan i CS:GO egentligt, der er noget om at der er kommet meget mere af de her Operations ikke og sådan noget ik?

00:27:50 [VC]: Ja de har lavet meget om de er både begyndt at få det der Battle Royale ind altå hvor du lander et sted og så skal mod alle de andre ik.

På et lidt tørre map en det normale CS:GO. Så er de også begyndt at få Battle Pass og alt det der som der lidt er taget fra Fortnite.

00:28:12 [FH]: Spiller du nogle af de der Battle Pass?

00:28:18 [VC]: Nej, jeg køber det ikke i CS:GO for det syntes jeg og det er der også mange af mine venner der har sagt det er direkte spil af penge for du får så lidt altså du får måske et eller to skins og så et skin til din man for 13 14 euro eller hvor meget det nu er og det er rigtig sjældent at du får noget godt i det der. Så kan du få klistermærker og så har du betalt 15 euro for det. Der syntes jeg man fik lidt mere i Fortnite. Der får du en ting eller to hver gang du kommer et tier op

#### 11.1.14 Andy

00:00:00:00 [Michael]: Cool. So how did you get into CS? What made you want to play it?

00:00:10:17 [Andy]: So the first time I've played CS was at a local LAN party with my friends. So basically, my friends introduced me to the game. We played it against each other for a whole night and I really enjoyed it, since I also could feel like I was getting better with every round we have played.

00:00:29:08 [Michael]: Okay, cool. So when was this, for how long have you been playing CS?

00:00:38:06 [Andy]: The first time I played cs was around 2006 at the LAN that I mentioned. But I had large breaks in between where focused on other things in life, for example other games or sport, school and so on. From 2008-2010 I played a lot CS, and then from 2014-2020 I picked it up again, even though I was also gone there like a whole year since I went on an exchange.

00:01:06:10 [Michael]: Okay. So just, just returning to the start of Counterstrike, right. What was the first version of CS you ever played? How was the game back then?

00:01:19:07 [Andy]: The first version I have ever played was CS 1.6. The game felt difficult at first, since the old 1.6 mechanics in regards to movement and weapon control were way more harsher than today in CS:GO. I also remember how finding people to play against was a real pain in the butt. We had to use third party tools or websites like IRC or gegnersuche.de in order to find enemies

00:01:50:28 and give them our server IP. Most of the games ended up being unbalanced because there was no real ranking system in place. But yeah, I tried other game genres after I stopped playing around 2012 and I later on switched directly to CS:GO in 2014.

00:02:08:05 [Michael]: Yeah. Okay. I see. How come you have never played CS:S?

00:02:21:08 [Andy]: I mean, I have tried it, but I didn't like the visuals and it also felt way different than 1.6 and I think the overall skill floor was way lower, making it more noob friendly game in general. Also the mechanics were watered down in CS:S, for example movement was much more simpler and offered like less possibilities, so it reduced the overall skill ceiling. I think that the core of CS 1.6 players felt the same way, so they also never made the switch.

00:02:52:11 We kinda labeled CS:S as the newb friendly game. But yeah, it kinda sucked since the Counterstrike community was like ripped in half.

00:03:04:21 [Michael]: Okay. But, but then as I understand you jumped back into CS:GO when it came around. How was it back then? Kind of how, how did that feel compared to a 1.6 and CS:S?

00:03:23:20 [Andy]: I think it released around 2012, I remember playing much Diablo 3 during this time. I was really disappointed, not gonna lie. The game felt very like "clunky" and it wasn't really enjoyable at all. We played like 1

map of CS:GO and then went back and played some CS 1.6 instead. We immediately noticed that CS 1.6 felt way smoother.

00:03:52:02 [Michael]: All right. But I believe you said you're still kind of playing CS. Go now. What made you stick with it? What do you think was the main reason why CS:GO was such a success in the end?

00:04:09:14 [Andy]: I personally think the combination of skins and esports. Skins were already popular in other games such as MOBA's during that time, so obviously the majority of the community also enjoyed them in CS:GO. Personally, for me esports was probably the reason why I came back to CS in general. I followed the esports scene of CS 1.6 as well. And then I saw like one of my favorite teams of CS 1.6 about to play one of the CS:GO Majors,

00:04:42:10 the 2014 Katowice Major. And to my pleasant surprise my favorite team went on and kept winning and in the end won the whole tournament. Man, I really enjoyed watching that tournament and also feeling the energy and excitement of the crowd. It really got me hooked to the CS:GO esports scene. Moreover, I think websites like CS:GO Lounge for example where people used to bet on games also had a huge impact

00:05:11:11 of the overall viewership of CS:GO esports games, since the viewers were feeling more engaged with the games, because yeah they really wanted to win their bets, so yeah...that probably helped the scene as well.

00:05:23:11 [Michael]: Nice. Well I see, so you, you mentioned kind of the skins and that stuff amongst other things. What, what do you think about them of in CS:GO?

00:05:36:09 [Andy]: I think they are cool. I have a solid collection of skins myself. It's probably the best form of monetization, since it doesn't make the game like Pay to Win, unlike Fifa with Ultimate Team and their OP player cards.

00:05:52:03 [Michael]: I see you kinda like them. Oh, so you have bought some yourself, what was your main motivation behind that?

00:06:10:14 [Andy]: I think actually... multiple reasons. One reason was of course for my own kinda satisfaction, I think some skins really look cool and add something to the game. Also, it was kinda cool dropping your own skins during a round to one your friends, and they would give you some feedback about how they look and so on. Another reason...maybe giving back something to the developer. I've played CS for so many years and barely spent anything on the game,

00:06:42:02 so yeah I think buying a skin here and there to also support the esports scene like with the purchase of autograph/team sticker capsules, it's a nice thing to do. I also think the ability to get your money back from them is also like another purchase motivation so to speak. It feels like you are rather renting them in a sense and in some cases you even make profit over time with them since they

00:07:11:10 gain in value, so it feels like making a smart investment..

00:07:15:29 [Michael]: Oh, that's interesting. Could you just clarify, so like when you, when you bought something esports related, like the autographed stickers that money would go to the esports organizations or?

00:07:32:02 [Andy]: Yeah, exactly. Like a set percentage of the money would go like to the esports teams directly. I think it was 50%.

00:07:39:03 [Michael]: Alright, cool. So, you seem a bit attached to your skins. Do you have any favorites and why do you like your skins?

00:07:54:03 [Andy]: I really love my karambit knife, apart from that I also think the AWP Dragonlore is cool and unique, basically a skin you don't see every day. But nothing for me personally, since it costs around 1000-2000€ depending on the condition.

00:08:11:28 [Michael]: Yeah, that, that's a heck of a lot of money. What, why do you think it's, it's kind of worth so much? What, value does such as skin have besides kind of looking good?

00:08:26:25 [Andy]: Well yeah, because there is a thriving market for CS:GO skins and there is a high demand and obviously a limited supply like with the AWP Dragonlore for example. Also, websites like OP Skins back then made it easy to convert skins back into real money again, so people were not afraid of spending hefty sums on skins.

00:08:49:04 [Michael]: Okay. So you mentioned OP-Skins? What was that?

00:08:55:24 [Andy]: Oh, that's basically like a third-party trading website, which acts like a middleman between trades for users, meaning that it was also really safe to use. You can't withdraw your Steam Wallet balance on Steam, you can only use that balance on other Skins or other games within the Steam Platform. That's why OP Skins got so popular, since it acted as

00:09:23:11 third-party service which finally added this possibility for the users.

00:09:27:06 [Michael]: All right. So it's like a trading website. When did you begin using this? How did you kind of find out about it?

00:09:40:16 [Andy]: So, yeah the first third party trading website I used was probably CS:GO Lounge, since I would transfer my items there in order to bet on esports games. However, I quickly found out that betting on games wasn't really for me and rather focused on trading instead, because trading provided a stable form of income.

00:10:13:18 So yeah coming back to the question, in general, websites like OP skins simply offered cheaper prices than the Steam Community market, since OP Skins transaction fees were way lower than the Steam market ones. I also got quite invested into the trading business in CS:GO, basically buying and reselling CS:GO items for profit. Back then you could only sell items for a maximum like of 400 USD on the Steam Market, and

most of the items I was dealing with were worth way more than that, so essentially

00:10:42:07 I was forced to use third party websites...unless I wanted to lose a lot of money. I also rather was the type of guy who when he wanted like a particular skin, would put money away over a period of time and simply buy it, and not waste money on opening lootboxes.

00:11:06:08 [Michael]: Oh, I see. Can you, can you kind of remember how much money you made out of skins? What was your kind of best investment you make?

00:11:19:07 [Andy]: Uh, so during my peak period of trading where I traded for, I don't know, around three months very intensively, I made around 2,000 USD. And right now I still have my steam inventory, which also gained a lot of value over like the last three years. I think it went from 800 USD to like 2200 USD.

00:11:40:20 [Michael]: All right. So that's, yeah, to some extent comparative to just kind of trading on the stock market or buying antiques. Um, so you mentioned that you thought that loot boxes were a waste of money. Why do you think that?

00:12:03:11 [Andy]: Because I think it is another form of gambling and just money burning in general. If I know that this loot box can have a nice skin, I will probably just buy the skin from the market. During my 6 years of CS:GO I probably spent around 100€ on opening cases, but I did that rather just for fun and not really expecting too much of it. I also did that together

00:12:35:21 with friends, we would sit on Teamspeak together and watch each other opening cases. So yeah, that was kinda fun..

00:12:41:16 [Michael]: All right. I see. So, you used it a little bit, but not that much. So yeah, I mean you mentioned gambling and I think that in general it has been mentioned quite a lot in the media. Can you name some gambling scandals, which come to your mind?

00:13:04:17 [Andy]: Oh yeah for sure, sadly there is a long list of that. Probably CS:GO Lotto and CS:GO shuffle with TmarTn and Phantoml0rd were the biggest ones. Basically, the owners of these gambling websites were huge influencers on either Twitch or YouTube and they advertised these websites to their young and probably some of them underage audience. They didn't really admit that they actually own these

00:13:36:11 websites, and are essentially never actually at risk losing anything, so acted like actual scumbags. The sites were probably also rigged you know. They could tell when someone is going to win or lose, it was just disgusting in general, I can't really believe that they got away with that either.

00:14:06:02 Another scandal was the NA super team called IBuyPower having someone bet against them and lose the game on purpose, not sure if that's gambling but yeah it's match-fixing related. But these guys at least got punished and are still banned from Valve sponsored events until even this day.

00:14:30:17 [Michael]: Yeah, I remember reading about that. What are your thoughts in regard to gambling?

00:14:49:14 [Andy]: I mean, not a fan of it. Especially in CS:GO. Think a lot of young people were exposed to this whole gambling trend and lost a lot of money. I also had some friends who started to become more and more engaged and absorbed with this whole gambling stuff, thinking that if they continue playing, they will win and once they do they will stop playing and just cash out. Quite sad actually, because a

00:15:17:06 because a lot of them end up losing all their skins in the end.

00:15:21:01 [Michael]: Yeah. That does sound a lot like a real gambling. Um, but yeah, I think, think we've got to know a bit about that. Let's, move to some of the other kind of areas of engagement. So, CS:GO has

introduced something that's called operation passes. Have you used them before, or what do you think of them or other players in general?

00:15:46:19 [Andy]: Ah, I enjoy them and so does the majority of our community. They are something special, I really like the unique COOP missions where you can team up with a friend. I also like the unique rewards you can get from them. I just wish they would be more frequent, we almost waited for like 3 years for the latest operation to come out

00:16:08:01 [Michael]: Oh yeah, that's a really long time. So for these operations, I believe you have to pay for them. What made you willing to pay for them?

00:16:27:23 [Andy]: Uhm. Probably main reason for me are the cool rewards and giving something back to the developers. Because you can also play the mission without buying the operation pass.

00:16:46:29 [Michael]: Okay.

00:16:48:10 [Andy]: Some other friends of mine bought the pass along with all the stars right at the beginning, so they would get all the rewards for the missions immediately. They were like speculating on my making a profit by selling them early on the Steam market. And they even did make a profit.

00:17:08:14 [Michael]: All right, let's see. Yeah, I didn't know you could do that. What do you think about the other game modes than competitive Matchmaking in CS:GO such as Dangerzone?

00:17:34:10 [Andy]: I really like the addition of Scrimmage and also like Deathmatch in general in order to warm up. Dangerzone isn't really for me, since I am not a big fan of the BR genre in general. I feel like if people want to play a good BR, they would rather just play PubG, Fortnite or COD instead you know. Otherwise...I like that they implemented old school CS 1.6 modes

00:18:07:06 like surf maps into CS:GO as well, which can be accessed through the community server browser

00:18:13:06 [Michael]: Ah, I see. Since you mentioned Fortnite. Have you ever played that and is that because it's better than the Dangerzone mode?

00:18:30:10 [Andy]: Never played Fornite myself, but I watched some streams.

00:18:38:14 [Michael]: All right. So, you have watched some streams? What are your thoughts on these?

00:18:47:13 [Andy]: Just think they are quite enjoyable to watch.

00:18:52:04 [Michael]: I see. What makes them enjoyable?

00:18:58:05 [Andy]: Because it's enjoyable to watch someone else get frustrated rather than myself. Also, popular people played Fortnite for example, watching Ninja play with Drake, stuff like that. Watching how they interact, like yeah, that was kind of cool.

00:19:42:01 [Michael]: Yeah. All right, cool. Um, yes. So they're linking back to Counterstrike. I mean, since you don't play Fortnite. Nowadays, CS:GO is free to play, it used to be pay to play. Can you explain what the CS:GO Prime Status is? Also did you buy that as well?

00:20:15:18 [Andy]: It's basically some sort of additional service, that allows you to play against other players who have the prime status only as well. In order to get the prime status, you need to buy it nowadays, and also link your phone number to it. And no, I never had to buy it, since I have been playing for a long time and all the older accounts got it automatically for free. We basically just needed to link our phone number in order to get it.

00:20:43:21 [Michael]: Alright, cool. So it has got kind of phone number verification. Did the switch to f2p surprised you? Also did it affect you in any way?

- 00:20:59:02 [Andy]: Not really to be honest. Most of the popular multiplayer games are free nowadays anyways, like Dota or Fortnite and LoL. CS:GO was also on sale quite regularly, where the game costed around 5 USD or something, which basically is not much anyways. And no, I didn't really feel the impact of the switch to f2p. I think
- 00:21:32:02 the switch to F2P basically impacted newer players and maybe like lower ranked players.
- 00:21:39:12 [Michael]: Speaking off new players, what do you think about the skill floor and skill ceiling in the game, is it easy to get into and is it sufficiently challenging at the top?
- 00:21:59:28 [Andy]: Uh, I mean compared to CS 1.6 the skill floor and overall skill ceiling are lower for sure... but still, when I compare it to other FPS like Overwatch for example, I feel like the skill floor is significantly higher. You can hop into Overwatch and basically have a good time already, whereas in CS:GO you basically don't really know what to do and people will get angry at you and you don't even know what you are doing wrong.
- 00:22:29:29 So I really think that for complete beginners, it might be very difficult to get into the game, even though the gameplay itself isn't really that complex. In all honesty I cannot imagine starting a game like CS:GO from the scratch without any help through friends, who basically act as like mentors and teach me how to play. Most of the time in my early CS days I spent a lot of time practicing in order to learn game mechanics like different spray patterns of guns and so on.
- 00:23:01:23 I would basically shoot a wall for hours straight to learn how to control the recoil, or jump around on an empty server to improve my movement mechanics. Luckily, I had friends who explained stuff and practiced a lot with me, so it didn't feel too lonely. So yeah, getting into CS and also mastering it is very difficult.

