Marketing Esports to the Masses:

Testing the Efficacy of Positive Community-Curated Stimuli on Mitigating Negative Attitudes towards Esports

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Abstract

Competitive gaming, also known as “esports”, is a rapidly growing global phenomenon that is increasingly being pulled into the mainstream media spotlight with a critical hand. This paper proposes and tests the efficacy of a mitigation strategy for esports marketers when combatting the frequent negative influence of mainstream media on non-consumers’ attitudes towards esports. In order to understand the problematic communicative frameworks currently in place between consumers, non-consumers and mass-media, the paper explores whether esports marketers can utilise these various stakeholders to better inform strategies to promote esports to the wider public by engaging with two studies. First, outreach to the esports community provides context and importance to the research problem at hand whilst also putting forward negative and positive representations of esports. Second, a between-participants experiment on non-consumers is conducted to measure attitudes towards esports based off stimuli found in the first study. The findings show that the introduction of a positive stimulus can have a positive influence on attitudes towards esports, even following the negative influence of mainstream media. The paper concludes that esports marketers should take into account multiple stakeholder perspectives and use positive messaging as a means to further expand consumption of esports on a wider market.

Key words: esports; competitive gaming; mitigation strategy; positive messaging; stakeholder perspectives

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1. Introduction

Competitive video gaming, or *esports*, has taken the world by storm. Expanding rapidly from a nascent fringe subculture to a $1.5bn industry (SuperData, 2017, p.3), esports has become of increasing interest to marketers and mainstream media alike. Despite this, it has struggled to find legitimacy in the mass market and faced not only a barrage of criticism in the press but also a deep-rooted scepticism that esports will ever "make it" on a global scale. This dissertation focuses on the many benefits of esports: from its role as a social and recreational space to its development of a new competitive scene that can help individuals satisfy life goals and train skills. It questions the critical view of esports by the press and calls for the ongoing misrepresentation and negativity from mainstream media to be explored at its very roots. Where esports has faced adversity and accomplished so much without the need for support from the mainstream, offering forwards a method for communicating it effectively and positively to the wider public could bring forth new opportunities for growth. Expanding the audience and pushing for greater recognition could be beneficial not only for esports stakeholders, but for the wider public who may not yet be educated wholly about the subject.

One of the most pressing issues that this study hopes to address is the problematic communicative frameworks in place. Where a large number of marketers look to capitalise on the huge growth rates and clear-cut target market, the threat of a non-traditional form of media consumption has been received with hostility, resentment and wariness by a wider public – one that is constantly influenced by negative messaging about gaming in general. Indeed, the current framework for communicating esports to a wider, first-time audience runs through two distinctly separate streams: 1) mainstream media and 2) the esports community. This has caused a significant problem to arise: an "us" and "them" mentality between both parties has made it difficult for the non-consumer to embrace esports, particularly within a landscape of backlash and negativity (Johnson, 2015; Schwartz, 2015; Cameron, 2018). As a result, more and more potential consumers are being deterred from engagement with

esports, and consequently it struggles to find widespread acceptance despite its rapid growth.

This paper seeks to rework this existing problematic framework into one that accounts for multiple inputs and produce a nuanced view of an emerging esports culture. More precisely: how can esports marketers pull useful data from consumer and non-consumer segments to create a balanced and comprehensive response to mainstream media negativity?

To address this question, this report aims to tackle three hypotheses. Firstly, I hypothesise that non-consumers, when presented with a negative portrayal of esports, will have an unfavourable attitude towards esports. This is due to research on the effect of negativity on attitude and opinion, such as studies on negative reviews and product attitude reporting that "a simple negative recommendation…can influence the attitude of consumers" (Lee, Park and Han, 2007, p.349) and studies on the role of media in the construction of public opinion which argue that "the media – television, the press and online – play a central role in communicating to the public what happens in the world" (Happer and Philo, 2013, p.321). Esports is not universally experienced and a large proportion of non-consumers are first put in contact with the idea of competitive gaming from mainstream new sources; as "the power of the media message tended to be heightened in those cases where there was no direct experience or other knowledge of an issue" (Happer and Philo, 2013, p.328) it is likely that non-consumers will be strongly affected by the largely negative portrayals of esports by mass media and therefore develop an unfavourable attitude.

- ➔ **H1: Non-consumers presented with negative stimuli will have an unfavourable attitude towards esports**

Secondly, I hypothesise that the treatment group will have a more favourable attitude to esports than the control group. This is linked to my third and final hypothesis: that a positive community-curated stimulus, even following initial negative influence or attitude, will cause the non-consumer to view esports in an overall improved. These hypotheses are based on

the effectiveness of emotional appeals in changing consumer attitudes. Historically, there have been different types of emotional appeals in advertising and media, particularly from a political standpoint. “Fear-ads” are released for the purpose of “awaken[ing]… the anxieties of the viewing audience” (Brader, 2006, p.6); the negative portrayal of esports put forth by mainstream media could be likened to a fear-ad, but they are also often unimpassioned – meaning that they lack in emotion and try to put forward largely information-heavy pieces. Whilst negative emotions have often been seen as more of a driving factor for humans – also known as negativity bias (Vaish, Grossman and Woodward, 2008) – some critics argue that positive messaging can incite similarly powerful responses. Frederickson’s work on the value of positive emotions further helps to draw the conclusion that positive messaging can help mitigate negative, fear-based messaging from the media. As a result, the treatment group that is given a positive stimulus should have a more favourable opinion of esports than the control group that is only given a negative stimulus. Taking this one step further, using positive stimuli as a response to negativity could be an effective way to tackle widespread misinformation and scepticism revolving around esports, as “community transformation becomes possible because each person's positive emotion can resound through others” (Frederickson, 2003, p.335), thereby making it possible to circulate positive views more efficiently and offering esports marketers a means to capitalise on this approach.

- ➔ **H2: Treatment group participants will have a more favourable attitude towards esports than the control group’s participants**

- ➔ **H3: Positive community-curated stimuli, even following an initial negative influence, will cause non-consumers to have a positive change in their attitude towards esports.**

Esports marketers are battling to shrink the gap between gamers and non-gamers and frequently suffer from the seeming unapproachability of esports to outsiders (Edwards, 2013). My research aims to tackle the root of this problem whilst noting the errors on both the

part of the esports community and of mainstream media. That is: brands entering the esports space are expected to "have done their due diligence and homework" (Pike, 2017, p.1) but often fail to, whilst conversely esports marketers looking to enter the non-consumer space assume that acceptance should and will be granted even without their own due diligence. In this study, I will use *community-curated stimuli* to challenge negative perceptions about esports, with the phrase "community-curated" referring to information or media that has been specifically chosen or highlighted by a majority of a sample of esports consumers. It should also be noted that my use of *non-consumer* means one that is unfamiliar and carries little to no knowledge of the competitive gaming scene and the term "esports". In sum, this dissertation investigates how positive community-curated responses can help to mitigate the negative attitude towards esports among non-consumers, particularly resulting from mainstream media influence.

By producing an in-depth marketing-oriented approach to esports, this study hopes to achieve new insight into an expanding field that is still yet to receive much academic scrutiny. There is a dearth of self-critique from the esports community when trying to identify reasons why esports struggles to find a positive reaction from the general public; this paper hopes to fill this gap by looking more critically at the relationships in play between consumers and non-consumers. It hopes to be the foundation for further study into the path of conversation between the esports community and those that extend beyond it and provide a framework for combatting negative attitudes. To test the effectiveness of my framework, two studies will be carried out: first, a preliminary survey of esports consumers in order to obtain community-curated responses, and second, a quantitative between-participants experiment on non-consumers to determine the effect at different influence points.

This paper will begin with a literature review in order to provide a detailed context to the study and critically analyse both the negative and positive aspects of esports. The following two chapters will give an in-depth discussion of the methodology and results from the two studies, each reporting on the findings and their relevance. The structure of these studies

can be seen in Figure 1. The final chapter will wrap up all the findings and draw conclusions based on the results gathered from the two studies, leading to a rejection or acceptance of the hypotheses.

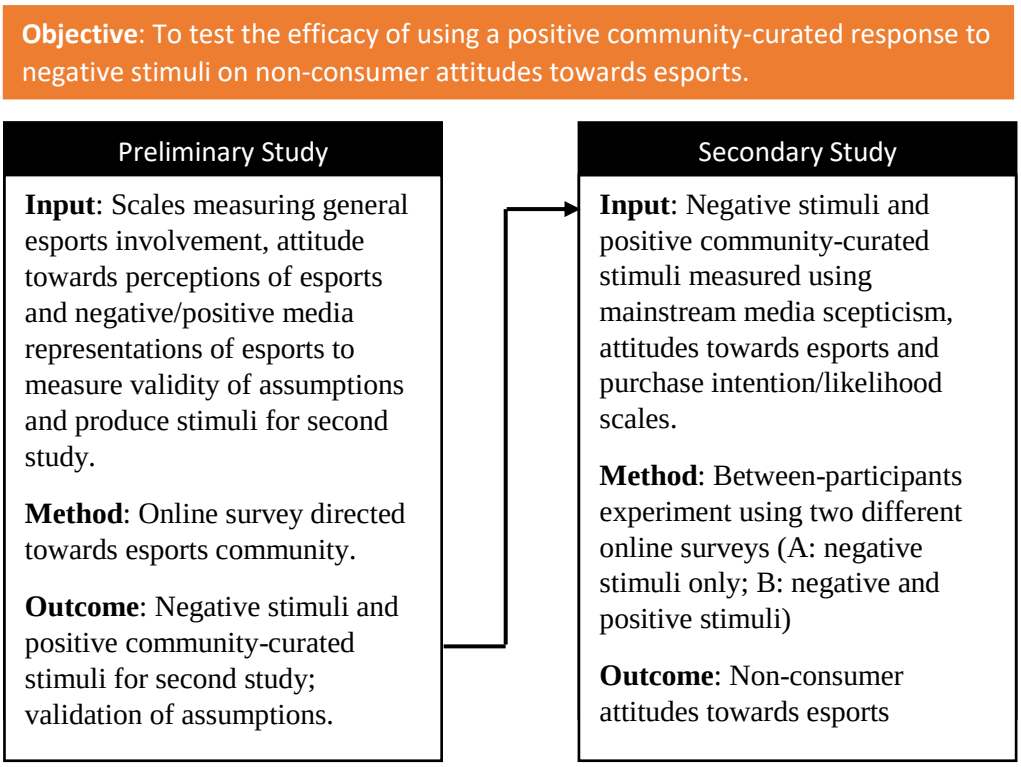

Figure 1: Structure of two related studies (Study 1 and Study 2) conducted to address the objective

2. Literature Review

2.1 Defining Esports

It is important to first take into account the contemporary esports landscape and the scholarship revolving around the background against which my study is set. Understanding esports is complex because of "the relative novelty of the industry as well as the convergence of culture, technology, sport, and business" (Jenny et al., 2016, p.4), therefore it is crucial to understand the origins and evolution of the term "esports" itself before delving deeper into the intricacies of the industry. Wagner's 2006 definition of esports, "an area of sport activities in which people develop and train mental or physical abilities in the use of information and communication technologies" (Wagner, 2006), tends to be the classification most widely accepted by esports scholars. However, it is often more casually defined as "competitive gaming at a professional level" (Newzoo, 2018, p.12) by data and market intelligence companies as well as esports enthusiasts on the whole.