- 00:23:30:11 Overall, on a pro level I think that there is a maximum skill ceiling people like Simple or Zywoo starting to reach and most other pros are maybe not too far from that as well. It's really difficult to be good and dominant on an individual level alone in pro level CS:GO, since due to the set skill ceiling you cannot really get any better at some point. So most the dominant teams in CS:GO don't
- 00:24:00:17 necessarily have the best players, but they make up for that by very good and coordinated teamplay instead, which has an overall bigger impact on the outcome of matches.
- 00:24:11:08 [Michael]: Okay. I see. Um, so yeah, there you mentioned a bit about it being really difficult for, new players. You wouldn't really recommend it doing it alone. Do you have any recommendation as to how they should get into the game?
- 00:24:28:22 [Andy]: Yeah, find a group of people to play with. That's my first recommendation. Find a group of people you enjoy playing with. In an ideal scenario find people who are also willing to improve. Maybe hook up a more experienced friend and tell him to mentor you for maybe just an hour, because just one hour of mentorship of someone experienced will have a great impact on a completely new player.
- 00:25:03:08 Otherwise watch tutorials or read guides on YouTube or Reddit, they will be really helpful and explain in detail how to get better
- 00:25:12:11 [Michael]: Kkay, I see. And what is your rank in CS:GO?.
- 00:25:20:04 [Andy]: Oh, so yeah, my rank is called Global Elite and yeah, that's basically the highest rank you can achieve in MM.
- 00:25:29:07 [Michael]: Um, so I mean obviously you played lots of hours. What makes you keep playing? What are like your main motivations behind that?

00:25:42:21 [Andy]: That's actually a very good question! We have asked that ourselves multiple times. In the end we do not care really about our ranks. We just play to compete you know, while also having a good time; we love winning and competing against other teams. So yeah basically we use CS:GO as a tool to compete. We only play when we have 5 people on Teamspeak, since we don't really want to deal with random people who often tend to be like toxic

00:26:16:10 or annoying you know. Of course, we don't really play CS:GO every day, since it is quite taxing and stressful after a while, since we always stay focused during the games. We also face cheaters from time to time, which also is a real mood killer.

00:26:36:28 [Michael]: Oh. Cheaters yeah. I remember reading about that being bit of a problem in CS:GO. What, what was your experience with that?

00:26:51:21 [Andy]: I mean on our ranks, it isn't that much of an issue, but especially on lower ranks or non-prime match-making there are so many cheaters. It's crazy. Also the switch to f2p made it so much worse, cheaters will get banned and can just create a new account and cheat again. Yeah... I really feel sorry for new players. But yeah, cheating is just really bad, it ruins the fun for a lot of players,

00:27:21:25 really hope that one day we will able to fix that.

00:27:25:07 [Michael]: Yeah, that makes sense. And I guess you haven't cheated yourself right? How often do you personally face cheaters?

00:27:41:01 [Andy]: Haha, of course not. Sometimes, it's hard to tell if someone cheats or not. But blatant and obvious cheaters, maybe something like between 5-10% of all my matches played on my main high rank account. When we face a cheater, in that case then there is often a single cheater in the opposing team, who is using a spinbot and basically offers a boosting service to the

00:28:12:25 remaining 4 players in the lobby he is playing with. But yeah, if we are going through a phase, where we encounter a lot of cheaters in regular MM, we switch to third party matchmaking services.

00:28:25:14 [Michael]: All right. So let's just pick up on these boosting services, could you elaborate on that?

00:28:37:13 [Andy]: Yes. So basically, cheaters who invite people to their lobby in exchange for money or skins. Then they will play with them and yeah farm wins, so the people in the lobby can rank up quickly.

00:28:55:23 [Michael]: And you mentioned this third-party matchmaking services. Would you explain what those are?

00:29:07:29 [Andy]: Basically third party companies like FacelT or Esea who offer an own matchmaking service. They have their own servers, which run on 128 tick, so the servers feel smoother and more responsive. Also, they have a better AC client and a solid report function with admins and moderators on top of that. So there are not really that many cheaters on these third party match making services.

00:29:36:13 [Michael]: Ah, I see. Um, and how much did you pay to play on there?

00:29:44:29 [Andy]: Um, it depends on the match making service. For example, FacelT is even for free, but if you want to play in the premium queue, which also offers more functionality, stuff like that, I think it costs something around six euros a month

00:30:01:19 [Michael]: All right. So yeah, they kind of make money off of that thing. Are there other third party websites, you are using in regards to CS:GO?

00:30:18:21 [Andy]: Uhm. I mean sure. Basically, HLTV and reddit are two main ones. To keep myself informed about latest news or updates or about the esports scene in general. Then I use Twitch and YouTube of course, mostly to watch esports tournaments or highlight clips from these

tournaments. Some friends of mine also use like third party statistics websites,

00:30:51:14 where they can upload their games and archive their demos, so they have a detailed overview over their stats

00:30:58:26 [Michael]: Ah an overview over their stats, I see. Yeah. Yeah. And you, you talk quite a bit about esports. What made you engage with the esports scene?

00:31:20:04 [Andy]: Before the CS:GO esports scene I followed different scenes like the CS 1.6 scene or the HoN scene. So watching esports was not something entirely new for me. But the turning point for me to watch CS:GO as an esports, was to watch my favorite team, who transitioned from CS 1.6 to CS:GO. And also,

00:31:50:10 you are able to receive nice drops by linking your Twitch account to your Steam account, during CS:GO majors. All you had to do then is just watch the games, or at least keep the tab open and running to get some drops, you could sell on the Community Market.

00:32:16:15 [Michael]: Alright, cool. So, can you remember kind of how many drops you've gotten, and have you kept some of them or did you sell them all?

00:32:25:12 [Andy]: Uh, I'm gonna be honest. In the beginning, in the first few years, I probably got around 10, but then again, I have like multiple Counterstrike accounts. So, you know, that's what most of the people would do, they would watch those majors on like six to 10 accounts in order to farm those drops. So yeah. But I sold most of them cause some of them were worth like 30 Euro where you can get like a

00:32:56:03 Dragonlore for example out of them. But I would rather sell the case for 30 Euro than take the 0.02, you know, percentage on actually looting that skin.

00:33:04:03 [Michael]: Yeah, I mean that makes good sense. You said you had multiple accounts. Was that before or after the game went free to play? Did you pay for them?

00:33:17:05 [Andy]: Oh no, actually I paid for those. I used to have these accounts because of low ranked friends. This was I was able to play with them and teach them a bit. Because otherwise I wouldn't have been able to do so.

00:33:36:21 [Michael]: Awesome. Yeah. So, let's dive into streaming. Do you also watch other streaming content in regards to CS:GO?

00:33:56:00 [Andy]: Um, I mean I sometimes watch other esports athletes when they play FPL, basically a scrimmage league for pros. But yeah, mainly just highlight videos on YouTube, maybe sometimes some guides as well, like Nadeking, so I know how to throw perfect smokes. But apart from that not really, I think CS:GO in general is a bad game to be streamed on Twitch, since the Streamer has to mainly focus on

00:34:29:20 the game and cannot really interact with its community.

00:34:32:14 [Michael]: Ah, I see you say that you don't think it's that good for kind of a non esports streaming then. So, you mentioned, yeah, YouTube quite a bit. can you recommend some channels?

00:34:50:18 [Andy]: Sure, yeah for example Virre for highlight videos, he makes like an annual CS:GO rewind. As I said, Nadeking for how to throw like perfect grenades, and probably 3kliksphilip, he makes like interesting videos about the most recent

00:35:18:19 updates and how they might impact my gameplay.

00:35:22:22 [Michael]: I see. Does CS:GO has anything upcoming that you are excited for?

00:35:40:17 [Andy]: Uhm, yeah probably the next CS:GO Major. Gonna be blast watching that for sure.

00:35:45:17 [Michael]: You remember when that this?

00:35:51:15 [Andy]: I think the qualifiers are starting in late April and the actual tournament will be played in May.

00:36:01:22 [Michael]: So have you watched them only online then? Or have you ever gone to a tournament event yourself?

00:36:19:03 [Andy]: Actually, it did once. It was the very next major, which got me initially into watching Counterstrike. It was at a Gamescom 2014.

00:36:30:02 [Michael]: All right. Would you go to that again, if it came to Germany near you or do you prefer watching online?

00:36:41:02 [Andy]: Uh, it depends. I mean, if I could, you know, go there with some friends, I think I would go there. But since my favorite team is no longer around, probably not anymore.

00:36:53:19 [Michael]: Yeah. I think actually I forgot to ask you about that, what was your favorite team back then?

00:37:00:20 [Andy]: Oh, they're called Virtus Pro and I mean the team or organization still exists, but they picked up, you know, like a whole new roster. So, it has nothing to do with the old team I loved.

00:37:11:20 [Michael]: Okay. So, so you're kind of more invested in the individual players rather than the actual team organization? I see. So yeah, I mean you've been playing Counterstrike for a long time now. So, you have spent a fair amount on the Steam platform. So, what do you think about Steam?

00:37:34:13 [Andy]: Um, I mean I think it's an overall a solid platform, think I got so used to it that I actually don't know to really appreciate it. I never really had any complains about Steam itself.

00:37:49:08 [Michael]: Yeah. So you, you kind of got gotten used to it I guess. So, we talked about how you used the market, what about the Steam Workshop, have you kind of used that? What did you use it for?

00:38:09:13 [Andy]: Yeah a few times, Most of the times, to download update practice maps. Maps like aim\_botz are really helpful with warming up. I also had a look and some cool skins concepts there, which I found over reddit. If I liked the skins I gave them a nice rating.

00:38:31:26 [Michael]: All right. So you can give a bit of feedback ther. We talked a bit about Fortnire before. I guess, I mean, you watched a bit of a Fortnit. How do you think, they compare to each other, after watching both of them?

00:39:08:15 [Andy]: Yeah, I think they are two completely different games, also catering towards two different audiences. Think CS:GO is way more competitive, whereas Fornite is rather played in order to have a some fun.

00:39:34:28 [Michael]: Ah, yeah, I see. I think you also heard that Fortnite had a world cup and so on. How do you think Fortnite compares to CS:GO as an Esports? Do you think it can be also successful as an Esports?

00:39:58:22 [Andy]: That's a though one. I don't really know. Compared to CS:GO probably not. I think the BR genre in general is not really esports suited, since there are a lot of random elements to the game the players cannot really influence. And crowning someone a let's say a Major champion, where maybe half of the.

00:40:29:15 success was based on luck, uff I don't know, that's rough. I will admit that they draw in a large audience though and are fun to watch sure, so they might have a successful future regardless.

00:40:40:29 [Michael]: Ah, so you are bit more skeptical I guess. Um, yeah, I think that pretty much covered all my questions. So, yeah. Thanks for, thanks for giving the interview. Right. That was really helpful.

00:40:40:47 [Andy]: Thanks for having me. Bye.

## 11.2 Coding

### 11.2.1 Advergaming

<Files\Poppy Interview> - § 3 references coded [0,65% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,20% Coverage

I can't tell you that. I can say, though, that for Subway Surface, at Sybo. Most players don't spend a whole bunch of cash.

Reference 2 - 0,15% Coverage

Some of the techniques we used as well where you could watch an ad and earn something in-game.

Reference 3 - 0,30% Coverage

Obviously, the ad revenue goes to the company. So, getting them to do that, those kind of ads monetize really, really well, especially in the countries where perhaps they don't spend as much.

### 11.2.2 Challenge

<Files\Daniel Interview> - § 1 reference coded [1,31% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1,31% Coverage

I think it's a very broad skill range. So you have the players that are just gonna be casual and that's with every game. You're always going to have the people that are casual and they won't go above and beyond to get these high placements. And then you see that there's these players that, you know, will go above and beyond to get their first place spot no matter what it takes. The skill gap is so large because it's always changing. The meta in the game's always changing.

<Files\Jonas> - § 1 reference coded [0,61% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,61% Coverage

You know me. I get very competitive. And I cannot stand to lose. So right now I only play some games here and there on my phone. I mainly watch others play now.

<Files\Olivier Interview> - § 3 references coded [1,44% Coverage]

#### Reference 1 - 0,94% Coverage

its insanely infuriating when you start, um, but progressively you get a bit better and it definitely has a technical, uh, aspect to it where you can't just mash the buttons and hope for the best. You really have to, there is a lot of, of a, there's a lot to the game, especially when you start considering you have solos duos, uh, trios and uh, quads as well games and just the dynamic of the game changes completely depending on, uh, how many players you got and it's just, it's great. Mmm. It's one of those games that you have to play quite a lot to really get into, but when you do, it's quite, it's very satisfying.

#### Reference 2 - 0,28% Coverage

the ranked I think is quite good in Rocket league because it puts you against people who are, they are a very similar, uh, rank as you. Um, so it's, it's quite good to challenge yourself

#### Reference 3 - 0,21% Coverage

Um, Jeremy played a couple of times. Uh, he didn't really enjoy it again because he's just, his level was quite low. He got a bit demotivated.

### 11.2.3 Community

<Files\\Daniel Interview> - § 2 references coded [0,83% Coverage]

#### Reference 1 - 0,59% Coverage

You know, it's like you're there, but you're not. When you get a real like, you know, you're you feel like you're there when you're not. So I feel like there's a big connections that and I really enjoy those events.

#### Reference 2 - 0,24% Coverage

I do talk I do talk a lot about Forntie off line, mainly with a close group of friends.

<Files\\Dean interview> - § 4 references coded [2,19% Coverage]

#### Reference 1 - 0,28% Coverage

But the other side of that is trying to increase that sort of social element and get social bonds.

#### Reference 2 - 0,28% Coverage

And as you see with these social platforms, probably the best way to do that is with social groups.

#### Reference 3 - 0,74% Coverage

If you've got like more followers on your Instagram or your Facebook or whatever. That's the one you're going to go to the most. You know that you can have more interactions with that, bringing you back to that. And that's going to be taking more of your time.

#### Reference 4 - 0,89% Coverage

So I'm always on their news sites, which is normally the best place or their social media platforms to get the stuff as well I follow loads of people on Twitter. So I'm just constantly getting feeds of information, whether that be Wolfram's latest update, Runescape's latest update, Sea of Thieves' latest update.

#### <Files\\Jennifer> - § 2 references coded [1,35% Coverage]

#### Reference 1 - 1,04% Coverage

Not as much as I used to, but it definitely was. I used to be super active online and in online community, and also other fandoms. I have made a couple of good online friends, that I still meet regularly. I was kind of nerdy, and still am growing up, but I think, looking back, I was lonely and my social skills weren't up to scratch if we are both being totally honest. So I was super active on like loads of online forums, and chats among them twitch as well.

#### Reference 2 - 0,32% Coverage

Probably both really. I came for the content and then stayed for the personalities and the community, and then I reverted back to the content

#### <Files\\Napy> - § 2 references coded [2,22% Coverage]

#### Reference 1 - 1,35% Coverage

This is a trick question because while i love communities like Knockout.chat, the successor to Facepunch, I absolutely hate reddit. I think that in order to have useful information and meaningful discussion, you need to cut the fat with a hard moderation. Reddit is impossible to navigate because people keep spamming the same shit over and over again for karma, and some random posts get more visibility than a well thought argument just because the first one has a big woman's ass on display.

#### Reference 2 - 0,87% Coverage

I think the best communities are the ones that built themselves, separated from the devs. They'll be

able to critique bad things, and speak more freely. But it's also important for the devs to watch these channels, and also participate if possible. But i'd be wary of a community where a dev is also a moderator/admin.

<Files\Olivier Interview> - § 6 references coded [2,35% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,66% Coverage

No because I don't know him from my own childhood I going through friends of my brother so it mostly started off with my brother and I playing and then my brother's friends playing with me and then they're friends join in and then when we all realised that we had a mutual interests in TF2. We would just love to like four or five of us join a serve and just dominates everyone. Because we would all be on voice chat at the same time.

Reference 2 - 0,34% Coverage

Uh, I'd only really start playing because my friends played it. It wasn't really ever something I thought, yup, I want to turn on my PC and play CS:GO with strangers. It was always a game that I played with, uh, with friends.

Reference 3 - 0,27% Coverage

Uh, I was introduced by my group of Steam friends. Mmm. I think it was, again, mostly our friend nappy that, um, that started it. Mmm. I think he created the, erh our Discord group.

Reference 4 - 0,41% Coverage

ESC is something that my brother and I, we made years ago on steam, we created a group, an ESC group, which stands for while it was our school, European School Calum was our school. And then we would schedule events on that group and then they'd go and get notification

Reference 5 - 0,31% Coverage

So I think discord is a good way for him to get the word outs and then also join other channels and um, communicate with other people in the same sort of domain as he is, and then he just created this group,

Reference 6 - 0,36% Coverage

Uh, a fraction. Uh, I again, I've got Facebook really late, uh, in life. I only got it just to try and stay in touch with people that might not be able to be in touch with. Mmm. I dunno. Like 1% or less. Compare

it to steam and discord.

<Files\\Poppy Interview> - § 5 references coded [0,99% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,25% Coverage

So we had the largest gaming forums in the world and that's where we engaged with players. So there were forums separated into different skills just off topic.

Reference 2 - 0,08% Coverage

That was the main place where we engaged with people.

Reference 3 - 0,41% Coverage

But then they introduce friends chat and then clan chat where you could join together in a group and then talk there. We actually had a statistic back in I think it was 2011 or 2012 that half of the people who logged into Runescape didn't enter the game world.

Reference 4 - 0,13% Coverage

It has diluted it somewhat. Now a lot of people will use their discord to talk.

Reference 5 - 0,12% Coverage

No, so it's using the community in order to get people to play your game.

<Files\\Victor Interview DK> - § 2 references coded [0,70% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,31% Coverage

Nej, det er faktisk gennem games i CS:GO jeg er blevet venner med dem og så har jeg siddet og skrevet lidt med dem og spillet nogle flere games med dem.

Reference 2 - 0,39% Coverage

Ja der er stadig nogen af dem der bruger Epic games når du spiller Fortnite, men vi er i hvert fald flest der spiller over Steam, CS:GO og GTA og Unturned og Rust og alle de der spil vi spiller

## 11.2.4 CS:GO

<Files\\Jacob> - § 1 reference coded [0,24% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,24% Coverage

Like these guys don't want to do it, especially in CS:Go, especially in Dota. But I think goals and the applications for most of them, a lot of them could build huge personal brands, but no one, none of them want to do it.

<Files\\Victor Interview DK> - § 16 references coded [11,66% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,41% Coverage

Det er lidt forskelligt, for jeg har jo min papbror Lukas som bor i Vig og min lillebror Patrick og dem spiller jeg engang imellem noget CS:GO med dem, men ellers er det nok for det meste bare randoms.

Reference 2 - 0,69% Coverage

Ja, lige nu har jeg silver elite master, men det er fordi at jeg syntes tit at jeg kommer sammen med nogen jeg syntes er rigtig rigtig dårlige, vi taber altid. Så lige nu der står mine kampe at jeg har vundet, så har jeg tabt, så har jeg vundet, så har jeg tabt, så har jeg vundet, så har jeg tabt, sådan står der for det meste hele vejen.

Reference 3 - 0,43% Coverage

Ja, det er meget vigtigt syntes jeg selv når man spiller CS:GO competitive at man har mikrofonen og kan for det meste snakke med dem du spiller med så du kan give info til hvor spillerne er og forskellige ting.

Reference 4 - 0,20% Coverage

Ja, jeg har prøvet at streame CS:GO og Fortnite da jeg spillede det meget, det er Fortnite i sær

Reference 5 - 1,59% Coverage

Ja det var faktisk for det meste lige da det kom ud og det kom ud i 17 tror jeg der streamede jeg det rimeligt meget, en gang om ugen måske. Så begyndte jeg at streame lidt CS:GO da jeg syntes at Fortnite begyndte at blive kedeligt. Så tror jeg stoppede med at streame for et års tid siden så syntes jeg ikke rigtigt at det var spændende for der var mellem 5 og 10 mennesker der begyndte at se mine streams. Altså jeg sad jo i flere timer og streamede det og man fik jo ikke sådan noget for det vel, man

gjorde det bare af fri vilje, så til sidst syntes jeg det begyndte at blive sådan lidt fordi der var flere og flere mennesker der ikke gad og se mine streams til sidst sidder man der med 3 der sidder og kigger og man sidder i flere timer for at underholde, det er rimeligt svært.

#### Reference 6 - 0,50% Coverage

Jeg har faktisk et skin på min Steam account, det koster, min M4A, 12.5 Euro, jeg tror for i alt har jeg nok skins til omkring 50 til 60 euro. Min AK den har jeg i StatTrack og den har jeg jo mange dræbte med, jeg runder snart tusind drab med den.

#### Reference 7 - 1,03% Coverage

Jeg tror jeg har brugt rigtig rigtig meget, det der er fedt ved for eksempel Fortnite og CS:GO det er at du kan ikke købe så du bliver bedre du kan ikke købe ting som gør dig bedre inde i spillet det er fair og lige for alle. Så derfor er et rimeligt ligegyldige penge man har brugt på spillene men fordi at jeg syntes at de der skins de ser fede ud, det er jo præcis det samme i Fortnite, jeg tror også jeg har brugt omkring 1.000 kroner på Fortnite skins og battlepass og alle de der ekstra ting du kan få.

#### Reference 8 - 0,18% Coverage

Ja, jeg har nok brugt 20 til 30 euro på crates som jeg ikke har fået særligt meget ud af.

#### Reference 9 - 0,50% Coverage

En af mine venner åbnede faktisk en kniv på et tidspunkt til omkring 2 til 3 hundrede euro. Du kan jo hvis du går in på Steam markedet, så kan man finde knive, lad os se, den dyreste koster 1.620 euro den dyreste, bar for et skin inde i et spil ik

#### Reference 10 - 0,75% Coverage

Hvis jeg skal have et fedt skin fx i CS:GO så går jeg efter noget som hvor det selvfølgelig er billigt men også er noget jeg kommer til at bruge meget inde i spillet, for eksempel jeg sælger altid de skins som revolveren i CS:GO den bruger jeg aldrig for der har jeg slået Deagle til så hvis jeg får nogle revolver skins så sælger jeg dem for jeg bruger ikke revolver.

#### Reference 11 - 0,44% Coverage

Ja det har jeg, jeg har prøvet at få droppet et skin til en shotgun tror jeg til 4 euro som jeg solgt fordi jeg ikke bruger shotgun særligt meget. Ellers får man normalt de der små skins til 0.2 euro eller 0.4 euro ik.

#### Reference 12 - 1,96% Coverage

Ja det har jeg, jeg har faktisk prøvet noget som jeg virkelig virkelig fortryder i dag fordi at på det tidspunkt spillede jeg ikke særligt meget CS:GO hvor det var at jeg var inde og bette nogen af mine skins for jeg tænkte jeg kommer nok ikke til at spille det særligt meget mere. Så jeg bettede fire fem af mine bedste skins og fik faktisk et rimeligt fedt AK skin, det der hedder Bloodspot, til 44 euro eller hvad det nu var. Og der tænkte jeg nå, det var sgu egentligt meget godt og så solgte jeg det og gav min gamle account til min fætter for han spillede meget CS:GO og så sagde jeg at jeg skulle have et gift card til GTA. Så der fik jeg et giftcard der svarede til ca 40 euro og han fik min account til omkring 40 euro ik. Og så det skin han har i dag det der Bloodspot der det ville jeg rigtig gerne have tilbage, for nu er jeg ved at spille CS:GO rigtig meget igen. Så det fortryder jeg lidt, det er nok det bedste jeg nogensinde har vundet i CS:GO.

#### Reference 13 - 1,13% Coverage

Nej sådan noget hvor du roolede du satte dine skins ind og så var der en anden der satte skins ind til ca samme værdi ik. Og så vandt du lidt og tabte lidt og så på et tidspunkt hvis du havde noget der var ok godt så lagde du det ind i sådan en bunke og så ligesom du kan trade nogle skins inde i CS:GO, så lagde jeg fem seks skins ind og så fik jeg det der Blodspot der så heldig som jeg var. Der kunne man også have fået et eller andet sygt dårligt skin til 0 euro eller en kinv til 3000. Der vil jeg sige der syntes jeg selv jeg var rimelig heldig.

#### Reference 14 - 0,31% Coverage

Nej, det er faktisk gennem games i CS:GO jeg er blevet venner med dem og så har jeg siddet og skrevet lidt med dem og spillet nogle flere games med dem.

#### Reference 15 - 0,55% Coverage

Ja de har lavet meget om de er både begyndt at få det der Battle Royale ind altå hvor du lander et sted og så skal mod alle de andre ik. På et lidt tørre map en det normale CS:GO. Så er de også begyndt at få Battle Pass og alt det der som der lidt er taget fra Fortnite.

#### Reference 16 - 0,98% Coverage

Nej, jeg køber det ikke i CS:GO for det syntes jeg og det er der også mange af mine venner der har sagt det er direkte spil af penge for du får så lidt altså du får måske et eller to skins og så et skin til din man for 13 14 euro eller hvor meget det nu er og det er rigtig sjældent at du får noget godt i det der. Så kan du få klistermærker og så har du betalt 15 euro for det. Der syntes jeg man fik lidt mere i Fortnite.

Der får du en ting eller to hver gang du kommer et tier op

### 11.2.5 Data and Analytics

<Files\\Dean interview> - § 6 references coded [4,84% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,10% Coverage

The game data is critical nowadays.

Reference 2 - 0,23% Coverage

You want to be be; you don't want to overanalyze it and just be drowned in data.

Reference 3 - 1,67% Coverage

That's not giving you the right value or enough value. But you need enough to ensure that you know what your players are doing and a lot of, like places they're saying data driven development. I'd much prefer the term data assisted development because what you want to do: An MMO is a fascinating game. People do crazy stuff that you wouldn't even think off. And they carry on doing it as well. And the game is changing, constantly evolving. So you need to see if what you're doing is having the right sort of impact of what you want and that vision for the game and also your business.

Reference 4 - 1,50% Coverage

As for Business KPI's, I would say revenue for users and stuff. I'd definitely say sort of reach on social platforms now whether it be Twitter or Twitch sort of daily active users, monthly active users. You know how long people will play in the session? How long are they sitting on your game for? Are they doing it daily? Because ideally what you want to do is, you want to have people on a long, long time or at least having coming back frequently in your game that you games, you can have enough bite sized moments or do what

Reference 5 - 1,03% Coverage

There is always some questionability in some of the data sources and the big accuracy of that. So, I mean that's always gonna be tough and I haven't got that much experience with that, to be honest. The best bet is the game side of it. If you're doing it internally and in your own cohorts in a own sort of way, you're going to put those data points for analysis.

Reference 6 - 0,30% Coverage

You do need to have a good beta phase and use a lot of sort of user testing and back that up with the data.

<Files\Jacob> - § 3 references coded [0,61% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,38% Coverage

That's a very good question, because most of my data is connected to sponsorships, so very often I look at viewership metrics. One thing I really, really like is that now a lot of the big tournaments organizers have started to use Nielsen for measuring. And that means that they used now measurements that can be a little bit compared to regular sports.

Reference 2 - 0,13% Coverage

That's a lot of metrics out there that gives parts of the story, but that's no real metric that will give a full picture.

Reference 3 - 0,10% Coverage

For now, I think Nielsen is usually the one I treat the best in terms of how reliable the data's.

<Files\Poppy Interview> - § 6 references coded [3,11% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,62% Coverage

Yeah, absolutely. I mean, you'll always look at the audience analytics of what you've done, how many people view it. When they stopped watching, when they started. What's interesting. Then you use that for your content for next time. Everyone liked it, when I leaned back and looked upwards. I'll do that again. No one liked it when I ate a sandwich. I will never do that on stream again.

Reference 2 - 0,65% Coverage

I mean, as long as you're not identifying people, then you need to know how often people play, when do they play, if there's a part of the game that they stop at. What is it? How can you get them playing longer? What makes people spend money and what makes people not spend? These kind of analytics can all be built into these kind of games to help shape it. So it has a longer life and obviously more revenue.

Reference 3 - 0,07% Coverage

And then obviously location data is as well.

#### Reference 4 - 0,74% Coverage

I mean, the standard stuff that social media collects are always useful. Yeah. So, you know, knowing all of your demographics from Facebook and Instagram and Twitter is useful in shaping future content because it gives you insights into your audience that, you know, you wouldn't have otherwise. So yeah, I think the more data that you have, the better. But a lot of people, you know, they'll have this data and they'll just look at it and won't do anything with it.

#### Reference 5 - 0,19% Coverage

You need to make sure you've got people on board who know how to decipher it and know how to use it to shape your product.

#### Reference 6 - 0,84% Coverage

Who's going to play your game. Who's aimed at? You know, if it's already released, who is playing your game? What countries are they located in? How old are they? What are their other interests? I'd want to know details about the game. As in you know, is it violent? What kind of game is? What genre it is? How long it's been around? How long do you expect it to be around and need to know information like to make it a good fit with us, you know, is it a crappy little game or is it a premium game you know with a long life in it?

### 11.2.6 Discovery

<Files\\Daniel Interview> - § 5 references coded [3,74% Coverage]

#### Reference 1 - 0,43% Coverage

I just, you know, use social media as a big factor, because without social media, I wouldn't have a lot of this right now to a big part of it, social media.

#### Reference 2 - 0,32% Coverage

That's the biggest part for me, just growing my name through like Twitter and all that and getting my name out there.

#### Reference 3 - 1,18% Coverage

It's kind of just as a way for me to, you know, sort of connect with my following a little on a more personal

level. So I set up a Snapchat aside my personal account, just like, you know, interact with my community a little bit more. I also have Facebook, which is my Facebook is just my Instagram and whatever from my Instagram is directly there. And let me think. And also YouTube, because YouTube is also a big part of it, too.

#### Reference 4 - 1,18% Coverage

And I think it's a really good thing that Fortnite had brought into their game because it finally gave creators a way to actually get monetized for promoting the game. So that's something a lot of games didn't do. And you see a lot of games you starting to do now. But I think it's nice because, you know, it finally gives a spotlight on the creators who are actually helping the game and, you know, they can turn into a profit.

#### Reference 5 - 0,63% Coverage

You know, everyone had mixed feelings about it. You know, you had the people that never played a game before playing it. And it was all over. But for people that don't play games daily. They don't see it in the same way that I do.

#### <Files\Olivier Interview> - § 7 references coded [2,97% Coverage]

#### Reference 1 - 0,27% Coverage

Uh, I was introduced by my group of Steam friends. Mmm. I think it was, again, mostly our friend nappy that, um, that started it. Mmm. I think he created the, erh our Discord group.

#### Reference 2 - 0,17% Coverage

Again, with all his connections, two, uh, the world of crates and all that sort of stuff, you know, design stuff.

#### Reference 3 - 0,70% Coverage

invited his friends and my brother told me to install Discord and I was skeptical so I was like, Oh, Steam chat works fine. Didn't really want to have a third party app just for chatting. But uh, he, he sold it to me when he said, Oh, you got loads of voice settings and quality settings and you can individually select the volume of each, each user and whatnot. You have different chat rooms. And I was like, yep. Sold. And it's also free. So I was yup. Okay.

#### Reference 4 - 0,51% Coverage

I started using it again one of the first ones, to start using it in my sort of um, age group because my brother is already playing with his, with his friends on steam and I just sort of tagged along and then, um, before I knew my friends one by one, started to get into the gaming scene I told them to get steam because it was awesome.

#### Reference 5 - 0,44% Coverage

it was one of the rocket league streamers. I liked to watch everyone is asking him to play this game called PUBG and I had no idea what the heck this game, PUBG I honestly thought it was something to do with pubs. Mmm. I had no idea. And then he started playing it and it looked quite cool.

#### Reference 6 - 0,23% Coverage

And again, the game is free so you download it if you don't like it, don't have to keep playing it. So, uh, and in fact lots of my friends did do that.