Originating as a shortened form of *electronic sports*, esports has evolved as a term since its conception and become the source of much debate just in its spelling. Frequently spelt in past scholarship as "e-Sports" and "eSports", a call for the dropping of capitalization and hyphenation in the term became proof of the widespread usage of the word and the steady seeping of esports into the day to day life of a growing audience. As of 2017, the official spelling was confirmed in the AP Style Guide as "esports" due to "industry trends and general usage" (Lee, 2017) and was proclaimed as "another sign of progress as esports moves closer to the mainstream" (Darcy, 2017). Whilst Wagner's definition is perhaps more encompassing than the generic and arguably limiting casual definition, it still falls short of a succinct and rounded explanation of esports; it fails to explicitly mention its competitive nature and the inherent focus on gaming, not just computing.

As such, throughout this study, esports will be defined as an amalgamation of the Wagner and Newzoo's definitions:

Esports is an area of video-gaming activities in which people develop and train mental and/or physical abilities on a competitive level.

Another reason for my reluctance to use Wagner's definition is in the implication that esports is, and should be understood as, a sport. Whilst the long line of debate and research on the topic (Lee and Schoenstedt, 2011; Witowski, 2010; Jenny et al., 2016; Hallman and Giel, 2018) is fundamental in understanding why there may be implicit bias against esports by the wider public, I argue that esports does not need to be classified a sport and that doing so is largely irrelevant for it to be successful in its own right. Growing as its own field and developing its own tournaments has so far shown growth and results whilst the effort of integrating it into larger sporting events may reap little reward. Only 28% of esports fans themselves think that gaming should be included at the Olympics and only around half consider esports to be an actual sport (Pike, 2017). Whilst the Olympics could provide another level of exposure, it is extremely likely that the most popular and competitive esports titles would not fit the "Olympic Values of Friendship, Respect and Excellence" (International Olympic Committee, 2018). Thomas Bach, President of the International Olympic Committee, recently stated that "killer games can never be part of the Olympic Movement" (Fitch, 2018), confirming the likely removal of huge esports titles such as *Counter-Strike.* Consequently, "such a culling of esports titles would certainly inhibit interest for a substantial portion of the community" (Massaad, 2017) and potentially reduce viewership from the esports community itself. Growth may, as a result, become stunted and the opportunity for esports to rise in its global presence could diminish. On the other hand, if esports were to be accepted and successful as an Olympic sport, it could negate many of the critiques society holds against gaming and open the niche activity up to a broader audience.

The numbers for esports are already illustrative of its great promise and potential for growth: global esports viewers will total 380 million this year (Pannekeet, 2018), comprised of 165 million esports enthusiasts and 215 million occasional viewers. These huge numbers continue to build across livestreaming platforms such as *Twitch* and *Youtube*, and record-holding viewership numbers are constantly being broken. As of May 2018, the 2018 Mid-Season Invitational of popular multiplayer online battle arena (MOBA) video game *League of Legends* broke the world record for the maximum number of online viewers, hitting a peak of 127 million spectators and becoming "the most popular esports event in history" (Esports Charts, 2018). Despite previous suggestions that "it won't be that long before [esports] are covered on television in the same way as traditional sports" (Gestalt, 1999), this traditional marker of success, i.e. being popular enough to be shown on television, seems to be unfit for the modern world of esports. Whilst this may have once been the goal envisioned, the insistent rising viewership for esports has proved that streamed content may have more reach and flexibility than if it were to be shown via traditional channels. This newfound notion – a turn away from conventional routes – is a perfect illustration of the constant tension between the mainstream/niche duality that esports possesses. With esports no longer needing traditional mainstream media to thrive and grow, and with its own audience beginning to rigorously support this self-sufficiency, a new confidence in the industry has sprung forth. Returning to the example of the Olympics, renowned esports commentator Paul "Redeye" Chaloner aptly comments: "the Olympics need us more than we need them" (Stewart, 2018). This could, however, apply to attitudes towards mainstream activity in general and the increasing power of millennials, the latter of which esports captures securely in its target demographic. The annual Internet Trends report released in 2017 by Kleiner Perkins suggests that millennials aged 21-35 like esports just as much as traditional sports (Meeker, 2017); data from Mintel's 2016 report on video games in the UK shows that male millennials aged 16-24 have the highest degree of interest in watching esports coverage and are the most likely to play video games at least once per week (Flowers, 2016).

2.2 Negative Aspects

2.2.1 Concerning violence and health

The problem that my research aims to address stems from a close look at the multitude of issues that plague esports, even in its rising popularity. Gaming has always seemed to face inherent distrust and disapproval, both as a hobby that connotes reclusiveness and as a media form that, to some, incites the approval of violence. A huge amount of research has gone into such topics and two adverse effects have been identified and hotly debated by scholarship on videogames. Firstly, some scholars argue that violent videogames trigger the development of violent attitudes (Wei, 2007; Anderson, 2004; DeCamp and Ferguson, 2017). Even since the 1990s, video games have been brought out of the leisure and arts frame and into political discourse, with Senator Joe Lieberman calling them “digital poison” (Curley, 1997) and Hillary Clinton likening the effect of violent video games on violent behaviour in adolescents to “what smoking is to lung cancer” (Vitka, 2005). Such claims against gaming have brought about a high level of criticism and debate: DeCamp and Ferguson’s nuanced study into the impact of exposure to violent video games is perhaps the most compelling research yet, taking into account past research and newer revelations about external factors that may also cause violent behaviour. They advise that “caution is still warranted over claiming a relationship between violent video games and violent behaviour” (DeCamp and Ferguson, 2017) and note that one must differentiate between violent media use and real-life exposure to violence. The scarcity of research into pro-social effects of gaming and the intrinsic challenge posed by finding a way to accurately measure aggression means that it is extremely difficult to definitively state the adverse effects of gaming. More succinctly, “the direction of influence is hidden” (Matthews, 2013) and finding an answer to such predominant issues will take time and much scrutiny.

Secondly, more recent studies have had a renewed interest in “videogame addiction”: the recent inclusion of such concerns through the defining of “gaming disorder” in the draft 11th

Revision of the International Classification of Diseases (World Health Organization, 2018) appears to validate such fears. A tweet by BBC Technology claiming that "20-hours per week" was illustrative of computer game addiction (BBC Technology, 2018) received immediate backlash. Many Twitter users picked up on the fact that people spent equivalent if not more time watching television or checking social media: a 2018 Ofcom report showed that, on average, people in the UK watched over 3 hours of television per day (Ofcom, 2018), surpassing the 20-hour weekly marker that supposedly suggests gaming addiction. In fact, many hobbies and sports have hours poured into them by those who are involved, and yet there is no real controversy or negativity on the same level. Pulling video games into the spotlight under a precursor of denunciation is perhaps what has caused such deep-rooted and rigid pre-existing negative perceptions to infiltrate our increasingly technological world. It is possibly another sign of wary mainstream media attitudes towards digitalisation and unfamiliar technological innovation, not in its universality or entirety but "in that the configuration is not amenable to the societal preference of those participants" (Murthy and Mani, 2013, p.3) - it does not fit in with the desires and comfort of mainstream media.

2.2.2 Sensationalism and Reputation

The supplement to sustained pessimism about gaming turned out to be the villainizing of esports as it brought gaming forwards as a new avenue for competitive play. Rather than being celebrated as a venture into an era of digitalized activities, esports is instead weighed down by its tie-ins with whether or not it's a "real sport" and the negative associations gaming carries. Fuelled by gambling controversies (Auxent, 2016), homophobic language problems (Myers, 2018) and the ongoing threat of "an undercurrent of sexism" within the industry (Gaudiosi, 2012), the positive attributes and successes of esports are frequently overshadowed by such issues, particularly in mainstream media. Whilst some have been praised for their balanced and well-researched coverage of esports, such as US-based giant *ESPN*, many have been criticised for their "unceasing misrepresentations and smears" (Shields, 2018). The number of Twitter users using the platform to discuss gaming and

esports is immense (Chadham 2018) – it's unsurprising that esports industry figureheads such as Duncan "Thorin" Shields (quoted above) use it to voice their frustration and concerns about the distorted coverage of esports by major publications. However, the anonymity aspect of Twitter and distance from real life confrontation also leads to users being less inhibited and more likely to post controversial or aggressive opinions. The correlation between content sensitivity and a user's choice to be anonymous (Peddinti et al., 2014) is likely to attribute to the huge amount of backlash that follows the release of dissatisfactory esports pieces from sites such as *Kotaku*, *The Guardian* and the *BBC*.

Hosstile responses to media pieces which misrepresent esports, though understandably stemming from a place of anger from the community, are also a part of the problem. Hostility on social media is not uncommon: recent studies have indicated that social media is the dominant space for cyberbullying (Whittaker and Kowalski, 2014) and Twitter in particular is a breeding ground for further issues such as hate speech, as it only "warns (rather than prohibits) users that they may be exposed to content that might be 'offensive, harmful, inaccurate or otherwise inappropriate'" (Alkiviadou, 2018, p.6). As such, where many choose to call-out the publishers for their lack of understanding from a frustrated but constructively critical perspective, there is a small audience that answers such articles with extreme volatility and aggression. Often using slurs, hateful comments and verbally abusive remarks (Appendix A), those who choose to respond in this manner unfortunately tend to become voices that are picked up on by mainstream media and used as an illustration of the negative face of esports.

Herein lies the endless and cyclical problem: mainstream media appears to be constantly seeking to capitalize on the sensationalized reputation of esports and gaming; the esports community suffers from the voice of a toxic minority that enables this sensationalism to be outwardly validated. This problem should not be mistaken as one-sided, but it must be noted that in goading the community, advocating anachronistic stereotypes, and being selective with the truth, mainstream media's motives of sensationalism and readership are causing

huge issues. Twitter in particular has empowered individuals to freely voice their opinions and facilitate “citizen journalism”, where the everyday user engages in online journalistic practice (Goode, 2009, p.1288). Such journalism is more likely to represent common sentiment, whereas traditional mass media still suffers from its own desire to attract readership by producing negative content, which has been said in psychological literature to attract humans more readily than positives (Ito et al., 1998; Rozin and Royzman, 2001; Chen and Lurie, 2013). Consequently, showing esports in a negative light for the purpose of shock tactics and major headlines ends up painting an incomplete and distorted picture to the masses, much to the frustration of the esports community.

2.2.3 The Threat of “New” Media

One of the most compelling arguments to be made in explaining mainstream media’s negative approach to esports is in the threat of its own position as a media source that is being outdated. Traditional television, radio and news are being overtaken by new digital platforms such as social media and popular viewing sites like *Twitch* and *Netflix.* For the purpose of this study, “traditional media” is defined as TV, radio, newspapers and other print publications, whilst “new media” refers to media that is digital and networked via the internet i.e “graphics, moving images, sounds, shapes, spaces and text which become computable” (Manovich, 2001, p.44)*.* As the line between traditional and new media is increasingly blurred, it is difficult to firmly define both concepts.

“I do think some of the mainstream press are actually very scared by esports and even more scared by the lack of young readers they have” – Paul Chaloner (McMath, 2018)

Mainstream media agencies have increasingly taken to sites like Facebook and Twitter, whereas before they did not have much social media presence. Social media as a preferred route to news content rose to 18% in 2017, with referral traffic coming from social media ranging between 13-15% for the Guardian, Independent and BBC the same year (Newman and Kalogeropoulos, 2017); the rising prominence of social media as a venue for readership

for mass media illustrates the decreasing distance between traditional and “new” media. Note that it is important to be critical of the term “new” and wary of its connotations, particularly in an age where technology is constantly evolving and former notions of newness can be outpaced very quickly; “millennial media” may be a term to consider as a replacement.

Esports connects immediately with the upcoming generation because of its wholehearted embracing of digital technologies, both in its very nature and in the methods of communication it employs. Esports tournaments and streams secure consistent viewership via *Twitch* – a live video game streaming website – and maintain large numbers despite not being televised on traditional channels. *Twitch* offers far more than pure video media content, providing “more manifold and holistic communication […] particularly due to the high levels of interaction” (Sjöblom and Hamari, 2016, p.985); enabling instant communication with hundreds of thousands of viewers is something that traditional media lacks. The importance of such interaction can be expressed most aptly through prevalent theoretical framework, the Uses and Gratification (UG) theory. Hamilton notes that “many people watch streams for social interaction with other human beings with whom they identify” (Hamilton et al., 2014, p.1319), and with esports being largely unknown to the mass public, a UG perspective is easily understandable in this case. Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch’s 1973 work on UG theory offers forward five ways in which social factors may be involved in the generation of media-related needs, with the first stating:

“Social situation produces tensions and conflicts, leading to pressure for their easement via mass media consumption” (Katz et al., 1973, p.517)

Here, the tensions and conflicts stem from social situations between the esports consumer and non-consumer; the easement comes from interacting with likeminded individuals via platforms such as *Twitch.* Hamilton further notes that similarities between traditional and electronic spectatorship have been found (Cheung and Huang, 2011), but that there is an

emphasis on “social engagement and community building” (Hamilton et al., 2014, p.1323) that is not present in traditional sports viewership via traditional media. The rise of digital virtual consumption and the building awareness of its advantages is an intrinsic marketable value of esports that is incorporated from play (online downloadable clients and updates) to spectatorship (live video streaming) to the spread of news (social media and websites). Rather than aiming to see the value of technology acceptance, mainstream media appears blindsided by its rapid development, choosing to see it as a threat that must be quashed as opposed to a welcomed opportunity for growth – the numerous “click-worthy” articles sensationalizing esports and arguably fear-mongering can be seen as examples of this (Kain, 2017).

2.4 Positive Aspects

2.4.1 Reasons for Consumption

This report has so far talked at length of the complex background to esports and the many negative associations that accompanies it - this section will go on to explore the many positive aspects that esports holds. Firstly, it is fundamental to understand the motivations and reasons for esports consumption to recognise why the benefits outweigh the disadvantages, and why the esports audience continues to grow. There has been much research into the social context of video games, including Jansz and Martens’ study on the appeal of gaming at a Local Area Network (LAN) event. The authors use a UG framework to analyse motives for consumption, focusing on five key areas: competition, control, entertainment, escapism and pastime (Jansz and Martens, 2005). Acknowledging that games are largely represented in mass media as isolating and violent, their results showed that whilst the “nerdy” lonely stereotype of adolescent gamers was corroborated by some results, other results contradicted it heavily. The social motive was the highest scoring in the study and “more than half of the sample actively participated in a gaming community” (Jansz and Martens, 2005, p.345), suggesting that gaming has a social context beyond just solitary

play. Other studies have also found sociability to be the leading motive for many esports players (Hobler, 2006; Frostling-Henningsson, 2009), followed by motives such as fun and competition. According to Martončik, these latter motives are also wholesome rather than detrimental: “[esports] can be a valuable way of spending leisure time and a means of expressing themselves for young people in the rapidly changing modern world” (Martončik, 2015, p.211). Again, the UG perspective is central as esports is seen as a way of satisfying various needs; a further study using the UG framework to explicitly identify why people play online games supports this theory: “social interacting, such as making friends, sharing experiences/information with each other… is one of the major factors driving players to participate in online games and is coherent with previous studies” (Wu, Wang and Tsai, 2010, p.1868).

2.4.2 Presenting New Job Opportunities

Secondly, beyond its value as a platform that fulfils needs for social interaction, esports offers new job opportunities and a growing market for millennial attraction. Some of the most well-known esports teams such as *Team SoloMid, Optic Gaming, Cloud9 and Fnatic* have had significant investment from celebrities, sports clubs and brands; merchandising and sponsorship also come into play with fans buying “shirts, mouse pads and even dedicated chairs” (Lewis and Bradshaw, 2017). With some teams having estimated valuations of $100 million (SportTechie, 2018) and huge, dedicated fanbases that touch upon multiple demographics, it is easy to understand why huge brands like *Mercedes-Benz, BMW, T-Mobile* and *Coca-Cola* are investing in the scene (Anekal, 2017). Leading teams and players can earn significant wages alongside prize money and sponsorships, but the growth in esports on the whole means that entirely new career paths are opening up beyond just that of player or manager. Coaches, PR executives, content creators and hosts are just a few of the job roles that the esports industry now demands to keep up with its expanding presence; pro teams have also begun to employ nutritionists, fitness staff and psychologists (British Esports Association, 2017) as steps towards building health infrastructure for players are

being made. These strides towards healthier lifestyles are illustrative of the movement esports is making away from the stigma of gamers "sitting behind computer screens and TVs with horrible diets and no real structure" (Marshall, 2017) to professional players that focus on mental and physical health as part of their effort towards high-end performance.

2.4.3 Furthering Education

Educational prospects are an increasing area of positive effect for esports, particularly with the rise of collegiate scenes and University programmes that target the industry. Partnerships such as the 2017 affiliation between esports organization *ESL* and the *University of York* (University of York, 2017) and the introduction of a full esports degree set to start in September 2018 at Staffordshire University (Staffs.ac.uk, 2018) offers more inclusion and involvement from a grassroots level. Progress like this sets a sturdy foundation for steady upwards movement into the industry, hopefully enabling individuals to gain skills for an esports career and broaching the gap between enthusiast and business professional. The rising popularity of competitive gaming at a University level is also promising: the *NUEL* (*National University Esports League*) hosts tournaments that feature over 300 teams from more than 100 UK universities and offers community support to University esports and gaming societies (The NUEL, 2018). These kinds of opportunities help young esports players flow into the industry with experience competing in regulated tournaments, whilst also providing work experience to those who wish to move forwards in other sectors such as business, photography or production. The recent announcement of *National Student Esports (NSE)* shows a further development of infrastructure from an institutional level (bucs.org.uk, 2018). Supported by the national governing body for UK university sport (*BUCS),* the increasing support for students should help strengthen the esports ecosystem and encourage young people to view esports as a legitimate career path.

3. Preliminary Study

This chapter will present in-depth information about my preliminary study and the objectives, strategy and methodology behind it. Alongside a critical review of my chosen methodology and the reasons behind its use, the sampling frame and means of data collection will be detailed. Finally, to determine conclusions to the identified assumptions laid out in the objectives section, an analysis of findings will be presented.

3.1 Objectives

There were three main purposes to this preliminary study. Firstly, it aimed to prevent any arbitrariness in the choice of negative stimuli being presented in the second study. Secondly, it hoped to develop the basis of my second study and procure a positive community-curated response. The final objective was to develop a context for the importance of my research question and prove the validity of the following assumptions:

Assumption 1: The esports community cares about how it is perceived by the wider public

Assumption 2: The esports community is largely discontent with the portrayal of esports in mainstream media

These assumptions are crucial in understanding the significance of developing a means to change attitudes towards negativity brought about by mainstream media. This preliminary study should offer forward a general consensus as to how the esports community perceives its own portrayal in mass media, and whether or not it is essential to try and address the problem that has been identified.