#### Reference 7 - 0,65% Coverage

But I've definitely discovered some stuff on Twitch. And again, I think it's also sometimes when you're when I'm watching a streamer that's saying that they're playing one game and they end up switching to another Mmm. Mid stream, while still technically, um, it's labeled as being the game that you're wanting to watch, but it they're actually playing something else. I've found that sometimes a good way to discover other games.

### 11.2.7 Epic

#### <Files\\Daniel Interview> - § 2 references coded [1,31% Coverage]

#### Reference 1 - 0,70% Coverage

So I use Epic game store. What I really enjoy that they do is they have these promotions where every month I believe it is. Or every week I believe it is actually, they give out a free game. So you get a game that you would normally maybe paid for free.

#### Reference 2 - 0,62% Coverage

I think that's good because it allows me to, let's say one day, you know, it have nothing to play or something. It gives me an opportunity to try the game that I would have never tried if I didn't have it for free, you know.

<Files\\Napy> - § 1 reference coded [1,43% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1,43% Coverage

The easiest way to stop piracy is giving those people a service that's better than what they're receiving from the pirates." Steam does that very well, where Epic fails hard. I've skipped many games that became exclusives to Epic just because, as a consumer, I have no trust at all in Epic. Uplay is fine as it integrates nicely into steam, if you want to. Origin recently updated with a steam partnership too. I tend to think that if you need exclusives to make people come to your platform, you don't have a good platform.

<Files\\Olivier Interview> - § 3 references coded [1,26% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,25% Coverage

I think I was very skeptical about wanting to download it because of having to download another Mmm game store. And that really annoyed me. That really annoyed me.

Reference 2 - 0,71% Coverage

Because, um, again I'd been used to steam for years. I wasn't, I'm not saying it's necessarily the best, but all I'm comparing it to was, um, origin, which I had and was rubbish. And Uplay, which is even worse. So I thought, well, what's this new game store though? And also the name, like Epic games. I kind of thought what kind of Mickey mouse thing is this. So anyway, I downloaded it and I was perfectly ready to uninstall it, um, and get rid of it on my system.

Reference 3 - 0,31% Coverage

So I still have it to this day and they keep throwing free games at me. So yeah, I actually prefer it now. I've gotten used to the layouts and everything and I prefer it to, to uh, to Uplay and Origin.

<Files\\Victor Interview DK> - § 3 references coded [0,96% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,30% Coverage

Nå, altså Epic games de har ikke så mange spil eller, de har mange spil men jeg er ikke så meget til, hvad hedder de nu, World of Warcraft og LOL.

Reference 2 - 0,27% Coverage

Nej, men Steam de har de der spil, det er kun Fortnite jeg har prøvet på Epic. Steam der syntes jeg der er mange flere valgmuligheder.

Reference 3 - 0,39% Coverage

Ja der er stadig nogen af dem der bruger Epic games når du spiller Fortnite, men vi er i hvert fald flest der spiller over Steam, CS:GO og GTA og Unturned og Rust og alle de der spil vi spiller

### 11.2.8 Esport

<Files\\Christoffer> - § 1 reference coded [0,55% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,55% Coverage

I think everything together, but I think CS:GO was kind of the first esports tournament that made it grow again. And then everything basically kind of came after that. So, at the beginning it was just a new game. Around 2012 or 2013, basically everything started to explode with TI and then everybody else came along.

<Files\\Daniel Interview> - § 1 reference coded [0,70% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,70% Coverage

You know, a lot of mechanics were new. I had never, you know, tried to play game competitively before, before Fortnite. And, you know, overall just this kind of threw me into the, you know, the loop of like competitive esports and realizing that it exists.

<Files\\Jacob> - § 8 references coded [2,75% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,23% Coverage

That's kind of what e-sports is for gaming. So gaming is usually what you do at home and esports is professional, competitive, if I would say there are always some distinctions, but I think that's basically it.

Reference 2 - 0,21% Coverage

think that's not true anymore. But I think esports is probably still a very good investment compared to regular sports. You have to pay less for the exposure that you get. So in that way, it's good.

#### Reference 3 - 0,62% Coverage

You can say that the difficulty with esports is that you as a brand probably have to drive and do more compared to regular sports where they will probably be better at activating you and supporting you in that regard. You have to be the professional partner in esports in many cases. Obviously some of the biggest teams tournaments and those kind of properties do have some experience and expertise in advertisement and promotions for brands. But in general, I would say that the key thing to really get enough value in these sports is also to understanding how to drive value

#### Reference 4 - 0,21% Coverage

Well, I think the thing that sponsorships and sponsorships within esports the same as that you can create some engagement that you probably that's not necessarily a very easy to create without it.

#### Reference 5 - 0,17% Coverage

It's also a way for, you know, the game to drive an additional again, engagement with players outside of the game to create content around it and create a world

#### Reference 6 - 0,43% Coverage

And then the professionalism, I think you can pretty quickly look at an e-sports team and see how does their branding look? Do they look professional? Does it look a little bit low quality, things like that? And usually that will really also reflect in the way they work and how professional they are in terms of producing content. And the less professional they are, the more work you have to do.

#### Reference 7 - 0,22% Coverage

They might have 200000 follow us on Instagram and they post three pictures a year, but they could do so much with it and they could grow to become huge stars and influencers. But they just want a game. So.

#### Reference 8 - 0,67% Coverage

I think in terms of the opportunities of twitch, how you can integrate within the game. So I think that it's also publisher driven. Very often esports. Gives some unique opportunities and I think that's something that's really unexplored. That you have, you know, in regular sports, the pyramid is that you have a huge amount watching. And then how many is playing, how many is engagement levels that goes down? That's actually the opposite. On esports, you have these guys, you have the small amount of viewers on top and you have a lot of players in the bottom and naturally that you want to get more

people to view, right?

<Files\\Olivier Interview> - § 2 references coded [0,54% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,28% Coverage

It gives me an idea of what I can kind of work towards and it's quite impressive to watch see these guys to what they do in like these massive competitions, these e-sport competitions

Reference 2 - 0,26% Coverage

I know that nappy. Yeah. So my friend, this guy that does the, uh, TF 2 skins, uh, he would watch some Don't Starve Together, uh, official streams, and he would get drops.

<Files\\Victor Interview DK> - § 2 references coded [0,81% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,44% Coverage

Ja det har jeg, jeg har prøvet at få droppet et skin til en shotgun tror jeg til 4 euro som jeg solgt fordi jeg ikke bruger shotgun særligt meget. Ellers får man normalt de der små skins til 0.2 euro eller 0.4 euro ik.

Reference 2 - 0,37% Coverage

Jeg vil ikke sige jeg er fan af nogen teams, men jeg kan da godt lide for eksempel Astralis fordi at det er et dansk hold og spiller meget godt og har nogle rimeligt gode strategier.

### 11.2.9 F2P

<Files\\Christoffer> - § 1 reference coded [0,47% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,47% Coverage

I think in-game items are really the most driving things for publicist at the moment as people are making the games free to play, just look at Fortnite or also CS is now free to play. If you look at EA's turnover, you can see that they earned so fucking much money from FIFA.

<Files\\Jacob> - § 1 reference coded [0,45% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,45% Coverage

Free to play with only cosmetics. That's one thing that's also different free to play models with subscriptions. Dota 2 has a version of that. I know. And a lot of the other games, a lot of other games have the same where they, have these seasons or battle passes that you can sign up for some you have to buy individually each season and for others you can sign up for like the full year and you maybe get a discount.

<Files\Olivier Interview> - § 1 reference coded [0,23% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,23% Coverage

And again, the game is free so you download it if you don't like it, don't have to keep playing it. So, uh, and in fact lots of my friends did do that.

<Files\Poppy Interview> - § 3 references coded [1,50% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,60% Coverage

Do you know if you do it right. It works. You know, free to play is really, really difficult to get right. You know, you really can't just release a game and expect to make money off ads. You know, there's a whole lot of factors that come into play. You know, are you going to use micro-transactions? Are you going to be using ads, you know? Are the ads going to be too intrusive?

Reference 2 - 0,72% Coverage

So, if you get the right game and you get people who really love that, you want to come back and experience new content all the time, that's great, you know? But I've seen so many free to play games, you know, fail after their first year because somebody hasn't sat down in the background and made the spreadsheet. That figures out how many players you need to get playing, how many need to watch the ads, you know how much money you're going to make.

Reference 3 - 0,18% Coverage

It's a difficult model to crack. But, you know, if you get free to play right, you can make a whole lot of money.

<Files\Victor Interview DK> - § 1 reference coded [1,03% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1,03% Coverage

Jeg tror jeg har brugt rigtig rigtig meget, det der er fedt ved for eksempel Fortnite og CS:GO det er at du kan ikke købe så du bliver bedre du kan ikke købe ting som gør dig bedre inde i spillet det er fair og lige for alle. Så derfor er et rimeligt ligegyldige penge man har brugt på spillene men fordi at jeg syntes at de der skins de ser fede ud, det er jo præcis det samme i Fortnite, jeg tror også jeg har brugt omkring 1.000 kroner på Fortnite skins og battlepass og alle de der ekstra ting du kan få.

### 11.2.10 Fortnite

<Files\Daniel Interview> - § 24 references coded [18,61% Coverage]

#### Reference 1 - 1,18% Coverage

And I think it's a really good thing that Fortnite had brought into their game because it finally gave creators a way to actually get monetized for promoting the game. So that's something a lot of games didn't do. And you see a lot of games you starting to do now. But I think it's nice because, you know, it finally gives a spotlight on the creators who are actually helping the game and, you know, they can turn into a profit.

#### Reference 2 - 0,66% Coverage

The great part about is that they give us priority support. So we have like especially e-mails, we can email as creators and we get you know, they tried to get us in as quickly as possible and dealt with. Which is a very good positive thing.

#### Reference 3 - 1,37% Coverage

And it really just like expands your mind on how the game is and your thinking and knowledge of the game. So I think, you know, being able to connect the community as a whole is big because the community we all think on, you know, we all have the same thinking when it comes certain things like when Fortnite makes an update for something, a lot of us already have the same idea in our heads. So it's really cool that this community was built up that kind of shared the same mindset for the game.

#### Reference 4 - 0,96% Coverage

I think a big thing for me was the cartoon feel of it, because me, you know, growing up just watching cartoons every single day when I saw a game that had like this cartoon feel and it's a new genre that I had never experienced before, just getting into it was a lot more easier because of that cartoonish feel and also because it was something new.

#### Reference 5 - 0,70% Coverage

You know, a lot of mechanics were new. I had never, you know, tried to play game competitively before, before Fortnite. And, you know, overall just this kind of threw me into the, you know, the loop of like competitive esports and realizing that it exists.

#### Reference 6 - 1,31% Coverage

I think it's a very broad skill range. So you have the players that are just gonna be casual and that's with every game. You're always going to have the people that are casual and they won't go above and beyond to get these high placements. And then you see that there's these players that, you know, will go above and beyond to get their first place spot no matter what it takes. The skill gap is so large because it's always changing. The meta in the game's always changing.

#### Reference 7 - 0,43% Coverage

You know, what people need to know about the game is always changing with the game updated changes, how the whole game is played and how people see the game.

#### Reference 8 - 1,08% Coverage

So I really enjoy the battle pass because it really gives the user something to actually grind for and, you know, to get back into the game. Obviously the pricing, obviously that's a little annoying having to pay for it in every, you know, two months. You know, they have to make money somehow. But I think, I think in return you get enough where the price pays off with what you're getting.

#### Reference 9 - 0,51% Coverage

What am I going to do today? It's like I could just be like, oh, I will, go grind out the battle pass today and just hop on Fortnite and just start doing the challenges that come with it.

#### Reference 10 - 1,40% Coverage

The biggest thing for me when it comes to items is the Ninja skin. I love Ninja skin the ninja set in general because that was just in my mindset. It's you know, it's the beginning to something much bigger. He was one of the first creators to get his own skin in the game. And that's just going to lead to a lot more creators getting their own skins in the games. We basically started something that that nobody else had done yet, which I always respect from Ninja, is that he's been doing that since day one.

#### Reference 11 - 0,48% Coverage

So I think trading would be a good addition, but it would have to be within moderation because we've

all seen accounts get, you know, hijacked before and stolen and trading,

#### Reference 12 - 1,02% Coverage

I think would be a good feature, especially if you could sell stuff for a V-bucks, cause and players can, you know, open up a whole new marketplace for Fortnite and everything. But with the way the game is in the type of situations that have arose from, you know, security breaches and everything on people's accounts, I don't think it would be a good fit for Fortnite.

#### Reference 13 - 0,43% Coverage

So when it comes to these events, I really enjoy them because as we are all seeing with this coronavirus epidemic, you know, seeing a digital event is crazy.

#### Reference 14 - 0,59% Coverage

Like a while back when they did the marshmallow concert in game, there was almost, I believe, a million people in the game at that time, which is mindblowing because that's more people that could fit in the stadium.

#### Reference 15 - 0,54% Coverage

So seeing these scenes digital events, I feel like as a pioneer, to something is going to be much bigger because now that we have, you know, the sickness going around the coronavirus and everything.

#### Reference 16 - 0,46% Coverage

Now the big companies are trying to look for ways to, you know, bring their events into a digital space. And Fortnite doesn't need that cause Fornite already has that.

#### Reference 17 - 0,59% Coverage

You know, it's like you're there, but you're not. When you get a real like, you know, you're you feel like you're there when you're not. So I feel like there's a big connections that and I really enjoy those events.

#### Reference 18 - 0,96% Coverage

It was I believe it was a half an hour long. And that whole half an hour straight, I streamed the whole thing. I did the Star Wars event too, but to get back to the Marshmallow event. I stream that me and my chat were just we were just, you know, we were just chilling. We were just laughing about it. They had

super cool effects in the game for it.

Reference 19 - 0,22% Coverage

It was overall a very cool event. And I hope they do something like that again.

Reference 20 - 1,35% Coverage

The blackout event? I streamed almost the whole thing. It was almost a three day thing and it was the most tiring thing ever. Especially when you're trying to stream it because you're trying to sit there and find a black hole and talk to your chat about how, yeah, there's black hole here might be here for another month and we don't know. But, you know, it was interesting. It was very interesting. I did not expect it at all. And because of that, I think it brought more hype to the game.

Reference 21 - 0,35% Coverage

But it also killed off a bunch of a people, because people didn't want to sit there waiting like. So when are we coming back now?

Reference 22 - 0,24% Coverage

I do talk I do talk a lot about Forntie off line, mainly with a close group of friends.

Reference 23 - 0,63% Coverage

You know, everyone had mixed feelings about it. You know, you had the people that never played a game before playing it. And it was all over. But for people that don't play games daily. They don't see it in the same way that I do.

Reference 24 - 1,14% Coverage

I just like when they put in updates and don't listen to the community for feedback on it. Certain items they have. I remember when they had the infinity sword. The infinity blade come out. There was huge negative impact on that and it took months to get it out and eventually they got it out because it was causing a plain. But there has been other items that have been added to the game that have not been changed.

<Files\\Jacob> - § 2 references coded [0,63% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,37% Coverage

So looking at someone like Ninja, maybe it was a little bit of an coincidence and maybe he was one of a few that could have taken a huge leap forward with the fortnight launch. But he was very good at. Taking these opportunities, he was always there. He was, I think, very, very good at just approaching and making sure that it was always relevant.

#### Reference 2 - 0,26% Coverage

And obviously on the brand side of things, he's not been afraid to sell out in a good way. So he's made a lot of big partnerships because he's willing to do a lot of this stuff. Like a lot of influencers. Do you like to sit at home and play?

#### <Files\Olivier Interview> - § 6 references coded [1,22% Coverage]

#### Reference 1 - 0,28% Coverage

he would get requests to play Fortnite. I was like, Oh, it looks kinda cool. Uh, looked a lot easier and less complex than PUBG and lo and behold, it was free. So I thought, why not?

#### Reference 2 - 0,15% Coverage

And then, uh, I remember I had enticed CH uh, to download it because I described it as a Hunger game.

#### Reference 3 - 0,21% Coverage

Um, Jeremy played a couple of times. Uh, he didn't really enjoy it again because he's just, his level was quite low. He got a bit demotivated.