3.2 Methodology

3.2.1 Research Philosophy

It is often observed that no single methodology is superior over another, with some scholars calling for a mixed-method approach (Kaplan and Duchon, 1988) in order to suit the complexity of real-world contexts. Indeed, this research struggles to adopt a purely

interpretivist or positivist paradigm due to the complex nature of the research question and hope instead to use elements of both under a carefully managed frame. In believing that our knowledge of reality is socially constructed by human actors (Burrell and Morgan, 1979), it would seem that an interpretivist stance is more suited to this study, particularly due to the exploratory nature of this study, as it is "characterized by a need to understand the world as it is from a subjective point of view" (Ponelis, 2015, p.538). However, there are concerns lying in the limited objectivity of interpretivism and also in the fact that my research is predominantly quantitative and deductive in nature. As a result, my research methods will largely be from a quantitative, positivist approach in order to be objective as possible and maintain a distance between the researcher and the participant.

3.2.2 Surveys as a Data Collection Method

A survey is a "systematic method for gathering information from (a sample of) entities for the purposes of constructing quantitative descriptors of the attributes of the larger population of which the entities are members" (Groves et al., 2013, p.2). In this study, an online survey is used to gather data about the esports community in relation to their attitude towards the portrayal of esports in mainstream media. An online survey is a mechanism through which "a researcher can gain access to people who share *specific* interests, attitudes, beliefs and values regarding an issue, problem or activity" (Wright, 2006).

Advantages

There are many advantages to using an online survey in the context of this particular study, namely that it engages effectively with the specific virtual community that is being sampled. The online space is ideal for the esports community and for the contemporary context in general which is deeply familiar with the use of the Internet: as "the popularity of the Internet increases, more segments of society are using the Internet for communication and information" (Wright, 2006). Online gaming, as the name suggests, is based largely through virtual connection; whilst offline tournaments and events can gather many individuals from

the esports community in one place, more often it is difficult to reach a large number in-person than it is online. As such, an online survey seemed most suitable for gathering a substantial number of representative responses from the community. An online survey is also time saving, enabling me to collect data while pursuing the next steps in my research and getting real-time updates. They "allow messages to be delivered instantly to their recipients, irrespective of their geographical location" (Ilieva, Baron and Healey, 2002, p.365) meaning that although my reach was likely to largely be within the UK, it was able to stretch beyond without much hassle or extra work on my end. There is also no real financial implication associated with using an online survey, particularly since I chose to use Google Forms which is free to use; surveys give researchers "access to undreamed numbers of respondents at dramatically lower costs than traditional methods" (Couper, 2000, p.454). Something I also wanted to ensure was respondent convenience and comfort, as I hoped to make the data collection interesting and easy for the target sample in order to gain genuine emotional and attitudinal responses. As Evans and Mathur note in their study on the value of online surveys, "a respondent can take an online survey whenever he or she feels it is convenient" (Evans and Mathur, 2005, p.198), and the only real limitation is on the end of the researcher who can leave the survey open for several days or weeks, or however long necessary to gather enough responses. My familiarity with Google Forms was also an additional advantage to using this method of data collection, as I was able to formulate the survey quickly and effectively. Google Forms also has great in-built data representation and it is easy to view responses on a summary or individual scale.

Disadvantages

On the other hand, there are a few disadvantages that researchers need to bear in mind when using online surveys. Notably, non-interviewer questioning relies on self-reporting and the truthfulness of respondents. As it is anonymous it is less likely respondents will give answers in order to present a better image of themselves as they will not be identified to the researcher, however there could still be misrepresentation if respondents use anonymity as a

guise to express falsified opinions. Whitehead comments on the possibility of either, stating: "distance and anonymity may give the participant a reduced sense of accountability, although the opposite has also been suggested, that online study participants are more genuine and open" (Whitehead, 2007, p.788). As it is hard to know the definite effect of anonymity, the researcher must be wary of responses and be aware of the possibility of misrepresentation. Some research suggests that web-based survey participants will be less likely to complete the entire survey (Velez et al., 2004), though this will be unlikely to be possible in the first stages of my survey as the questionnaire has been programmed to only allow progression once answers have been given to all questions. The open-ended questions in the last section of the survey, however, may suffer from lack of responses as it requires effort on behalf of the respondent.

3.2.3 Survey Strategy and Design

Considerations

Strategy and design were both carefully considered and reviewed in order to come up with the most effective survey: various issues such as anonymity, response rate and scale development were taken into account. Assuring participants of anonymity hoped to prevent respondents from being deterred from answering the questionnaire, particularly women, minorities, or those that are stigmatised within the community. The survey was designed to adhere as much as possible to the response rate quality criteria listed in Table 1.1.

RESPONSE RATE CRITERIA based on Andrews, Nonnecke and Preece (2003, p.192)
Survey is salient to participant interests
Privacy and confidentiality is assured
Estimated time to complete survey is provided
Multiple ways to contact and invite participation are part of the distribution strategy
Survey customised to the target population (invitation language, type of notification media)

Table 1.1: Table showing response rate criteria

Participants and Sampling Frame

To ensure the sample was from the desired population, a set of requirements had to be met

by participants including age (18 to 40) and esports consumption (frequent player, spectator or industry professional). This study followed purposive sampling, with participants needing to meet the specific requirements in order to be eligible for the survey. Steps towards increasing the number of respondents were made such as outreach via social media where sharing functions – particularly retweeting in the case of Twitter – helped to expand communication beyond the reach of the researcher. There was no limit on gender or location, though it is likely that most responses would be from males based in the UK as a result of the relevance of those contacted via my immediate network of survey invites.

Scales

As the area of research is still relatively new, there was not much literature nor existing methodology that proposed relevant scales for use; it was critical to ensure that scales developed for the survey were not without a sound basis. The survey was comprised of three different sections: 1) general esports involvement, 2) attitude towards perceptions of esports and 3) media representations of esports. The first section was multiple-choice, the second used a 1 to 7 Likert scale, and the third used open-ended questions.

The general esports involvement questions were adapted from an "*Involvement with Sport*" scale (Walraven, Bijmolt and Koning, 2014) but altered to use esports vocabulary and made more specific so as to avoid terms like "frequently", "reasonably" and "regular basis" and replace them with "daily", "weekly" and so on to prevent subjective interpretation. Items for the "*Attitude towards Perceptions of Esports*" scale shown in Table 1.2 were developed from the two assumptions stated earlier and the construct "*contentedness with external perception*". Positively-worded statements were used consistently to limit bias and researcher influence on the participant, whilst also as to acknowledge the potential issues with negatively-worded items as "a few of these items randomly interspersed within a measure can have a detrimental effect on its psychometric properties" (Hinkin, Tracey and Enz, 1997, p.103). Negative and positive media representations of esports were collected using an open answer form where participants could add links and leave comments.

Items used in "Attitude towards perceptions of esports" Scale
1. Most people don't know what esports is
2. The perceptions of others affect my own enjoyment of esports
3. I care about how esports is perceived by the wider public
4. I am happy with how esports is portrayed in mainstream media
5. I have strong opinions about the benefits of esports
6. I have strong opinions about the disadvantages of esports
7. Attitudes towards esports have shifted significantly in the past year

Table 1.2: Table showing items used in "attitude towards perceptions of esports" scale

Pilot study

A small-scale pilot study was conducted in order to test for bias and comprehension. Generally, pilot study respondents should be "as similar as possible to those in the main enquiry" (Oppenheim, 1992, p.62), therefore two individuals with the desired participant attributes were asked to give their feedback on the study via an informal chat. Both pilot study respondents suggested that the final part of the survey (gathering negative and positive media examples) should have a third section that enables respondents to give any extra links that did not fit into either category in case any particular mainstream media representations of esports stood-out to participants but were excluded because the options were too limited. This was added to the survey to widen the potential data for collection and analysis. It may have been effective to conduct the pilot study with more participants, however as time was a limiting factor I chose to engage on a deeper basis with two individuals rather than a wider spread of participants on a shallower level.

Implementation

The survey was released on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and via email alongside a brief explanation about the research. There was immediate response to the survey and electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) was a successful tool in building up the number of respondents. Twitter appeared to be the most effective means of gathering respondents, with high engagement compared to other social media platforms in terms of likes and retweets. The

survey was left open for one week and received 190 responses, 189 of which were valid (consent given) and able to be analysed.

3.2.4 Methods of Analysis

The first and second survey sections were analysed using SPSS where the use of graphs, charts and statistics can help us to effectively "explore, present, describe and examine relationships and trends within our data" (Saunders et al., 2007, p.406) and was fitting for the quantitative data. The first section was largely used as a filter and a means of ensuring that respondents were knowledgeable about esports before continuing with the questionnaire. By issuing a preliminary section that could look at the background of each respondent specifically, I hoped that outliers could be compared against respondent information to see if any patterns occurred to do with length of time interested in esports, role within the industry or other measure of involvement should any unexpected or extreme answers arise.

The third and final section had answers coded (Appendix B) and then grouped before being represented in a frequency table. As the responses were not identical nor immediately recognisable, each answer was read thoroughly in order to gain an overall view of common responses and then coded by using the name of the publication mentioned in each answer. In the case of positive media examples (Appendix C), the responses were also coded but done so under different group labels. Answers were much more varied in comparison to the negative media examples, and so responses were grouped under more general terms to prevent there being a wide spread of too many groups with too little frequency.

3.3 Results and Discussion

3.3.1 Attitudes towards Perceptions of Esports

Results from this study show that the majority of esports consumers care about how esports is perceived by the wider public. Figure 2.1 shows 70.7% of responses range between “slightly agree” to “strongly agree”. The median and mode both fall in the same category of “slightly agree” with the graph skewing strongly to the right; the most frequent answers are situated on the same end of the scale. The study has also found that most esports consumers are unhappy with how esports is portrayed in mainstream media, with there being a strong trend towards the negative end of the scale: 62.8% of respondents answered with some element of disagreement to the statement “I am happy with how esports is portrayed in mainstream media”, shown in figure 2.2. The modal answer was “slightly disagree”, as was the median.

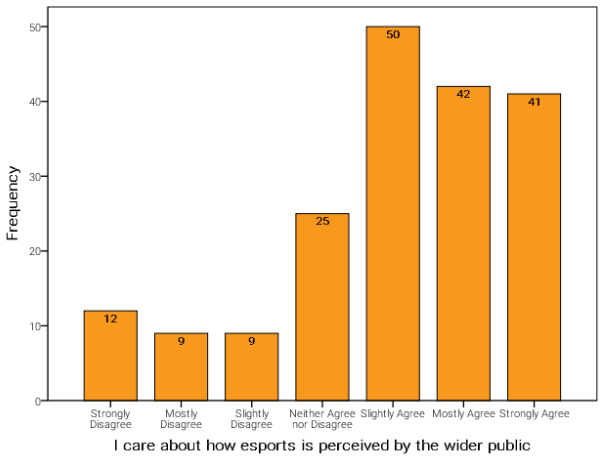

Figure 2.1: Responses to the statement "I care about how esports is perceived by the wider public"

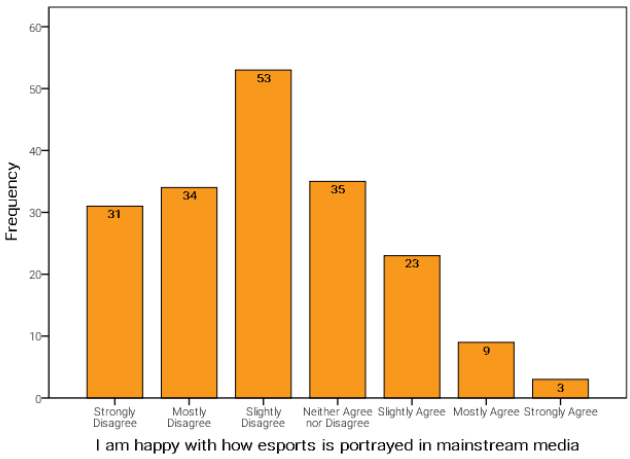

Figure 2.2: Responses to the statement "I am happy with how esports is portrayed in mainstream media"

It is possible to conclude from these results that our two assumptions are met and are valid based on the data collected from the respondents: 1) the esports community cares about how it is perceived by the wider public, and 2) the esports community is largely discontent with the portrayal of esports in mainstream media. These two assumptions are vital in

understanding why the second study in this report tackles the problem with mainstream media and why effectively communicating esports to the wider public is an important issue for the esports community.

3.3.2 Negative Representations of Esports

The second set of results look closely at the open-ended questions in the final section of the survey. These have two purposes: firstly, to gain an example of a negative portrayal of esports in mainstream media and secondly, to gather a community-curated positive media response. The answers to the question: "Is there anything (article/tweet/video) that you believe is a misrepresentation or negative portrayal of esports?" were varied and there were multiple different responses. Grouping them into 7 different groups was useful in looking at the trends of the data, as we were only seeking to find the most frequent response. The grouped answers are displayed in a frequency table in table 1.3 and as a bar chart in figure 2.3 with the groups "*Other"*, "*General Media/Mainstream Media in General"* and "*BBC"* being the leading three groups.

Group	Frequency
Other	25
General Media	16
BBC	16
Youtube	15
None	10
The Guardian	4
Sky Sports	2
TOTAL	88

Table 1.3: Frequency Table showing responses containing Negative Media Examples

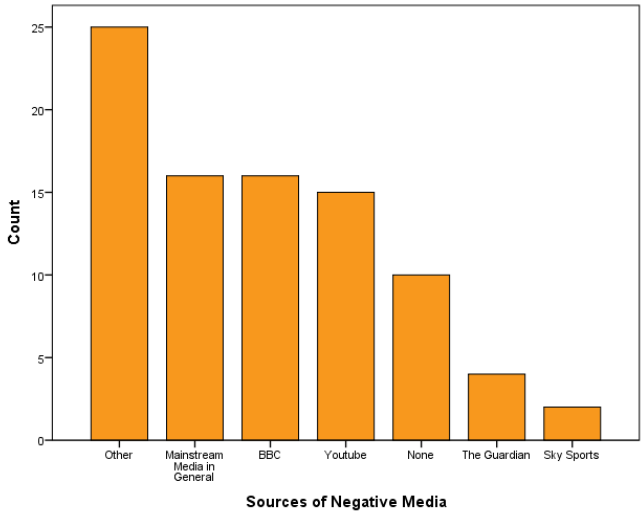

Figure 2.3: Bar Chart showing frequency of responses for each negative media source

To discern upon one negative media example to use in the second study, the categories "*Mainstream media in general*" and "*Other*" were disregarded as they contained a variety of different responses and no particular consensus in terms of the articles cited. The BBC was

then the most frequently referenced example and had one article in particular that was referenced multiple times. The “gaming disorder” article (Wakefield, 2018) was cited by 40% of the respondents that included the BBC in their answer to the negative media question. One respondent, speaking about the article, noted that the article “throws gaming under a bad light”; another commented critically saying that it was a “strong misunderstanding of addiction […] This article is a huge failure and erroneous”. A breakdown of articles cited within references to the BBC as a source of negative media is displayed in Figure 2.4.

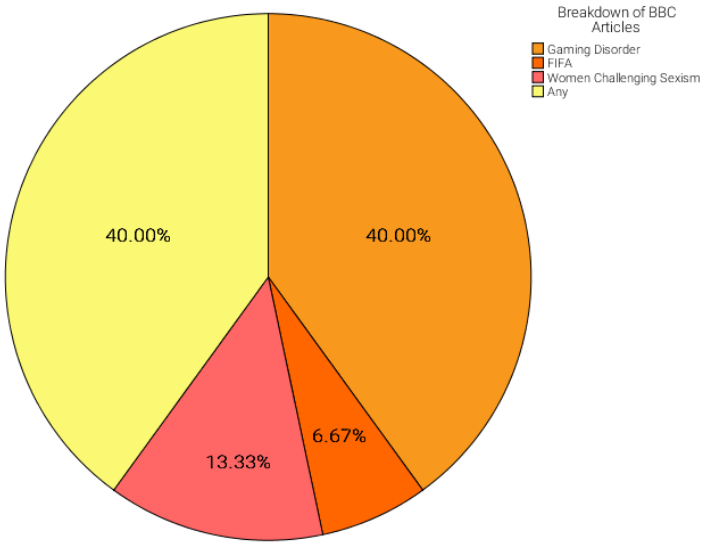

Figure 2.4: Breakdown of BBC articles cited by respondents

It should be noted that the open-ended questions did not receive 100% participation by the respondents – an issue that was likely to arise due to the high level of involvement and effort required by respondents. Out of 189 valid responses, only 89 gave an example of negative media portrayal, and consequently the data put forward may be limited in scope and reliability may be reduced. However, as the purpose of the question was to prevent arbitrarily choosing an article, that the gaming disorder article emerged as the best example of a negative portrayal of esports and gaming in general means that it is sufficient to be used in the secondary study of this report.

3.3.3 Positive Representations of Esports

Answers to the question "Can you think of an article or video that you would show to someone that did not know anything about esports?" were also not given by 100% of participants, rather only 88 out of 189 offered forward responses. The groupings remained the same as those in Table 1.4, however the group "*Documentary*" was split up further into "*Valve Documentary", "Vice Documentary"* and *"Other Documentary"* to distinguish between the various documentaries that were frequently brought up. Figure 2.5 shows the frequency of each media source cited, with a video produced by *League of Legends* developer *Riot Games* title "Our Game" being the most popular. The "*Our Game*" video was selected as the community-curated response to be used in Study 2 due to it being the most frequently cited in this preliminary survey.

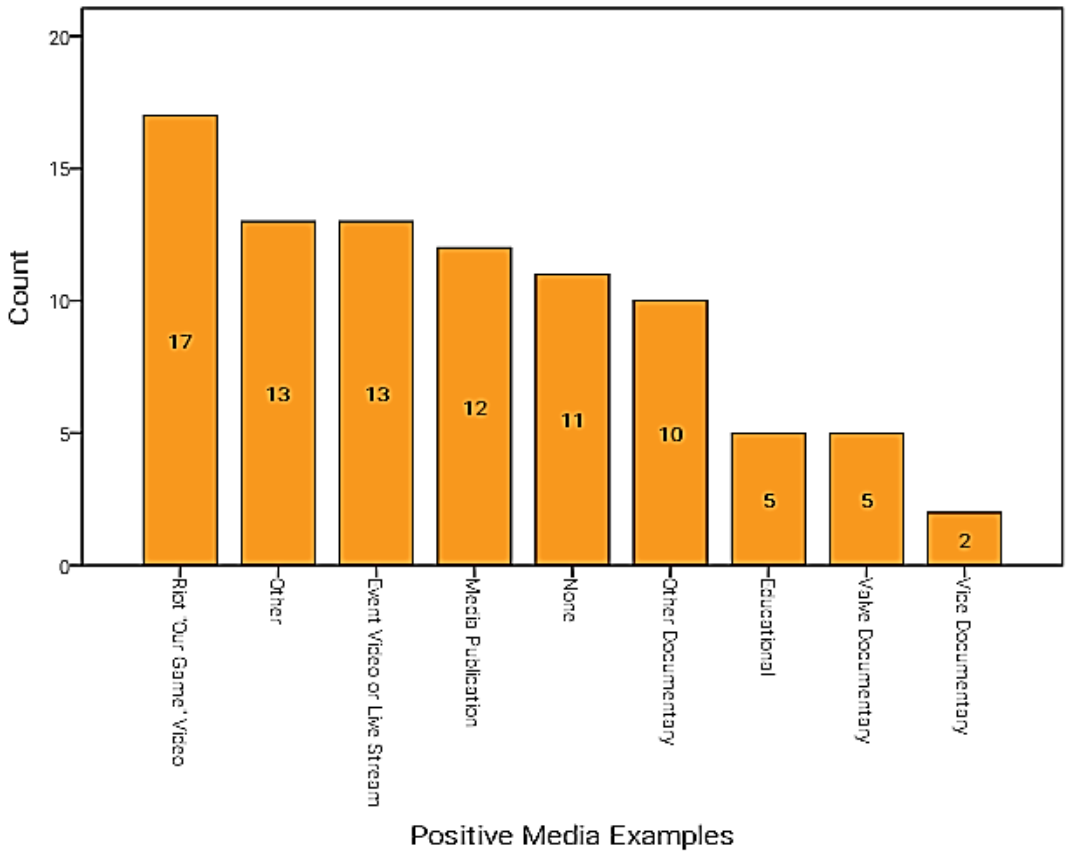

Figure 2.5: Bar Chart showing groupings of positive media examples and their frequency

4. Secondary Study

This study aims to investigate the efficacy of using a positive community-curated influence to mitigate negativity towards esports. The chapter will begin with an overview of objectives before looking at methodology and largely expanding on the methods used in the preliminary study. Strategy and design will again be discussed, taking into account the difference in sampling frame from the first study; following an analysis of results, conclusions will be drawn in relation to the study's hypotheses.