#### Reference 4 - 0,33% Coverage

Then again, a few other of my friends downloaded it and they, um they definitely didn't like the, um, the build aspect to it wasn't their thing whereas PUBG might have been cause there isn't that, uh, the element to it.

#### Reference 5 - 0,18% Coverage

Uh, he played it, I don't know if that's what made me download it, but that's, I think that's when I first discovered it.

#### Reference 6 - 0,06% Coverage

Um, but turns, it was quite a fun game.

<Files\\Victor Interview DK> - § 8 references coded [5,97% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,20% Coverage

Ja, jeg har prøvet at streame CS:GO og Fortnite da jeg spillede det meget, det er Fortnite i sær

Reference 2 - 1,59% Coverage

Ja det var faktisk for det meste lige da det kom ud og det kom ud i 17 tror jeg der streamede jeg det rimeligt meget, en gang om ugen måske. Så begyndte jeg at streame lidt CS:GO da jeg syntes at Fortnite begyndte at blive kedeligt. Så tror jeg stoppede med at streame for et års tid siden så syntes jeg ikke rigtigt at det var spændende for der var mellem 5 og 10 mennesker der begyndte at se mine streams. Altså jeg sad jo i flere timer og streamede det og man fik jo ikke sådan noget for det vel, man gjorde det bare af fri vilje, så til sidst syntes jeg det begyndte at blive sådan lidt fordi der var flere og flere mennesker der ikke gad og se mine streams til sidst sidder man der med 3 der sidder og kigger og man sidder i flere timer for at underholde, det er rimeligt svært.

Reference 3 - 0,99% Coverage

Ja, det syntes jeg er begyndt at blive lidt for urealistisk der begyndte at komme simpelthen så mange mærkelige updates til det. Da jeg begyndte at spille det der hed det season 1, hvor der var mange steder at lande og du havde pistol og alt sådan noget og nu er der lige pludselig kommet laser guns og der er kommet Starwars tema og der er kommet noget kæmpe, alle mulige mærkelige ting du kan svømme nu og du kan flyve jeg syntes simpelthen det begyndte at blive alt for urealistisk.

Reference 4 - 1,03% Coverage

Jeg tror jeg har brugt rigtig rigtig meget, det der er fedt ved for eksempel Fortnite og CS:GO det er at du kan ikke købe så du bliver bedre du kan ikke købe ting som gør dig bedre inde i spillet det er fair og lige for alle. Så derfor er et rimeligt ligegyldige penge man har brugt på spillene men fordi at jeg syntes at de der skins de ser fede ud, det er jo præcis det samme i Fortnite, jeg tror også jeg har brugt omkring 1.000 kroner på Fortnite skins og battlepass og alle de der ekstra ting du kan få.

Reference 5 - 0,24% Coverage

Jeg har købt et af de der bundles der til 5 til 10 Euro på et tidspunkt tror jeg, dengang at jeg spillede det meget.

#### Reference 6 - 0,39% Coverage

Ja der er stadig nogen af dem der bruger Epic games når du spiller Fortnite, men vi er i hvert fald flest der spiller over Steam, CS:GO og GTA og Unturned og Rust og alle de der spil vi spiller

#### Reference 7 - 0,55% Coverage

Ja de har lavet meget om de er både begyndt at få det der Battle Royale ind altså hvor du lander et sted og så skal mod alle de andre ik. På et lidt tørre map en det normale CS:GO. Så er de også begyndt at få Battle Pass og alt det der som der lidt er taget fra Fortnite.

#### Reference 8 - 0,98% Coverage

Nej, jeg køber det ikke i CS:GO for det syntes jeg og det er der også mange af mine venner der har sagt det er direkte spil af penge for du får så lidt altså du får måske et eller to skins og så et skin til din man for 13 14 euro eller hvor meget det nu er og det er rigtig sjældent at du får noget godt i det der. Så kan du få klistermærker og så har du betalt 15 euro for det. Der syntes jeg man fik lidt mere i Fortnite. Der får du en ting eller to hver gang du kommer et tier op

### 11.2.11 Hedonic

<Files\Olivier Interview> - § 1 reference coded [0,21% Coverage]

#### Reference 1 - 0,21% Coverage

Initially when I first started, I was entirely on my own I think I was one of my few friends that actually played TF2 on a regular basis.

<Files\Poppy Interview> - § 1 reference coded [0,11% Coverage]

#### Reference 1 - 0,11% Coverage

And also, some people use this as their primary focus of enjoyment.

### 11.2.12 Influencers

<Files\Christoffer> - § 2 references coded [0,58% Coverage]

#### Reference 1 - 0,44% Coverage

But I think it will just continue to grow and also with some companies like WeHype for example as a

streaming network we can buy activities, it will just continue, but of course Twitch has helped the industry a lot making money for streamers and gamers.

#### Reference 2 - 0,15% Coverage

a streamer or whatever it is you also get authenticity through them like credibility

#### <Files\Daniel Interview> - § 12 references coded [10,83% Coverage]

#### Reference 1 - 0,37% Coverage

I just you know, this what I love to do. So I put all my free time into it. I put any little dollar that I make right back into this.

#### Reference 2 - 0,74% Coverage

anything that I get or make from streaming goes right back into streaming. So everything that I'm doing, you know, I devote my life to doing this because I love it and I enjoy it. And it's what I enjoy doing. And obviously, it's helped a lot and that my parents support.

#### Reference 3 - 0,43% Coverage

I just, you know, use social media as a big factor, because without social media, I wouldn't have a lot of this right now to a big part of it, social media.

#### Reference 4 - 0,32% Coverage

That's the biggest part for me, just growing my name through like Twitter and all that and getting my name out there.

#### Reference 5 - 1,18% Coverage

It's kind of just as a way for me to, you know, sort of connect with my following a little on a more personal level. So I set up a Snapchat aside my personal account, just like, you know, interact with my community a little bit more. I also have Facebook, which is my Facebook is just my Instagram and whatever from my Instagram is directly there. And let me think. And also YouTube, because YouTube is also a big part of it, too.

#### Reference 6 - 1,18% Coverage

And I think it's a really good thing that Fortnite had brought into their game because it finally gave creators a way to actually get monetized for promoting the game. So that's something a lot of games didn't do. And you see a lot of games you starting to do now. But I think it's nice because, you know, it finally gives a spotlight on the creators who are actually helping the game and, you know, they can turn into a profit.

#### Reference 7 - 0,66% Coverage

The great part about is that they give us priority support. So we have like especially e-mails, we can email as creators and we get you know, they tried to get us in as quickly as possible and dealt with. Which is a very good positive thing.

#### Reference 8 - 0,87% Coverage

So the social aspect is a big part for me, because me being someone who can just ramble on for ages and hours about the game, you know, it's a big part for me 'cause I like interacting with people. I like meeting new people. And I love just, you know, sharing my thoughts and ideas with other people in the community

#### Reference 9 - 1,37% Coverage

And it really just like expands your mind on how the game is and your thinking and knowledge of the game. So I think, you know, being able to connect the community as a whole is big because the community we all think on, you know, we all have the same thinking when it comes certain things like when Fortnite makes an update for something, a lot of us already have the same idea in our heads. So it's really cool that this community was built up that kind of shared the same mindset for the game.

#### Reference 10 - 1,40% Coverage

The biggest thing for me when it comes to items is the Ninja skin. I love Ninja skin the ninja set in general because that was just in my mindset. It's you know, it's the beginning to something much bigger. He was one of the first creators to get his own skin in the game. And that's just going to lead to a lot more creators getting their own skins in the games. We basically started something that that nobody else had done yet, which I always respect from Ninja, is that he's been doing that since day one.

#### Reference 11 - 0,96% Coverage

It was I believe it was a half an hour long. And that whole half an hour straight, I streamed the whole thing. I did the Star Wars event too, but to get back to the Marshmallow event. I stream that me and my chat were just we were just, you know, we were just chilling. We were just laughing about it. They had

super cool effects in the game for it.

#### Reference 12 - 1,35% Coverage

The blackout event? I streamed almost the whole thing. It was almost a three day thing and it was the most tiring thing ever. Especially when you're trying to stream it because you're trying to sit there and find a black hole and talk to your chat about how, yeah, there's black hole here might be here for another month and we don't know. But, you know, it was interesting. It was very interesting. I did not expect it at all. And because of that, I think it brought more hype to the game.

#### <Files\\Jacob> - § 10 references coded [3,17% Coverage]

#### Reference 1 - 0,30% Coverage

Because if we get them onboard, even if they are low, they will always promote our product and that's no cost to them. So I would say that's mainly this often random chance. Maybe once someone online and like them and then thought, hey, there could be an opportunity and wrote them.

#### Reference 2 - 0,56% Coverage

I think it's at a state where it's weirdly enough underrated and overrated at the same time. So I think in some areas it's definitely overrated. I think especially when fashion and things like that influencer marketing seems to be everything these days. But I also think in terms of gaming and for us specifically, it's underrated and we still have a long way to go in terms of how we utilize it. I think influence our marketing can be really, really effective in terms of driving conversions and driving more real interest.

#### Reference 3 - 0,15% Coverage

And I think in general, us as a society today, we tend to more follow individuals a lot and probably teams and organizations a little bit less

#### Reference 4 - 0,37% Coverage

So looking at someone like Ninja, maybe it was a little bit of an coincidence and maybe he was one of a few that could have taken a huge leap forward with the fortnight launch. But he was very good at. Taking these opportunities, he was always there. He was, I think, very, very good at just approaching and making sure that it was always relevant.

#### Reference 5 - 0,26% Coverage

And obviously on the brand side of things, he's not been afraid to sell out in a good way. So he's made a lot of big partnerships because he's willing to do a lot of this stuff. Like a lot of influencers. Do you like to sit at home and play?

#### Reference 6 - 0,47% Coverage

I think Dr. Disrespect is another good example. And he was one of the very first fully character driven streamers out there. And that also meant that with the over the top character that he had, that he could be extremely pushy. From a commercialization point of view and. Without him losing any credibility, so I think that's another good example of kind of forming your character so that what you do in terms of marketing will be believable.

#### Reference 7 - 0,24% Coverage

Like these guys don't want to do it, especially in CS:Go, especially in Dota. But I think goals and the applications for most of them, a lot of them could build huge personal brands, but no one, none of them want to do it.

#### Reference 8 - 0,22% Coverage

They might have 200000 follow us on Instagram and they post three pictures a year, but they could do so much with it and they could grow to become huge stars and influencers. But they just want a game. So.

#### Reference 9 - 0,26% Coverage

From the data that I've seen, we obviously don't have any objective data. But we did some twitch campaigns that you saw things like Rainbow Six, Counterstrike. These were really the high scorers in terms of how many people clicked on our head

#### Reference 10 - 0,34% Coverage

So I think influencer marketing can be many things it can also be micro influences that say, OK, we sent something to 10000 Instagram accounts and then we get some clicks to our websites back on to retailers or something like that and see how what this has to say is going to be. So there's many different levels.

#### <Files\Jennifer> - § 2 references coded [2,29% Coverage]

#### Reference 1 - 1,12% Coverage

If you are a regular with smaller Streamers it happens, and then you talk. And it makes you feel awesome and important. And of course, bragging rights with others. Its like the selfie with Lady Gaga I once got. Like, at the end of the day I don't assume that they know who I am, if I was being honest but in that moment, you think that. And then you fangirl all out. And of course when you donate money or sub, they will thank you personally and then you have the impression they will remember you.

Reference 2 - 1,17% Coverage

Oh yes, and that back in the day got me in trouble. Cause I used my mums paypal account, that she gaven me so that I can order school books over Amazon. She was furious. I spend like 500€ in one month. I might have had a huge crush on a Streamer, and I wanted him to notice me. But long story short, he did not realize that I was the love of his life and we are not together married with 10 children. And I totally did not write embarrassing fanfics about our future together with an obvious Marry Sue stand in for myself.

<Files\\Melissa> - § 1 reference coded [0,84% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,84% Coverage

ago. It was a wow streamer Asmongold. And he's the one who I still watch the most. Even if I'm not playing it I just think he's funny but I don't really remember exactly when it was I think it was like a year ago maybe. When I go say three years ago now I'm going to take that back three years ago the same guy.

<Files\\Poppy Interview> - § 8 references coded [2,56% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,42% Coverage

And we put it up on the Web site for love because it was quite funny and PewDiePie got ahold of it and he played it. And then suddenly from there, all of the massive YouTubers all played it. And we were getting millions and millions and millions of views on that.

Reference 2 - 0,25% Coverage

And from there, people would livestream the game. Roosterteeth, a big American influencer group, actually made an esport out of it, at their big event in Texas.

Reference 3 - 0,33% Coverage

And I think that it's a really, really nice way to kind of find new celebrities because, you know, you you always have your favorites with personalities and they'll be doing something that you want to watch

#### Reference 4 - 0,54% Coverage

I think that they're a unique mixture of entertainer, athletes, sportsmen, friend, person you can rely on. People can relate to streamers a lot more than they can to celebrities because they're just people. They look like the guy next door. The people who go to school or college with, you know, they look like people that you could approach.

#### Reference 5 - 0,13% Coverage

You know, not everybody can be Johnny Depp. But everyone can be Ninja, you know?

#### Reference 6 - 0,09% Coverage

but also the fact that you can interact with these people.

#### Reference 7 - 0,25% Coverage

but streamers will make videos where they talk with the audience. You know, in real time they'll look at the questions and answer them. You've got a real bond

#### Reference 8 - 0,54% Coverage

User generated content is something that, we created a poster in order to get influencers to play the next level. We actually named the organs of value after influencers because we knew that if PewDiePie saw that there was an organ called Pewdsball in there he would play that and you wouldn't have to give them a lot of money to make a video.

#### <Files\\Victor Interview DK> - § 5 references coded [3,50% Coverage]

#### Reference 1 - 0,27% Coverage

Jeg så mange YouTube videoer med engelske YouTubere der brugte dem i deres gaming videoer og der syntes jeg at den lød rimelig god.

#### Reference 2 - 1,15% Coverage

Det var fordi at jeg syntes at der var rigtig mange amerikanske streamere og sad jeg og så en der

hedder MrBeast som havde rigtig rigtig mange penge som sad og fyrede 100.000 dollar af til en eller anden lille streamer med nul viewers og så sad jeg og tænkte at hvis jeg var så heldig ik, så tror jeg godt jeg ville kunne begynde at streame. Det var faktisk derfor at jeg begyndte at streame. Og så efter at jeg havde streamet måske tre fire gange så tænkte jeg det kommer nok ikke til at ske men jeg syntes sku egentligt at det er meget sjovt og så blev jeg ved.

#### Reference 3 - 0,33% Coverage

Fortnite der så jeg faktisk ikke så meget ham der Ninja, jeg så mest, han hedder Tefui hvid du kender ham og Boga og Miss og Quality og alle de der store streamers.

#### Reference 4 - 1,03% Coverage

Ja er er en dansk streamer eller YouTuber eller hvad man nu vil kalde ham jeg ser meget faktisk en der hedder MarcusHD som åbner han og spiller meget CS:GO og streamer rigtig meget. Han åbner faktisk rimeligt tit knive hvis man kan sige det sådan og han har måske også over 30 eller 40 knive i sti inventory. Han købte også på et tidspunkt 40 af de der Howl M4A4 skins i CS:GO de kostede 1.000 euro på det tidspunkt og han solgte dem videre til 1.200 euro og han købte jeg tror det var 40 eller 42 af dem, et

#### Reference 5 - 0,72% Coverage

Ja han har gamblet meget på sine streams, men det er han stoppet lidt med nu for han har lige solgt sin bil til 2 millioner fordi trak rimeligt meget i hans pung ik. Så han havde ikke særligt meget penge tilbage så derfor stoppede han lidt med det gambling der og solgte sin bil og købte en lidt billigere bil. Han havde sådan en Mercedes AMG C63 tror jeg.