4.1 Objectives

This study aims to address the research question head on by measuring the attitudes of non-consumers towards esports following the introduction of negative and positive stimuli. The following hypotheses will be accepted or rejected based off the data gathered in this study:

***Hypothesis 1**: Non-consumers presented with negative stimuli will have an unfavourable attitude towards esports.*

***Hypothesis 2:** Treatment group participants will have a more favourable attitude to esports than control group participants.*

***Hypothesis 3**: Positive community-curated stimuli, even following an initial negative influence, will cause non-consumers to have a positive change in their attitude towards esports.*

As a result, it should be possible to determine whether positive stimuli are an effective means of countering negative approaches to esports and improving communication between the esports community and the wider public.

4.2 Methodology

4.2.1 Data Collection Method

In this secondary study, a between-participants experiment with two groups was designed. Group A would receive only negative stimulus (N), whilst group B would receive the negative stimulus followed by the positive stimulus (P). At each influence point (IP), three constructs will be measured: attitude, mainstream media scepticism and purchase intention. Figure 3 shows the structure of the experiment.

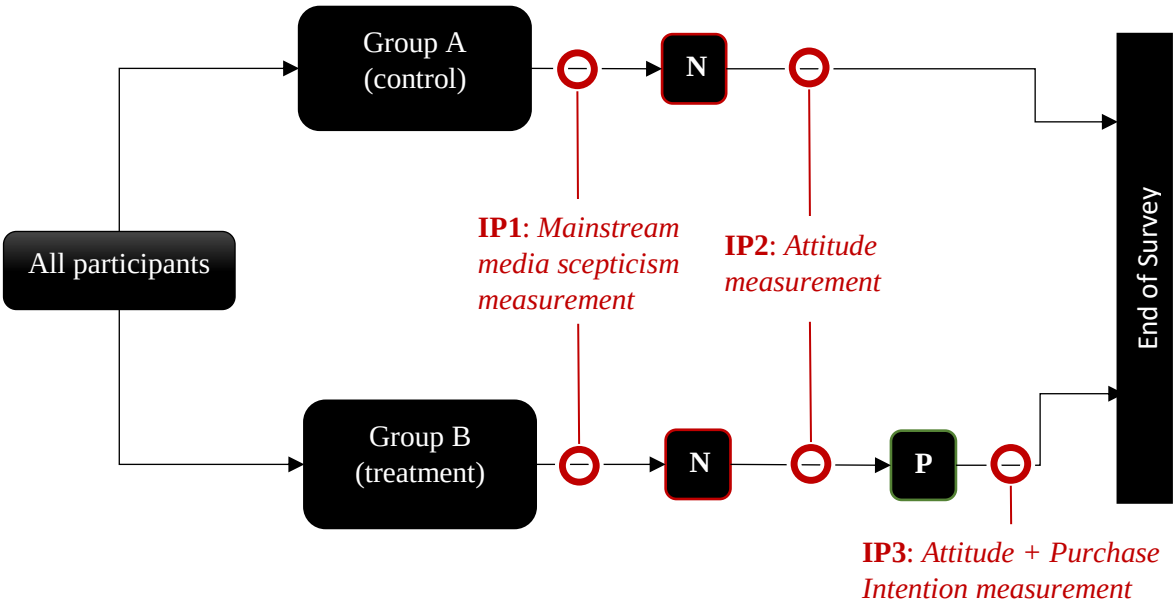

Figure 3: Structure of secondary study

These constructs were chosen as accurate measures of the study as they can capture changes before and after stimuli as well as pre and post-experiment inclinations of participants. Attitude was chosen over perception as a measured construct as the stimuli are not being analysed in their singularity, but as an influence on an individual's wider predisposition to the idea of esports: it is not the perception of the stimulus that is being measured, but the overall attitude towards esports following the stimulus.

An online survey was the most appealing choice for this study, particularly considering the advantages listed in the previous chapter's methodology. Furthermore, the flexibility offered

on an online platform was crucial for this study, where both text and video capabilities were required for the two different stimuli being used. Question diversity is a standout advantage of online surveys, which are capable of "including dichotomous questions, multiple-choice questions, scales, questions in a multimedia format" (Evans and Mathur, 2005, p.199). As the number of desired responses is large, interviewing on a one-by-one basis was not practical nor feasible.

4.2.2 Survey Strategy and Design

Considerations

Although the data collection method was the same as the first study, it was crucial to re-evaluate strategy and design as the target sample consisted of a different demographic. Response rate criteria were again reflected as much as possible, ensuring that estimated time to complete the survey was provided and other factors such as privacy and confidentiality were assured. However, the target population was much more inclusive of different ages and interests in comparison to the preliminary study, so keeping the survey salient to participant interests was more difficult to do than in the prior study. Language and vocabulary was considered at great length to avoid any confusion or difficulty in understanding the questions: the word "esports" was always prefaced in each section with "competitive gaming" in case the term was unfamiliar and participants could not easily recall what it stood for.

A decision to cut the length of the negative BBC article was made for three reasons. Firstly, ensuring that participants were not fatigued was crucial. Response fatigue can cause measurement errors as well as potential misrepresentation of answers (Egleston, Miller and Meropol, 2011) which would greatly affect the results of the survey. Secondly, cutting the length of stimuli such as an article or video is a standard scholarly practice used to manage cognitive load – a theory that assumes cognitive capacity is limited by the availability of working memory (Sweller, van Merrienboer and Paas, 1998). If a

stimulus was too lengthy, cognitive load would be too high for respondents to meaningfully comprehend and respond to the information. Moreover, the average reading speed of an adult is between 200 to 250 words per minute (Thomas, 2018) meaning that it would take about three minutes to read the entire article – perhaps too long for the respondent to maintain interest and engagement. A final reason is that in order to facilitate a meaningful investigation, it was necessary to ensure the stimuli were of a comparable length to prevent the results from being confounded. Reducing the article to only 300 words meant that it would take a similar amount of time to read as the video would take to watch (2 minutes).

Participants and Sampling Frame

The only requirements for this survey were that participants were above the age of 18 and that they were non-consumers, meaning they had little to no knowledge of esports. A nonprobability sample was applied which had slight crossover between purposive and convenience sampling; participants were chosen because they had the quality of "non-consumer", but as esports is a niche field there was also an element of wider accessibility to those who did not know what it is. Probability sampling would have been too difficult to achieve, whilst nonprobability sampling techniques such as purposive and convenience are "affordable, easy and the subjects are readily available" (Etikan, Musa and Alkassim, 2016, p.2). There was no limit on gender or location, and age was open to anyone above the age of 18. Responses would be largely gathered from online outreach primarily via social media platforms and manually sending links to those eligible.

Scales

Three scales were implemented in this survey in order to measure the following: 1) mainstream media scepticism, 2) attitude following stimulus, 3) purchase intention/likelihood. These were important in understanding the attitude of each participant towards the stimuli being introduced and the effectiveness of positive stimulus on changing attitudes towards esports. Due to the limited research in this area, the three scales were largely adapted from

existing ones that were related but not specifically targeting the constructs in question and altered to reflect the specific needs of the survey. These scales can be seen in table 2.1.

Scale	Items	References
Mainstream Media Scepticism *(1 to 7 Likert Scale rated from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree)*	1. We can depend on getting the truth in most mainstream media 2. The aim of mainstream media is to inform the consumer 3. Mainstream media is generally truthful 4. In general, mainstream media presents a true picture of the issue it is reporting on 5. I feel I've been accurately informed about gaming after viewing this article	- "Development of a Scale to Measure Consumer Scepticism Toward Advertising" (Obermiller and Spangenberg, 1998)
Attitude following Stimulus *(1 to 7 semantic differential scale)*	I felt that the article was… - Useless/Useful - Unimportant/Important - Unconvincing/Convincing After reading the article, I think competitive gaming is… - Bad/Good - Harmful/Beneficial - Worthless/Rewarding Overall, my attitude towards competitive gaming is… - Negative/Positive	- "Affective Responses Mediating Acceptance of Advertising" (Batra and Ray, 1986) - "External Variables, Beliefs, Attitudes and Information Technology Usage Behavior" (Hubona and Geitz, 1997)
Purchase Intention/Likelihood *(1 to 7 Likert scale rated "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree")*	1. After watching the video, my opinion of competitive gaming (esports) has changed 2. I have a better understanding of what esports is 3. Esports is an acceptable activity to pursue 4. I would definitely try esports in the future	- "Social power, product conspicuousness, and the demand for luxury brand counterfeit products" (Bian, Haque and Smit, 2015) - "Measuring Attitude toward the Brand and Purchase Intentions" (Spears and Singh, 2004)

Table 2.1: Table showing scales used in secondary study

The attitude following stimulus scale was used twice: once after the negative stimuli and once after the positive stimuli. In each case, the wording was changed slightly to reflect the type of media used and be consistent with what each participant had just seen (article or video). The purchase intention scale was used after the positive stimulus to try and gauge

with more certainty whether attitude had changed, and to what extent the participant was accepting of esports.

Likert-scales and semantic differential scales were used in this experiment, with both rated on a scale of 1 to 7. In order for the ratings scales to work effectively, the conditions detailed in table 2.2 must be met:

CONDITIONS FOR AN EFFECTIVE RATING SCALE based on Krosnick and Presser (2010, p.268)
Points offered on the scale should cover the entire measurement continuum
Point should be ordinal and progress from one end of the continuum to the other with no overlap
Each respondent should have a relatively precise understanding of the meaning of each point on the scale
Most respondents should agree in interpretations of the meaning of each point on the scale

Table 2.2: Krosnick and Presser's conditions for effective rating scales

Both scales were rated from 1 to 7 to simplify the translation of meaning from one scale to another and prevent respondents from feeling the scales were too limited or too vast when moving between them. A 7-point scale has also been found to have improved reliability, but increasing beyond 7 has minimal effect on the improvement of reliability (Givon and Shapira, 1984).

Pilot study

A small-scale pilot study was conducted using three individuals that met desired respondent criteria. Whilst it would have been effective to have conducted a larger scale pilot study, limited time meant that only a few could be tested in order to release the survey publicly as quickly as possible. All three testers found the survey to be easily comprehensible, although one felt that the negative stimulus article felt slightly heavy to read. To try and amend this, the image used in the original article was added to the survey and text was broken up into smaller paragraphs to increase readability. No further adjustments were made as I was satisfied with the readability and length of the survey based on the pilot study.

Implementation

The surveys were released manually via social media to various groups of people in order to try and ensure a 50-50 split amongst the two different surveys. Due to being unable to send

the survey out in one go, it took time to collect responses - using a paid-for A/B testing software may have been a more time efficient method of gathering responses as it would involve only one link. The survey was open for 3 weeks and collected 200 responses split evenly over both surveys.

4.2.3 Methods of Analysis

The results of the survey were analysed quantitatively using SPSS. Items were numbered 1 through to 21, with each group of items for a particular construct being placed under the heading related to the scale title. This can be seen in table 2.3, along with the associated influence point and code used for the variable in SPSS:

Construct	Point of Measurement	Code	Item Number
Mainstream Media Scepticism	IP1	MMS	I1, I2, I3, I4
Attitude towards Negative Stimulus	IP2	AttNS	I5, I6, I7
Attitude towards Esports: Negative Stimulus	IP2	EspAttNS	I8, I9, I10, I11
Attitude towards Positive Stimulus	IP3	AttPS	I12, I13, I14
Attitude towards Esports: Positive Stimulus	IP3	EspAttPS	I15, I16, I17
Purchase Intention	IP3	PI	I18, I19, I20, I21

Table 2.3: Groupings of constructs and related influence points and SPSS codes

A summated rating scale was an effective method of measuring the desired constructs, as "single items tend to be less valid, less accurate, and less reliable than multiple-item composites" (Warmbrod, 2014, p.32). To ensure that each item was cohesive within the summated scales, it was important to check the Cronbach's alpha for each group of items relating to each construct. Whilst there is slight debate about what value of alpha is required for reliability, a minimum of 0.70 is generally considered to be acceptable (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994), particularly for a sale that is newly developed. Consequently, the threshold for ensured reliability was 0.70 for each item; if an item did not meet this criterion, it would be removed from the summated scale.

SCALE	CRONBACH'S ALPHA
Mainstream media scepticism	0.841
Attitude towards negative stimulus	0.825
Attitude towards esports (NS)	0.898
Attitude towards positive stimulus	0.889
Attitude towards esports (PS)	0.892
Purchase intention	0.676

Table 2.4: Cronbach's alpha associated with each scale

Table 2.4 shows most scales had an acceptable Cronbach's alpha value with the exception of "purchase intention", which only had a value of 0.676. The item-total statistics showed that the removal of an item would not impact the value positively, but rather make it drop further; consequently, this scale was instead split up into separate items and analysed individually.

Likert and semantic differential scale data was treated as interval rather than ordinal – a "common practice, but controversial" (Wu and Leung, 2017, p.528). This enables the use of parametric tests in statistical analysis, which is generally preferable as they are typically more powerful than their counterpart non-parametric tests (Mumby, 2002, p.85). Though the debate for and against treating Likert scales as interval has not been clearly answered, acknowledging it as standard practice is important. More pertinently, this study has multiple Likert question responses summed together and follows criteria for reasonably treating it as interval data: 1) all questions use the same scale, 2) there must be a dependable approximation to an interval scale, 3) all items measure a single latent variable (Bertram, 2016, p.4). In total, there are four critical assumptions that must be met should a parametric test be used: (1) data is normally distributed, (2) homogeneity of variance is assured, (3) data is interval, and (4) data is independent (McCrum-Gardener, 2008). In each case that a parametric test is used in my analysis, these assumptions will be assured through closer inspection of the data being used. In the case of data not being normally distributed or should any of the other assumptions not be met, non-parametric tests will be used.

4.3 Results and Discussion

4.3.1 Participant Demographics

Gender

Group A and group B showed a relatively similar distribution of gender, with there being a largely 50-50 split between female and male over the 100 respondents in each group (Figure 4.1). The mode gender for both was female, however, and group A had 12% more female respondents than male. Group B showed slightly more diversity in gender, with the categories “other” and “prefer not to say” featuring responses in this group where they had not arisen in the other.

Age

Figure 4.2 shows that both groups A and B were dominated by the age category “18 to 25 years old”, though group A had 89% compared to the 69% in group B. Only 4 of the respondents in group A were above 30 years of age whilst age diversity was more prevalent in group B which had 22 participants that were above the age of 30. The mode for both was 18-25 years old, and both groups’ second largest age group was 26-30 years old.

Degree of Knowledge

In comparison to the largely similar trends in age and gender across groups A and B, degree of knowledge showed much more variation in responses (Figure 4.3). There were two mode categories for group A: “I have never heard of esports” and “I have heard of the term esports before but do not know much about it”; the mode for group B was “I have a little bit of knowledge about esports”. Group B featured triple the number of participants who had “a little bit of knowledge about esports” than group A, which might be important to consider if results between the two differ greatly in further analysis.

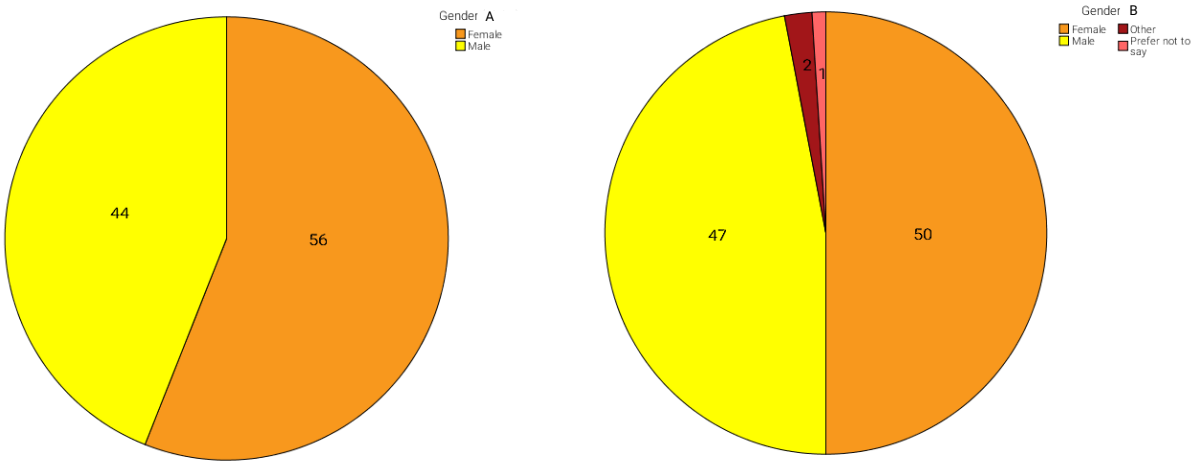

Figure 4.1: Pie charts showing gender distribution (Groups A and B)

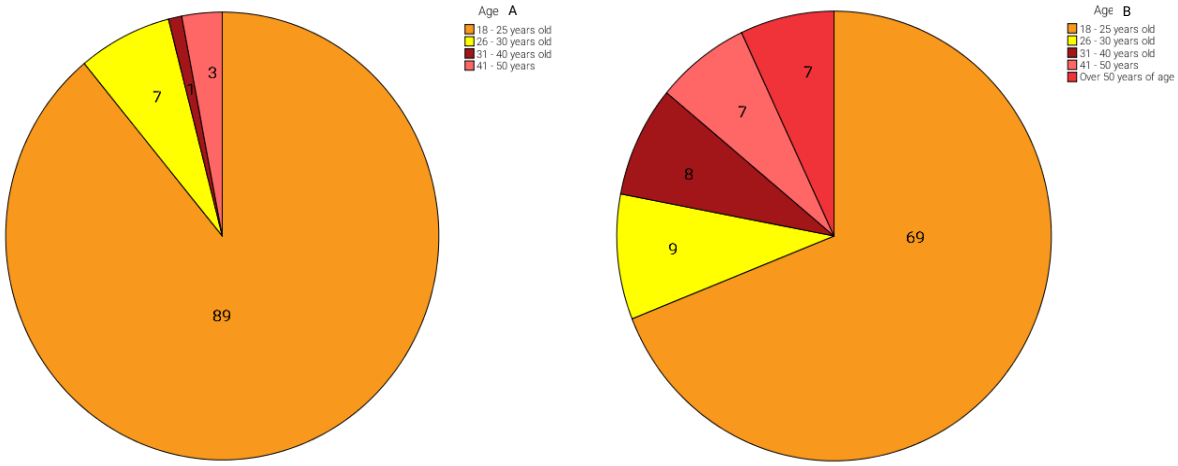

Figure 4.2: Pie charts showing age distribution (Groups A and B)

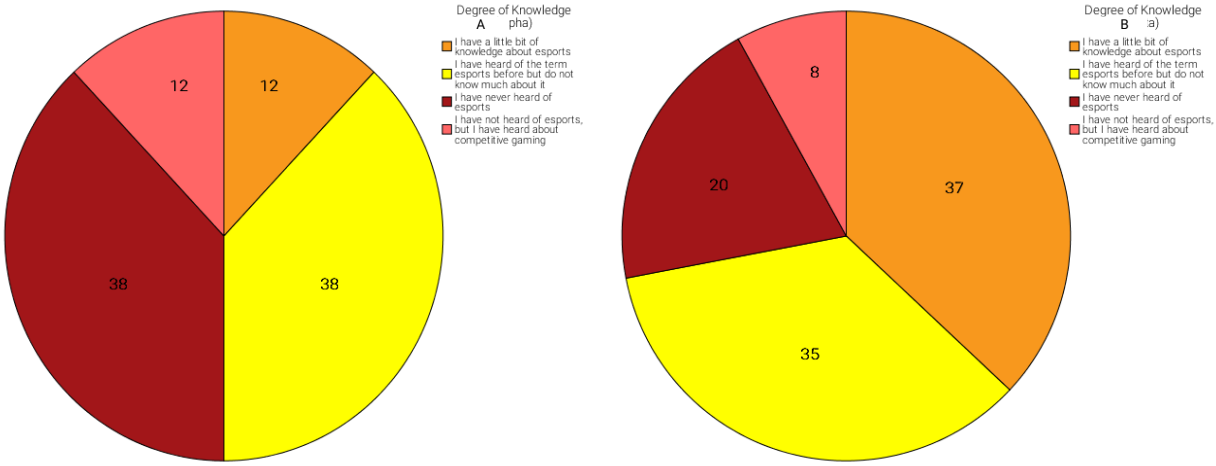

Figure 4.3: Pie charts showing degree of knowledge (Groups A and B)

4.3.2 Hypothesis 1

The first hypothesis to be tested was: “non-consumers will have an unfavourable attitude towards esports when presented with negative stimuli”. In order to do this, data collected for the attitude towards esports following negative stimulus (EspAttNS) from groups A and B was first checked for normality through visually representing the data. The Q-Q plot generally followed a linear pattern (Figure 5.1), and the boxplot was largely symmetrical (Figure 5.2), therefore it was possible to assume the data was normally distributed and therefore parametric tests could be carried out (provided all assumptions were met).