### 11.2.13 In-game content creators

<Files\\Napy> - § 6 references coded [1,44% Coverage]

#### Reference 1 - 0,17% Coverage

So everyone in the TF2 modding community started to make items

#### Reference 2 - 0,12% Coverage

It was part of the halloween update of 2012

#### Reference 3 - 0,26% Coverage

The Steam Workshop was first tested with TF2 [NDW]: I think that was a gamechanger for modders

Reference 4 - 0,22% Coverage

Dota 2 was created because Valve saw a modder had potential, where blizzard didn't

Reference 5 - 0,46% Coverage

The old team of modders are even working on a really big server sided mod that would allow them to add new weapons and cosmetics, keeping the game alive after it's death

Reference 6 - 0,21% Coverage

I don't think I own my items, yet I know valve will treat them with respect

<Files\\Olivier Interview> - § 2 references coded [0,59% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,13% Coverage

one of my close Steam friends NP he's designed quite a lot of hats and other wares in TF2

Reference 2 - 0,45% Coverage

yeah absolutely yeah he's submitted most of it and it's extremely successful. In fact he's still getting a small income from it today. And in fact it is just by doing that that enabled him to move out of his parents house and get his own apartment solely thanks to designing hats and scarves on TF2.

## 11.2.14 Legal

<Files\\Christoffer> - § 1 reference coded [0,26% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,26% Coverage

Yeah and also don't know if you heard about it, but many governments are looking into the loot boxes, since it is regarded as some sort of gambling.

<Files\\Dean interview> - § 1 reference coded [0,52% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,52% Coverage

If you go to the most ruthless ones with monetization, they're quite bad as well, especially as they're so open to children nowadays, so easily accessible and so easy to spend as well.

<Files\Poppy Interview> - § 1 reference coded [0,20% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,20% Coverage

But you know, personal data around people who are under 18. Super careful with that, what you can collect and what you can't.

### 11.2.15 Live Streaming and VOD

<Files\Christoffer> - § 6 references coded [2,21% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,44% Coverage

But I think it will just continue to grow and also with some companies like WeHype for example as a streaming network we can buy activities, it will just continue, but of course Twitch has helped the industry a lot making money for streamers and gamers.

Reference 2 - 0,54% Coverage

But I think just the streaming part is what has really changed. It was the game changer for everything. It has brought in sponsors, also making all the games grow, being not only something you that you play as an esports, actually bring in an audience for people to watch. So, I think this was hugest game changer

Reference 3 - 0,31% Coverage

Sure, I mean it keeps continue to grow and we are also starting to see a lot of competition with YouTube and Facebook trying to tap in and also for example Mixer from Microsoft.

Reference 4 - 0,36% Coverage

Streaming is growing the interest. For me when I am working, but there is a tournament happening, I can have the stream open in the background and you can see what other are doing. You just feel interested.

Reference 5 - 0,28% Coverage

So that's also something that makes everything just really good and connected with the streaming and also the audience and then also makes you want to play yourself.

Reference 6 - 0,28% Coverage

if they find much interest for a game I think, it becomes much more relevant for them to watch a streamer, because then they can take tips and see how they can grow.

<Files\\Daniel Interview> - § 1 reference coded [1,35% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1,35% Coverage

The blackout event? I streamed almost the whole thing. It was almost a three day thing and it was the most tiring thing ever. Especially when you're trying to stream it because you're trying to sit there and find a black hole and talk to your chat about how, yeah, there's black hole here might be here for another month and we don't know. But, you know, it was interesting. It was very interesting. I did not expect it at all. And because of that, I think it brought more hype to the game.

<Files\\Jacob> - § 1 reference coded [0,18% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,18% Coverage

So even smaller campaigns we've done have seen actually really good results, especially on YouTube when we work with influencers that create content around our products.

<Files\\Jonas> - § 1 reference coded [0,64% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,64% Coverage

I do. There is mixer, and you can go live on Facebook, and YouTube. But I also don't watch anyone really regularly then Gronkh. Like on YouTube yes, but not on Twitch.

<Files\\Julia> - § 1 reference coded [1,48% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1,48% Coverage

No, no you are right. Like Twitch chat is so fast, there is so much bullshit, so I prefer like discord or something, with people I already know. I mean I am not beyond arguing with strangers in the comment section on the internet, but yeah I can like think my answer through and also tumblr, there is a lot of stupid stuff but its like more in-depth, and I like that better. Its nicer. Its more calm, like of course there

are dickheads everywhere.

<Files\Melissa> - § 2 references coded [1,59% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,65% Coverage

I also watch a lot of YouTube and a little bit like Netflix but not like maybe regular TV so this mostly be maybe Facebook videos YouTube and Twitch and how much time per day do you think you spend on it or conscious say per day or per week.

Reference 2 - 0,94% Coverage

Yeah there was all this my husband likes this poker YouTube guy and he does dream sometimes too and he has merch and I was going to buy something for him from that guy because I know he likes him a lot. But it was a I don't think it's like it helps that streamer but then also like you kind of get something in return. It's not just like giving.

<Files\Olivier Interview> - § 8 references coded [3,58% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,64% Coverage

And I thought, that's weird. I like playing CS:GO but do I actually want to watch someone play and bit of time to get in to it. But then when I realized how much better these guys are playing compared to how good I was, uh, and the, the whole cinematic because it's in like a big stadium, you've got the commentators. Um, it's actually really fun to watch, especially when you can, when it's a game that you've played before.

Reference 2 - 0,24% Coverage

So once I knew about Twitch and the streaming thing, I quite liked the idea of a, streaming games. I don't know why. Just a, it was, I thought it was quite cool.

Reference 3 - 0,96% Coverage

And then my brother and some friends could watch. And then before I knew it, some randoms would start watching. And then that started to be an interesting thing cause I'd never really thought that that would happen, but somehow some randomers sometimes watch my streams and uh, yeah, they sometimes chat a bit and are quite friendly. And then I realized that actually there's quite a big audience for streaming, as long as you put out the right content. So, um, the biggest success, uh, for streaming and for me anyway has been the multiplayer games that you can play through one stream, that everyone

can play on their devices at home.

#### Reference 4 - 0,44% Coverage

it was one of the rocket league streamers. I liked to watch everyone is asking him to play this game called PUBG and I had no idea what the heck this game, PUBG I honestly thought it was something to do with pubs. Mmm. I had no idea. And then he started playing it and it looked quite cool.

#### Reference 5 - 0,28% Coverage

he would get requests to play Fortnite. I was like, Oh, it looks kinda cool. Uh, looked a lot easier and less complex than PUBG and lo and behold, it was free. So I thought, why not?

#### Reference 6 - 0,18% Coverage

Uh, he played it, I don't know if that's what made me download it, but that's, I think that's when I first discovered it.

#### Reference 7 - 0,18% Coverage

I often use, uh, streams to see what game is like. Mmm. But usually just to see what it's like. Um, more than anything.

#### Reference 8 - 0,65% Coverage

But I've definitely discovered some stuff on Twitch. And again, I think it's also sometimes when you're when I'm watching a streamer that's saying that they're playing one game and they end up switching to another Mmm. Mid stream, while still technically, um, it's labeled as being the game that you're wanting to watch, but it they're actually playing something else. I've found that sometimes a good way to discover other games.

#### <Files\\Poppy Interview> - § 3 references coded [1,44% Coverage]

#### Reference 1 - 0,69% Coverage

They had a whole load of people playing and the screens all put up there. And that was on a live stream from the event and such. So, it's been really, really exciting to see a video game world from where there was no content of people doing anything to suddenly it was everywhere and then watching how it changed from simple YouTube videos to live streaming as everybody started to buy their own kit and then pushing it even further,

#### Reference 2 - 0,23% Coverage

You know, they will just watch YouTube. They will just watch Twitch. They watch Netflix as well, but they won't consume media in traditional ways.

#### Reference 3 - 0,52% Coverage

People will record their twitch streams and put them on YouTube because even though YouTube have a streaming service, it's very seen the place to watch videos. They've got their new paid full service now and then Microsoft has got their own with Ninja now as well. But yeah, Twitch is very much all about the live stuff, isn't it.

#### <Files\\Victor Interview DK> - § 12 references coded [8,93% Coverage]

#### Reference 1 - 0,34% Coverage

Jeg bruger generelt faktisk rigtigt meget YouTube hvis man går ind og kigger på min telefon og min computer så bruger jeg rigtig mange timer på YouTube hver dag faktisk

#### Reference 2 - 0,75% Coverage

Ja, hvis der ikke er nogen for eksempel forskellige engelske YouTubere og streamers som ikke streamer på Twitch fordi de er blevet kan man sige købt af YouTube fordi så tjener de flere penge det lidt sådan det Twitch og Youtube battler omkring, det hvem der kan give dem flest penge for at stream på deres streams og hvem der har flest views og følgere og sådan noget.

#### Reference 3 - 0,20% Coverage

Ja, jeg har prøvet at streame CS:GO og Fortnite da jeg spillede det meget, det er Fortnite i sær

#### Reference 4 - 1,06% Coverage

Altså, der er noget der kaldes, jeg streamede så på Twitch på det tidspunkt, der fik jeg på et tidspunkt noget der hedder et host hvor der er en stor streamer eller det er bare en streamer der sender alle hans seere over på min stream. Og der blev der engang hostet en som hed Max som have 400 og et eller andet views så der var lige pludseligt 500 mennesker eller sådan noget der sad og så min stream. Det højeste jeg har været oppe på det er nok 513 men normalt hvis der ikke bliver hostet så er det nok imellem 5 og 20.

#### Reference 5 - 0,80% Coverage

Jeg sad bare i min egen verden og sad og spillede og tror faktisk jeg sad og havde vundet nogle games og så havde jeg siddet i noget der hedder hostet altså sådan hvor at du kan blive hostet. Og så var jeg inde og se, jeg har faktisk et klip hvor jeg sidder med en af mine venner og bliver hostet af ham Max for første gang med 200 og et eller andet viewers han har faktisk hostet mig to gange.

#### Reference 6 - 0,27% Coverage

Jeg så mange YouTube videoer med engelske YouTubere der brugte dem i deres gaming videoer og der syntes jeg at den lød rimelig god.

#### Reference 7 - 1,59% Coverage

Ja det var faktisk for det meste lige da det kom ud og det kom ud i 17 tror jeg der streamede jeg det rimeligt meget, en gang om ugen måske. Så begyndte jeg at streame lidt CS:GO da jeg syntes at Fortnite begyndte at blive kedeligt. Så tror jeg stoppede med at streame for et års tid siden så syntes jeg ikke rigtigt at det var spændende for der var mellem 5 og 10 mennesker der begyndte at se mine streams. Altså jeg sad jo i flere timer og streamede det og man fik jo ikke sådan noget for det vel, man gjorde det bare af fri vilje, så til sidst syntes jeg det begyndte at blive sådan lidt fordi der var flere og flere mennesker der ikke gad og se mine streams til sidst sidder man der med 3 der sidder og kigger og man sidder i flere timer for at underholde, det er rimeligt svært.

#### Reference 8 - 0,66% Coverage

Ja Twitch har det der hedder bits. Der var nogle engang i mellem, jeg havde ikke kort på det tidspunkt så jeg havde slået min MobilePay til, så det vil sige at der kom notifikationer hver gang de overførte MobilePay. Så jeg tror jeg har fået doneret i alt den tid jeg har streamet der har jeg måske fået en 200 kroner i alt.

#### Reference 9 - 1,17% Coverage

Ja, jeg havde på et tidspunkt gold hvor det var jeg sagde at, jeg havde rimeligt små beløb for jeg vidste folk ikke ville rigtigt give det store, så jeg skrev 5 kroner, så kunne man joine mit party og tage et game med mig og 10 kroner så kunne man blive venner med mig på Steam sådan permanent og spille engang imellem med mig. Og så tror jeg jeg havde 20 kroner hvor at jeg ville åbne en kasse for dem og så ville de få det skin der var i kassen, så hvis jeg havde åbnet en kniv så havde de fået den kniv. Det var der rimeligt mange der prøvede. Jeg fik så kun dårlige våben

#### Reference 10 - 0,33% Coverage

Fortnite der så jeg faktisk ikke så meget ham der Ninja, jeg så mest, han hedder Tefui hvid du kender ham og Boga og Miss og Quality og alle de der store streamers.

#### Reference 11 - 1,03% Coverage

Ja er er en dansk streamer eller YouTuber eller hvad man nu vil kalde ham jeg ser meget faktisk en der hedder MarcusHD som åbner han og spiller meget CS:GO og streamer rigtig meget. Han åbner faktisk rimeligt tit knive hvis man kan sige det sådan og han har måske også over 30 eller 40 knive i sti inventory. Han købte også på et tidspunkt 40 af de der Howl M4A4 skins i CS:GO de kostede 1.000 euro på det tidspunkt og han solgte dem videre til 1.200 euro og han købte jeg tror det var 40 eller 42 af dem, et

#### Reference 12 - 0,72% Coverage

Ja han har gamblet meget på sine streams, men det er han stoppet lidt med nu for han har lige solgt sin bil til 2 millioner fordi trak rimeligt meget i hans pung ik. Så han havde ikke særligt meget penge tilbage så derfor stoppede han lidt med det gambling der og solgte sin bil og købte en lidt billigere bil. Han havde sådan en Mercedes AMG C63 tror jeg.

### 11.2.16 Monetization

<Files\\Dean interview> - § 1 reference coded [0,47% Coverage]

#### Reference 1 - 0,47% Coverage

And normally that monetized in some form, whether that's a subscription model or a sort of buy your cosmetics or pay to win games, which again, I don't like too much.

<Files\\Jacob> - § 5 references coded [0,89% Coverage]

#### Reference 1 - 0,22% Coverage

I think a lot of game developers will look into what kind of mechanics can we do what can we do to monetize these? So I think these days it's all about monetization and it's very much about shareholder value.

#### Reference 2 - 0,12% Coverage

And I think more than before, in the last years, you've seen games being praised for generating a lot of

money.

#### Reference 3 - 0,12% Coverage

But I think these days, actually, people are praising them for how well a company robbing them off their money.

#### Reference 4 - 0,27% Coverage

So I think it's very important for us to know upfront and know in detail how the game works so that we don't go into a game and try to be quick, join something that actually has the predatory spending mechanics, because then there will be a backlash.

#### Reference 5 - 0,16% Coverage

And I don't think it would be positive for us being connected to that kind of gambling, even if I think it would be a through a kind of proxy connection.

#### <Files\\Victor Interview DK> - § 10 references coded [8,57% Coverage]

#### Reference 1 - 0,66% Coverage

Ja Twitch har det der hedder bits. Der var nogle engang i mellem, jeg havde ikke kort på det tidspunkt så jeg havde slået min MobilePay til, så det vil sige at der kom notifikationer hver gang de overførte MobilePay. Så jeg tror jeg har fået doneret i alt den tid jeg har streamet der har jeg måske fået en 200 kroner i alt.

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#### Reference 3 - 1,03% Coverage

Jeg tror jeg har brugt rigtig rigtig meget, det der er fedt ved for eksempel Fortnite og CS:GO det er at du kan ikke købe så du bliver bedre du kan ikke købe ting som gør dig bedre inde i spillet det er fair og

lige for alle. Så derfor er et rimeligt ligegyldige penge man har brugt på spillene men fordi at jeg syntes at de der skins de ser fede ud, det er jo præcis det samme i Fortnite, jeg tror også jeg har brugt omkring 1.000 kroner på Fortnite skins og battlepass og alle de der ekstra ting du kan få.

#### Reference 4 - 0,24% Coverage

Jeg har købt et af de der bundles der til 5 til 10 Euro på et tidspunkt tror jeg, dengang at jeg spillede det meget.

#### Reference 5 - 0,18% Coverage

Ja, jeg har nok brugt 20 til 30 euro på crates som jeg ikke har fået særligt meget ud af.

#### Reference 6 - 0,44% Coverage

Ja det har jeg, jeg har prøvet at få droppet et skin til en shotgun tror jeg til 4 euro som jeg solgt fordi jeg ikke bruger shotgun særligt meget. Ellers får man normalt de der små skins til 0.2 euro eller 0.4 euro ik.

#### Reference 7 - 1,96% Coverage

Ja det har jeg, jeg har faktisk prøvet noget som jeg virkelig virkelig fortryder i dag fordi at på det tidspunkt spillede jeg ikke særligt meget CS:GO hvor det var at jeg var inde og bette nogen af mine skins for jeg tænkte jeg kommer nok ikke til at spille det særligt meget mere. Så jeg bettede fire fem af mine bedste skins og fik faktisk et rimeligt fedt AK skin, det der hedder Bloodspot, til 44 euro eller hvad det nu var. Og der tænkte jeg nå, det var sgu egentligt meget godt og så solgte jeg det og gav min gamle account til min fætter for han spillede meget CS:GO og så sagde jeg at jeg skulle have et gift card til GTA. Så der fik jeg et giftcard der svarede til ca 40 euro og han fik min account til omkring 40 euro ik. Og så det skin han har i dag det der Bloodspot der det ville jeg rigtig gerne have tilbage, for nu er jeg ved at spille CS:GO rigtig meget igen. Så det fortryder jeg lidt, det er nok det bedste jeg nogensinde har vundet i CS:GO.

#### Reference 8 - 1,13% Coverage

Nej sådan noget hvor du roolede du satte dine skins ind og så var der en anden der satte skins ind til ca samme værdi ik. Og så vandt du lidt og tabte lidt og så på et tidspunkt hvis du havde noget der var ok godt så lagde du det ind i sådan en bunke og så ligesom du kan trade nogle skins inde i CS:GO, så lagde jeg fem seks skins ind og så fik jeg det der Bloodspot der så heldig som jeg var. Der kunne man også have fået et eller andet sygt dårligt skin til 0 euro eller en kinv til 3000. Der vil jeg sige der syntes jeg selv jeg var rimelig heldig.

#### Reference 9 - 1,03% Coverage

Ja er er en dansk streamer eller YouTuber eller hvad man nu vil kalde ham jeg ser meget faktisk en der hedder MarcusHD som åbner han og spiller meget CS:GO og streamer rigtig meget. Han åbner faktisk rimeligt tit knive hvis man kan sige det sådan og han har måske også over 30 eller 40 knive i sti inventory. Han købte også på et tidspunkt 40 af de der Howl M4A4 skins i CS:GO de kostede 1.000 euro på det tidspunkt og han solgte dem videre til 1.200 euro og han købte jeg tror det var 40 eller 42 af dem, et

#### Reference 10 - 0,72% Coverage

Ja han har gamblet meget på sine streams, men det er han stoppet lidt med nu for han har lige solgt sin bil til 2 millioner fordi trak rimeligt meget i hans pung ik. Så han havde ikke særligt meget penge tilbage så derfor stoppede han lidt med det gambling der og solgte sin bil og købte en lidt billigere bil. Han havde sådan en Mercedes AMG C63 tror jeg.

### 11.2.17 Needs

<Files\Christoffer> - § 5 references coded [1,24% Coverage]

#### Reference 1 - 0,44% Coverage

but it's like no, they just use all their money for in-game items. Because that's were you show your colors and also, I think just moving forward it would be so cool if you can have like fan jerseys or fan sets or whatever it is within the game basically.

#### Reference 2 - 0,27% Coverage

So I think the trend we are currently seeing will continue, when you buy in-game items you actually get something that makes you experience the game better

#### Reference 3 - 0,22% Coverage

and also seeing the prices of the skins in CS, they are not worth it but still the demand is much higher than what's available

#### Reference 4 - 0,24% Coverage

so I think people just want to express themselves with the things they really spent time in and also want

to have a like a cool experience.

Reference 5 - 0,07% Coverage

you don't know the drop rate of anything.

<Files\\Daniel Interview> - § 1 reference coded [1,40% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1,40% Coverage

The biggest thing for me when it comes to items is the Ninja skin. I love Ninja skin the ninja set in general because that was just in my mindset. It's you know, it's the beginning to something much bigger. He was one of the first creators to get his own skin in the game. And that's just going to lead to a lot more creators getting their own skins in the games. We basically started something that that nobody else had done yet, which I always respect from Ninja, is that he's been doing that since day one.

<Files\\Dean interview> - § 5 references coded [4,51% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,92% Coverage

Yes, definitely. I think some would probably go as far to say and could acknowledge that some companies are probably and definitely using sort of psychologists to sort of extrapolate and prey on even gambling aspects of the brain, I think, and the addictive personality and the nature of some of these mechanics in the games.

Reference 2 - 0,44% Coverage

You can get caught into that trap thinking they can grind their way along and just spend a bit in here. And for they know they spend loads trying to get it.

Reference 3 - 0,54% Coverage

People buy it if they really, really want it. But like those whole random chance, one in a million to get this special item, it's not one. They're worse than some of the gambling machines.

Reference 4 - 0,87% Coverage

Yeah. Definitely. Say for instance so I take an MMO as an example where you can have a lot of players let's say congregating within a bank scenario. Yeah. So everyone standing around and what do people like to do online? Show off their wares. You know there is E-Status/E-Fame who's got the top tier gear.

#### Reference 5 - 1,74% Coverage

So you want to sort of make sure all your exp curves, for instance, in your resource earning rates, if that's should be monetized as well as be grindable if you like or earnable through gameplay. Then you need to make sure that it's at that sweet spot. Sort of, that matches the user feedback that we'll get to the baseline of where you want people to be and be spending. So players don't feel that they're being forcefully grinding or into the moneymakers. Yeah, that's the thing as well. There's a psychological element as well. If you if it starts feeling like that, then you're not going to engage with it.

<Files\\Jacob> - § 1 reference coded [0,89% Coverage]

#### Reference 1 - 0,89% Coverage

We tried it, but I think that's extremely important. So from my understanding, if I assemble that a lot of people that purchased some of the steelseries stuff for Dota 2 and Cisco is because you purchase, let's say, a mouse for 50 U.S. dollars, then you get a good mouse for 50 Euros. The last thing you get an in game item. Let's say that item at the start has maybe a value of twelve and a half US dollar euros, whatever. But over time this will grow. So a lot of people will actually buy the product one because they get a unique in game item that not a lot of People have but also be because they hope that the popularity of this item will grow, so they will become more expensive over time. So I think that's that's something that can kind of. Make people buy a lot of products without being too interested in the product.

<Files\\Poppy Interview> - § 4 references coded [1,64% Coverage]

#### Reference 1 - 0,76% Coverage

Yeah. So, there's a certain type of player that wants to collect everything. So for example, you have a collection book with twelve stamps and only two are available for purchase. Certain people will not be able to let that go. They will want to complete their collection. And as time goes on, especially with their MMO's, the longer you've played, if you've played for seven or eight years and you have every item up until that point, the thought of missing one is just terrible.

#### Reference 2 - 0,34% Coverage

I've seen that with holiday items where somebody who's missed something and freaked out. So if you can monetize that, that's really cynical, actually. But that is what happens. You can monetize that that drive then

#### Reference 3 - 0,27% Coverage

Collectability, aspects of things as well. Being able to collect characters. Missed one? You know that at some point they're going to revisit that city so you perhaps login.

Reference 4 - 0,26% Coverage

There're mystery boxes to open where you can win stuff. All of these little hooks or ways to keep people engaged and keep them playing and potentially spend money.

### 11.2.18 P2W

<Files\Christoffer> - § 1 reference coded [0,40% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,40% Coverage

So, I think it will just continue and I hope that the publicists are just smart and develop things that are actually giving a better experience and not just pay to win. For example, like I think there was a big backlash in Star Wars.

<Files\Dean interview> - § 1 reference coded [0,30% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,30% Coverage

But yeah, if you can just pay to be better than everyone else then, guys can make a lot of money as well.

<Files\Jacob> - § 2 references coded [0,27% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,15% Coverage

But I think that's the model that is most frowned upon these days, is that you sell things at a premium and then there is pay to win mechanics.

Reference 2 - 0,12% Coverage

So I would say that's very rare. that we see that, especially since that usually gets a lot of negative press.

### 11.2.19 Platform and Ecosystems

<Files\\Daniel Interview> - § 2 references coded [1,31% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,70% Coverage

So I use Epic game store. What I really enjoy that they do is they have these promotions where every month I believe it is. Or every week I believe it is actually, they give out a free game. So you get a game that you would normally maybe paid for free.

Reference 2 - 0,62% Coverage

I think that's good because it allows me to, let's say one day, you know, it have nothing to play or something. It gives me an opportunity to try the game that I would have never tried if I didn't have it for free, you know.

<Files\\Olivier Interview> - § 2 references coded [0,52% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,41% Coverage

People like me it's fine but I do have friends that like to game but rather not have to install this separate application for a voice chat instead two clicks and you're speaking to them with their application is so much easier. So that is what we did despite its issues.

Reference 2 - 0,11% Coverage

I got it on a steam sale as per usual. So I think I got it about 50% off

### 11.2.20 Retention

<Files\\Daniel Interview> - § 5 references coded [3,57% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1,31% Coverage

I think it's a very broad skill range. So you have the players that are just gonna be casual and that's with every game. You're always going to have the people that are casual and they won't go above and beyond to get these high placements. And then you see that there's these players that, you know, will go above and beyond to get their first place spot no matter what it takes. The skill gap is so large because it's always changing. The meta in the game's always changing.

Reference 2 - 0,43% Coverage

You know, what people need to know about the game is always changing with the game updated

changes, how the whole game is played and how people see the game.

#### Reference 3 - 0,51% Coverage

What am I going to do today? It's like I could just be like, oh, I will, go grind out the battle pass today and just hop on Fortnite and just start doing the challenges that come with it.

#### Reference 4 - 0,70% Coverage

So I use Epic game store. What I really enjoy that they do is they have these promotions where every month I believe it is. Or every week I believe it is actually, they give out a free game. So you get a game that you would normally maybe paid for free.

#### Reference 5 - 0,62% Coverage

I think that's good because it allows me to, let's say one day, you know, it have nothing to play or something. It gives me an opportunity to try the game that I would have never tried if I didn't have it for free, you know.

#### <Files\\Dean interview> - § 10 references coded [7,72% Coverage]

#### Reference 1 - 0,85% Coverage

I would say that it's an ongoing game. So, if you take a normal game as a box product, sort of ship it. And so, we sell it and ship it sort of thing. The game as a service, is an ongoing thing to basically keep your player base there. You want to keep a higher player base with the game as a service.

#### Reference 2 - 0,97% Coverage

But you normally see regular content drops to sort of keep retention high like the games, like sort of Warframe, Runescape. They'll use it with story quests as well. So there'll be an overarching story theme that you can continue to play. So the game is never over in that sense, which is quite good. I do play a lot of them myself as well.

#### Reference 3 - 0,50% Coverage

there's so many different not to pigeonhole players because some people like everything but some like their quest's their story arc, someone like their combat or their raids,

#### Reference 4 - 1,51% Coverage

The bosses in. And someone like their skilling, you know, there's mining in and there's woodcutting and crafting. Those sort of elements of the game. So you need to give a varied amount of content. I think you need to have a strong theme to keep them in as well. And with the long grinding games, if you like, and the same with sort of Warframe, you need to vary the gameplay like no one likes repetition. If you need to sit there grinding something for 10 hours or whatever to get an item, you need to offer varied content there.

#### Reference 5 - 0,55% Coverage

Yeah. I mean, this is what basically everything's now is competing for namely people's time. Like we're so connected nowadays, we could we could pretty much do whatever we want, wherever we want.

#### Reference 6 - 0,21% Coverage

So, like it is literally trying to keep your personal retained and engaged.

#### Reference 7 - 0,28% Coverage

And as you see with these social platforms, probably the best way to do that is with social groups.

#### Reference 8 - 0,74% Coverage

If you've got like more followers on your Instagram or your Facebook or whatever. That's the one you're going to go to the most. You know that you can have more interactions with that, bringing you back to that. And that's going to be taking more of your time.

#### Reference 9 - 0,37% Coverage

And I mean it's partly because I played so many hours and I didn't mind putting in that money too and giving them something back.

#### Reference 10 - 1,74% Coverage

So you want to sort of make sure all your exp curves, for instance, in your resource earning rates, if that's should be monetized as well as be grindeable if you like or earnable through gameplay. Then you need to make sure that it's at that sweet spot. Sort of, that matches the user feedback that we'll get to the baseline of where you want people to be and be spending. So players don't feel that they're being forcefully grinding or into the moneymakers. Yeah, that's the thing as well. There's a psychological element as well. If you if it starts feeling like that, then you're not going to engage with it.

<Files\\Jacob> - § 1 reference coded [0,45% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,45% Coverage

Free to play with only cosmetics. That's one thing that's also different free to play models with subscriptions. Dota 2 has a version of that. I know. And a lot of the other games, a lot of other games have the same where they, have these seasons or battle passes that you can sign up for some you have to buy individually each season and for others you can sign up for like the full year and you maybe get a discount.

<Files\\Olivier Interview> - § 2 references coded [0,42% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,24% Coverage

but I do remember that it was a point where a lot of us slowed down playing TF2, and then it was like a breath of fresh air this new thing that they introduced

Reference 2 - 0,18% Coverage

and then if you haven't played for a while, obviously you lose your rank, so you're gonna have to build it up again.

<Files\\Poppy Interview> - § 3 references coded [0,85% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,53% Coverage

So, is a tried and tested method for a lot of the games as a service kind of games and that is regular updated content. So every three weeks, players knew that they could come back to the game and there would be a different level, there'd be different characters, there'd be different items. It would be a totally reskinned experience.

Reference 2 - 0,08% Coverage

And because it's new all the time, it's quite fresh

Reference 3 - 0,23% Coverage

There's also a lot of things like daily challenges where if you complete a challenge every day, you get multiplied the scores, you get extra things.

### 11.2.21 Social

<Files\\Christoffer> - § 1 reference coded [0,24% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,24% Coverage

so I think people just want to express themselves with the things they really spent time in and also want to have a like a cool experience.

<Files\\Daniel Interview> - § 1 reference coded [0,87% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,87% Coverage

So the social aspect is a big part for me, because me being someone who can just ramble on for ages and hours about the game, you know, it's a big part for me 'cause I like interacting with people. I like meeting new people. And I love just, you know, sharing my thoughts and ideas with other people in the community

<Files\\Dean interview> - § 3 references coded [2,54% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,47% Coverage

And then like, I'll take Dota, for instance. And then I'll join a party. But I was gonna go before that. So, that's just kept me around for another one game at least.

Reference 2 - 1,20% Coverage

That's normally an hour in Dota or something like that. The next thing you know, we are five games in. And then we've met another person and then we've got full party and then we don't want to drop the whole party. Then we had each other as friends. And that's four more people to invite me and bring me back online and potentially keep me away from another product or another service, whether it be a Netflix or whatever.

Reference 3 - 0,87% Coverage

Yeah. Definitely. Say for instance so I take an MMO as an example where you can have a lot of players let's say congregating within a bank scenario. Yeah. So everyone standing around and what do people like to do online? Show off their wares. You know there is E-Status/E-Fame who's got the top tier gear.

<Files\Olivier Interview> - § 9 references coded [2,48% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,07% Coverage

But when I really started playing with my friends

Reference 2 - 0,13% Coverage

get all his friends to join on the same server and we could just have our own rules

Reference 3 - 0,34% Coverage

Uh, I'd only really start playing because my friends played it. It wasn't really ever something I thought, yup, I want to turn on my PC and play CS:GO with strangers. It was always a game that I played with, uh, with friends.

Reference 4 - 0,21% Coverage

Uh, so I know a lot of my friends had it and I ended up getting it because they all had to, and there were sometimes playing it together

Reference 5 - 0,29% Coverage

Um, when I had a flatmate who is the biggest CS:GO, Mmm, addict slash fan I've ever seen. And we were living together. And instead of putting anything on TV, he would put CS:GO streams on TV.

Reference 6 - 0,16% Coverage

And that was with my flatmate. Um, when he was watching, it wasn't something I would tend to watch on my own

Reference 7 - 0,17% Coverage

living with that flatmate who's a big CS:GO fan, we'd often play together. And then, uh, I played with my brother

Reference 8 - 0,96% Coverage

And then my brother and some friends could watch. And then before I knew it, some randoms would start watching. And then that started to be an interesting thing cause I'd never really thought that that

would happen, but somehow some randomers sometimes watch my streams and uh, yeah, they sometimes chat a bit and are quite friendly. And then I realized that actually there's quite a big audience for streaming, as long as you put out the right content. So, um, the biggest success, uh, for streaming and for me anyway has been the multiplayer games that you can play through one stream, that everyone can play on their devices at home.

Reference 9 - 0,15% Coverage

And then, uh, I remember I had enticed CH uh, to download it because I described it as a Hunger game.

<Files\\Poppy Interview> - § 2 references coded [0,81% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,41% Coverage

But then they introduce friends chat and then clan chat where you could join together in a group and then talk there. We actually had a statistic back in I think it was 2011 or 2012 that half of the people who logged into Runescape didn't enter the game world.

Reference 2 - 0,39% Coverage

They just stayed in the chat lobby just to talk to their friends. So it was almost like a form of the first social media before social media being able to log into Runescape where you kind of knew each other from game and could just talk to people.

## 11.2.22 Steam

<Files\\Napy> - § 1 reference coded [1,43% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1,43% Coverage

The easiest way to stop piracy is giving those people a service that's better than what they're receiving from the pirates." Steam does that very well, where Epic fails hard. I've skipped many games that became exclusives to Epic just because, as a consumer, I have no trust at all in Epic. Uplay is fine as it integrates nicely into steam, if you want to. Origin recently updated with a steam partnership too. I tend to think that if you need exclusives to make people come to your platform, you don't have a good platform.

<Files\\Olivier Interview> - § 9 references coded [3,60% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,31% Coverage

And then, um, I think when Steam introduced the, uh, broadcasting again within the platform in two clicks, you can start, you can start sharing your stream with some of your friends. Um, that was really good.

#### Reference 2 - 0,27% Coverage

Steam streaming is quite limited on quality and uh, frames a second OBS, you've got so much customization you can do, you can adjust the bit rate resolution, frames per second.

#### Reference 3 - 0,41% Coverage

ESC is something that my brother and I, we made years ago on steam, we created a group, an ESC group, which stands for while it was our school, European School Calum was our school. And then we would schedule events on that group and then they'd go and get notification

#### Reference 4 - 0,70% Coverage

invited his friends and my brother told me to install Discord and I was skeptical so I was like, Oh, Steam chat works fine. Didn't really want to have a third party app just for chatting. But uh, he, he sold it to me when he said, Oh, you got loads of voice settings and quality settings and you can individually select the volume of each, each user and whatnot. You have different chat rooms. And I was like, yep. Sold. And it's also free. So I was yup. Okay.

#### Reference 5 - 0,62% Coverage

we were one of the, one of the first few to start using steam. And I say we, because it was my brother and I's account. Um, so, uh, we had to share it account for quite a while because we played the same games. There was no point buying, there was no such thing as steam family sharing back then. So we had one computer. So what's the point of having two accounts, paying for games on two different accounts.

#### Reference 6 - 0,51% Coverage

I started using it again one of the first ones, to start using it in my sort of um, age group because my brother is already playing with his, with his friends on steam and I just sort of tagged along and then, um, before I knew my friends one by one, started to get into the gaming scene I told them to get steam because it was awesome.

#### Reference 7 - 0,36% Coverage

Uh, a fraction. Uh, I again, I've got Facebook really late, uh, in life. I only got it just to try and stay in touch with people that might not be able to be in touch with. Mmm. I dunno. Like 1% or less. Compare it to steam and discord.

Reference 8 - 0,02% Coverage

Oh yeah, 100%.

Reference 9 - 0,41% Coverage

Yeah, definitely. Vast majority, probably at least 85% on steam easily. And I will go out of my way to try and find if there's games available both I will, even if it's cheaper on one than the other, I will usually wait until it's on sale as long as I can have it on steam.

<Files\\Victor Interview DK> - § 3 references coded [1,17% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,50% Coverage

En af mine venner åbnede faktisk en kniv på et tidspunkt til omkring 2 til 3 hundrede euro. Du kan jo hvis du går in på Steam markedet, så kan man finde knive, lad os se, den dyreste koster 1.620 euro den dyreste, bar for et skin inde i et spil ik

Reference 2 - 0,27% Coverage

Nej, men Steam de har de der spil, det er kun Fortnite jeg har prøvet på Epic. Steam der syntes jeg der er mange flere valgmuligheder.

Reference 3 - 0,39% Coverage

Ja der er stadig nogen af dem der bruger Epic games når du spiller Fortnite, men vi er i hvert fald flest der spiller over Steam, CS:GO og GTA og Unturned og Rust og alle de der spil vi spiller

### 11.2.23 Trading

<Files\\Daniel Interview> - § 2 references coded [1,49% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,48% Coverage

So I think trading would be a good addition, but it would have to be within moderation because we've

all seen accounts get, you know, hijacked before and stolen and trading,

Reference 2 - 1,02% Coverage

I think would be a good feature, especially if you could sell stuff for a V-bucks, cause and players can, you know, open up a whole new marketplace for Fortnite and everything. But with the way the game is in the type of situations that have arose from, you know, security breaches and everything on people's accounts, I don't think it would be a good fit for Fortnite.

<Files\\Dean interview> - § 4 references coded [1,39% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,27% Coverage

Yes, they resell it in sort of the real world like, it's weird. It depends how it's implemented.

Reference 2 - 0,30% Coverage

If people are exploiting it and farming it you know, I mean and manipulating markets and that, that's bad

Reference 3 - 0,65% Coverage

But I've, like the way Dota works, I've actually like got money on my steam account from item drops, item rewards and stuff like that. I just cleared out. I had probably I mean, I've got six and a half thousand hours playing Dota.

Reference 4 - 0,16% Coverage

And I earned 70, 75 pounds. That was just my junk items.

<Files\\Olivier Interview> - § 1 reference coded [0,33% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,33% Coverage

if I was ever sick of that item or wanted something new, yeah I'd just put it on steam market and it would sometimes sell for a couple of quid or something and then I just use that towards my next Steam Game purchase.

<Files\\Poppy Interview> - § 1 reference coded [0,08% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,08% Coverage

There were ones where you could buy and sell items.

<Files\\Victor Interview DK> - § 1 reference coded [1,96% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1,96% Coverage

Ja det har jeg, jeg har faktisk prøvet noget som jeg virkelig virkelig fortryder i dag fordi at på det tidspunkt spillede jeg ikke særligt meget CS:GO hvor det var at jeg var inde og bette nogen af mine skins for jeg tænkte jeg kommer nok ikke til at spille det særligt meget mere. Så jeg bettede fire fem af mine bedste skins og fik faktisk et rimeligt fedt AK skin, det der hedder Bloodspot, til 44 euro eller hvad det nu var. Og der tænkte jeg nå, det var sgu egentligt meget godt og så solgte jeg det og gav min gamle account til min fætter for han spillede meget CS:GO og så sagde jeg at jeg skulle have et gift card til GTA. Så der fik jeg et giftcard der svarede til ca 40 euro og han fik min account til omkring 40 euro ik. Og så det skin han har i dag det der Bloodspot der det ville jeg rigtig gerne have tilbage, for nu er jeg ved at spille CS:GO rigtig meget igen. Så det fortryder jeg lidt, det er nok det bedste jeg nogensinde har vundet i CS:GO.

#### 11.2.24 UGC

<Files\\Olivier Interview> - § 2 references coded [0,93% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,68% Coverage

But it got to a point where there's just so much stuff. I know it's really hard to keep track of because I think they've also got different levels of Mmm rarity, which again it was quite difficult to track. So they just thought, well, we're just going to make a websites that everyone can use and find out if their new headgear or their new skin that they received is good. And or basically, what is it? And you can search by rarity by name, by class

Reference 2 - 0,25% Coverage

because they've had to screenshots, I don't know what it was, is like something 10,000 different items, you know, from the, yeah. It was a crazy amount of, of work

<Files\\Poppy Interview> - § 1 reference coded [0,23% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,23% Coverage

You could do all kinds of things. And we had a team of 200 volunteers for moderators, which we trained

to look after the forums for us manually.

### 11.2.25 Value

<Files\\Dean interview> - § 4 references coded [2,13% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,65% Coverage

And sometimes you don't even convey the way that you're spending. So, you haven't even got a full understanding of what that item or all those currencies you're buying translates in real money, especially if you're a youngster.

Reference 2 - 0,25% Coverage

That's not my top tier items I've got, but because I have spent a lot of money on Dota.

Reference 3 - 0,87% Coverage

Yeah. Definitely. Say for instance so I take an MMO as an example where you can have a lot of players let's say congregating within a bank scenario. Yeah. So everyone standing around and what do people like to do online? Show off their wares. You know there is E-Status/E-Fame who's got the top tier gear.

Reference 4 - 0,37% Coverage

And I mean it's partly because I played so many hours and I didn't mind putting in that money too and giving them something back.

<Files\\Olivier Interview> - § 3 references coded [1,65% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,49% Coverage

one my favourite servers that I joined changed it's name or had the original name and then put hats hats hats after the server name all in capital letters trying to entice people to join because somehow trying to trick people thinking that there is more drops of hats in their server than any other one. Which was nonsense

Reference 2 - 0,48% Coverage

It's this, this, this, this one guy in particular he does that in most games. He does that in TF2 as well. He just saw an awesome costume he likes. Oh, I like that. And he just buys it. And then he will justify it

by saying, well, you know what, sunk a thousand hours into this game. What's a, what's five quid? Uh huh.

#### Reference 3 - 0,68% Coverage

But it got to a point where there's just so much stuff. I know it's really hard to keep track of because I think they've also got different levels of Mmm rarity, which again it was quite difficult to track. So they just thought, well, we're just going to make a websites that everyone can use and find out if their new headgear or their new skin that they received is good. And or basically, what is it? And you can search by rarity by name, by class

### 11.2.26 Virtual Currency

<Files\Olivier Interview> - § 1 reference coded [0,55% Coverage]

#### Reference 1 - 0,55% Coverage

I never bought anything with my own money it was always with in-game currency which was essentially the scrap metal the metals so you'd get loads and loads of drops of low quality stuff, sometimes good stuff, but mostly low quality stuff, and you would progressively refine it into these metals that you can then combine and then get yourself a really rare item

### 11.2.27 Virtual Economy

<Files\Daniel Interview> - § 1 reference coded [1,08% Coverage]

#### Reference 1 - 1,08% Coverage

So I really enjoy the battle pass because it really gives the user something to actually grind for and, you know, to get back into the game. Obviously the pricing, obviously that's a little annoying having to pay for it in every, you know, two months. You know, they have to make money somehow. But I think, I think in return you get enough where the price pays off with what you're getting.

### 11.2.28 Virtual Items

<Files\Christoffer> - § 1 reference coded [0,47% Coverage]

#### Reference 1 - 0,47% Coverage

I think in-game items are really the most driving things for publicist at the moment as people are making the games free to play, just look at Fortnite or also CS is now free to play. If you look at EA's turnover, you can see that they earned so fucking much money from FIFA.

<Files\\Napy> - § 2 references coded [3,42% Coverage]

#### Reference 1 - 3,02% Coverage

Personnaly, I like customizing my game characters to reflect my personnality

[NDW]: My character is mine, even tho it's got the same stats as everybody else

[NDW]: yet you know who the guy playing with that scarf alongside with that armor is

[NDW]: It tends to reflect how you play too [NDW]: For others, Rarity is more important

[NDW]: They wear only the rarest, and trade huge amounts of money to have something other people don't have

[NDW]: Even if the item looks bad [NDW]: It's got value as long as it rare

[NDW]: In the TF2/CSGO/Dota ecosystem, you can also trade items, so they have intrinsic value

[NDW]: In a game like Rainbow 6 Siege, items can't be traded, yet they still have value to people's eyes

[NDW]: A Black Ice skin that only rarely drops from a random pack is seen by the community as one of the best, even though owning one doesn't say anything about you, beside you got lucky at one point

[NDW]: It's like in real life really , people see value where they want to

[NDW]: It might be purely economic value, or it can be sentimental value, or just "fashion value"

#### Reference 2 - 0,40% Coverage

Say a friend of yours traded you a TF2 hat one day, and then he died. I think that virtual item would hold as much sentimental value as a real thing

<Files\\Olivier Interview> - § 6 references coded [1,48% Coverage]

#### Reference 1 - 0,20% Coverage

all of a sudden hats and you know different costumes and everything you could think of was suddenly the Kcraze hats being the main

#### Reference 2 - 0,24% Coverage

he'll join in his self-made character like all this this like this new hat new scarf new outfit new boots that no ones ever seen before and it's quite amazing.

#### Reference 3 - 0,45% Coverage

yeah absolutely yeah he's submitted most of it and it's extremely successful. In fact he's still getting a small income from it today. And in fact it is just by doing that that enabled him to move out of his parents

house and get his own apartment solely thanks to designing hats and scarves on TF2.

#### Reference 4 - 0,10% Coverage

You could get some really nice looking weapons and it was great.

#### Reference 5 - 0,38% Coverage

I personally never spent, uh, uh, any money on it. Um, it was a, or if I did, no, I think I did, but I only ever spent money that I had gotten by selling Mmm. Items that dropped and I don't think I've ever spent more than 50 P or something on a skin.

#### Reference 6 - 0,12% Coverage

And like some of my other friends have spent stupid amounts of money on skins.

<Files\\Victor Interview DK> - § 4 references coded [3,72% Coverage]

#### Reference 1 - 0,50% Coverage

Jeg har faktisk et skin på min Steam account, det koster, min M4A, 12.5 Euro, jeg tror for i alt har jeg nok skins til omkring 50 til 60 euro. Min AK den har jeg i StatTrack og den har jeg jo mange dræbte med, jeg runder snart tusind drab med den.

#### Reference 2 - 0,50% Coverage

En af mine venner åbnede faktisk en kniv på et tidspunkt til omkring 2 til 3 hundrede euro. Du kan jo hvis du går in på Steam markedet, så kan man finde knive, lad os se, den dyreste koster 1.620 euro den dyreste, bar for et skin inde i et spil ik

#### Reference 3 - 0,75% Coverage

Hvis jeg skal have et fedt skin fx i CS:GO så går jeg efter noget som hvor det selvfølgelig er billigt men også er noget jeg kommer til at bruge meget inde i spillet, for eksempel jeg sælger altid de skins som revolveren i CS:GO den bruger jeg aldrig for der har jeg slået Deagle til så hvis jeg får nogle revolver skins så sælger jeg dem for jeg bruger ikke revolver.

#### Reference 4 - 1,96% Coverage

Ja det har jeg, jeg har faktisk prøvet noget som jeg virkelig virkelig fortryder i dag fordi at på det tidspunkt

spillede jeg ikke særligt meget CS:GO hvor det var at jeg var inde og bette nogen af mine skins for jeg tænkte jeg kommer nok ikke til at spille det særligt meget mere. Så jeg bettede fire fem af mine bedste skins og fik faktisk et rimeligt fedt AK skin, det der hedder Bloodspot, til 44 euro eller hvad det nu var. Og der tænkte jeg nå, det var sgu egentligt meget godt og så solgte jeg det og gav min gamle account til min fætter for han spillede meget CS:GO og så sagde jeg at jeg skulle have et gift card til GTA. Så der fik jeg et giftcard der svarede til ca 40 euro og han fik min account til omkring 40 euro ik. Og så det skin han har i dag det der Bloodspot der det ville jeg rigtig gerne have tilbage, for nu er jeg ved at spille CS:GO rigtig meget igen. Så det fortryder jeg lidt, det er nok det bedste jeg nogensinde har vundet i CS:GO.