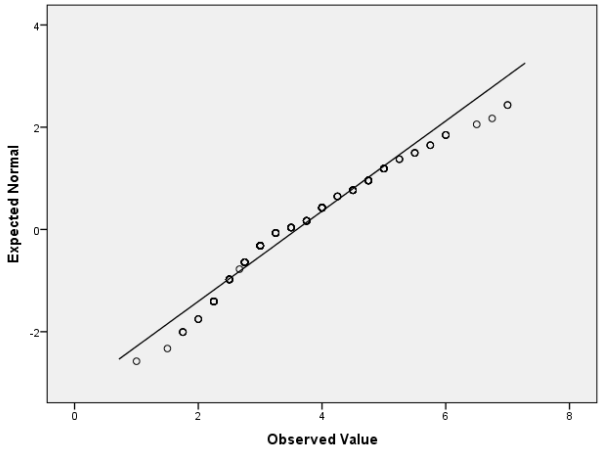

Figure 5.1: Q-Q plot of "Attitude towards esports” (Groups A and B)

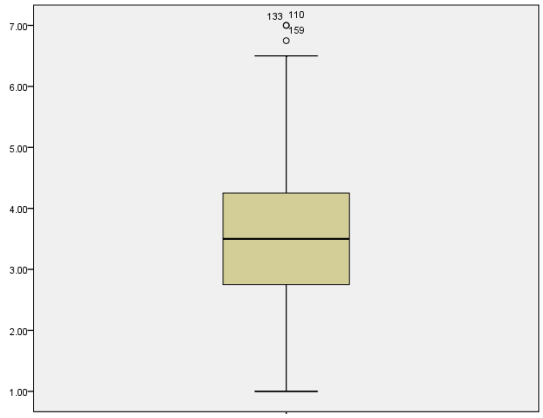

Figure 5.2: Boxplot of "Attitude towards esports" (Groups A and B)

Group A was used as a control group therefore before continuing analyses it was important to further check the validity by running a t-test to check whether there was a significant difference in the means between the two groups or not. The boxplot showed that there were 3 outliers therefore the t-test was run with the outliers removed. Equal variances were assumed as p=0.358 (outliers removed) which is greater than 0.05 therefore Levene’s null hypothesis is accepted (the population variance between two groups is the same).

For the tested hypothesis to hold true, the mean values for groups A and B should be similar and ideally there should be no significant difference between the two mean values. The null and alternative hypotheses for the t-test are as follows:

H_0: There is no difference between the mean values of the two groups.

H_1: There is a difference between the mean values of the two groups.

The t-test revealed that group A (M = 3.329, SD = 0.989) had a similarly unfavourable attitude towards esports as group B (M = 3..763, SD = 1.100) but as the p value is less than 0.05 (t = -2.913, p = 0.004), the null hypothesis is rejected and it can be concluded that there was a slight statistical difference between their values.

Despite the t-test showing significant difference between the two groups, the mean value for both groups fell in the lower end of the scale where 1 = unfavourable and 7 = favourable, suggesting that non-consumers' attitude to esports was generally unfavourable following the introduction of a negative stimulus. Degree of knowledge was higher in group B with more participants having a small amount of pre-existing knowledge about esports, therefore their attitude may be less inclined to influence based on one stimulus which could account for the difference between groups A and B.

4.3.3 Hypothesis 2

This hypothesis states: "Overall, group B participants will have a more favourable attitude to esports than group A participants". To test for this, an independent samples t-test comparing the attitude towards esports in groups A and B at the end of the survey. Group A's survey finishes at IP2 whilst group B's survey finishes at IP3, meaning that attitude for group A will be measured after only a negative stimulus, but B will be after both negative and positive. For the hypothesis to be accepted, there must be a significant difference between the mean values of the two groups, and the mean value for group B being higher than group A. The independent samples t-test can be used as Figure 5.3 shows data falling closely to the linear line and so the normality requirement for a parametric test is met. Levene's null hypothesis is accepted and equal variances can be assumed as p=0.447 which is greater than 0.05.

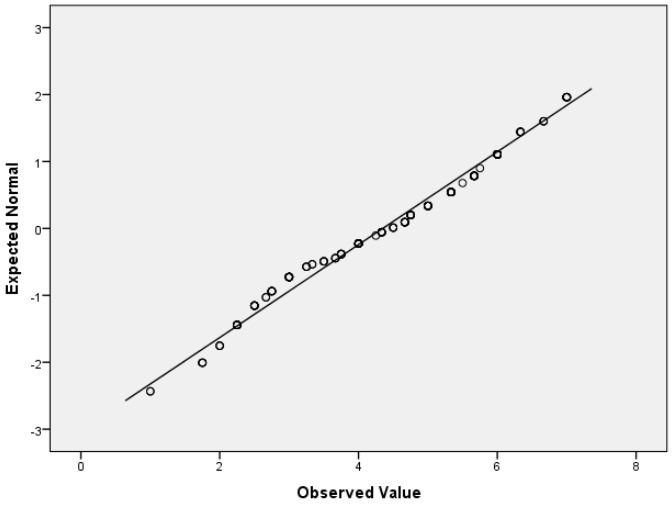

Figure 5.3: Q-Q plot of group B "attitude towards esports" at end of survey

The hypotheses for the t-test are:

H_0: There is no difference between the mean values of the two groups.

H_1: There is a difference between the mean values of the two groups.

The results of the t-test showed that Group A participants (M = 3.329, SD = 0.989) had a significantly less favourable attitude towards esports than Group B participants (M = 5.370, SD = 1.045) at the end of their respective surveys (t = -14.181, p = 0.000). As the p value is less than 0.05, we reject the null hypothesis and can conclude that the mean values of the two groups are statistically different. Group A has a much lower mean than group B, whilst the standard deviation shows that group A is slightly less varied than group B in the spread of data around the mean.

4.3.4 Hypothesis 3

The final hypothesis proposes: "Positive community-curated stimuli, even following an initial negative influence, will cause non-consumers to have a positive change in their attitude towards esports". A comparison of means between group B's attitude towards esports after negative stimulus and after positive stimulus is the most effective method of checking this hypothesis. If the hypothesis holds true, there should be a significant difference between the

two mean values, with attitude towards esports after the positive stimulus (EspAttPS) having a higher mean value than attitude towards esports after the negative stimulus (EspAttNS). Furthermore, subtracting the mean of EspAttNS from the mean of EspAttPS should give a positive value.

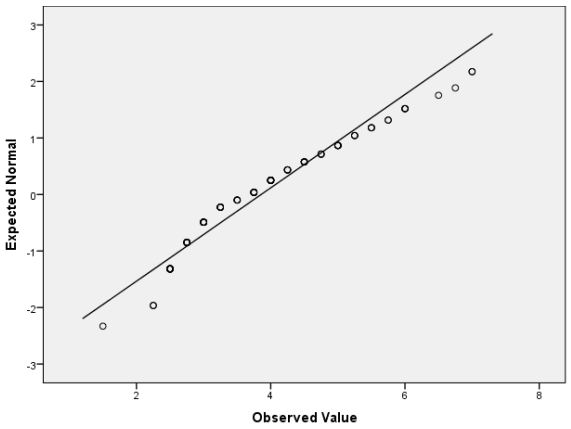

Figure 5.4: Q-Q plot showing distribution of group B data EspAttNS and EspAttPS

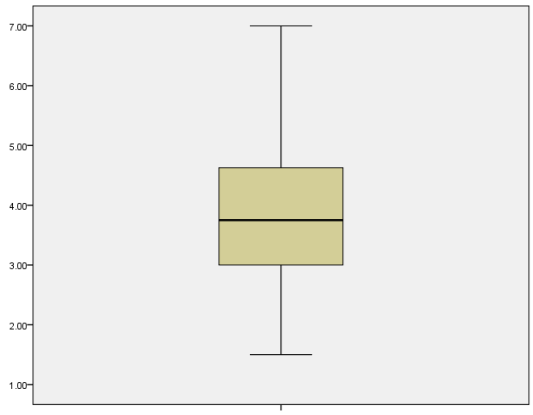

Figure 5.5: Boxplot showing group B EspAttNS and EspAttPS

Normality was first assured through a visual analysis of the data against a Q-Q plot (Figure 5.4) and boxplot (Figure 5.5). Data points mostly followed a linear pattern and the boxplot showed a fairly symmetrical plot therefore a parametric paired samples t-test was used to compare the means as the data being analysed was a before and after measurement on the same population i.e. “data is in the form of matched pairs” (Xu et al., 2017, p.187). The hypotheses for a paired samples t-test are as follows:

H_0: The true mean difference is equal to zero.

H_1: The true mean difference is not equal to zero.

Attitude towards esports after a negative stimulus (M = 3.858, SD = 1.210) was significantly lower than attitude towards esports after a negative stimulus (M = 5.370, SD = 1.045), with the paired t-test results showing that the true mean difference is not equal to zero (t = 10.426, p = 0.000) as the p value is less than 0.05 meaning that the null hypothesis must be rejected. As hypothesised, there is also a positive mean difference of 1.513 when EspAttNS is subtracted from EspAttPS.

The acceptance of hypothesis 3 can be further cemented by looking at the answer to Likert-scale items 18 and 19 in the survey: “my attitude towards esports has changed” and “esports is an acceptable activity to pursue”.

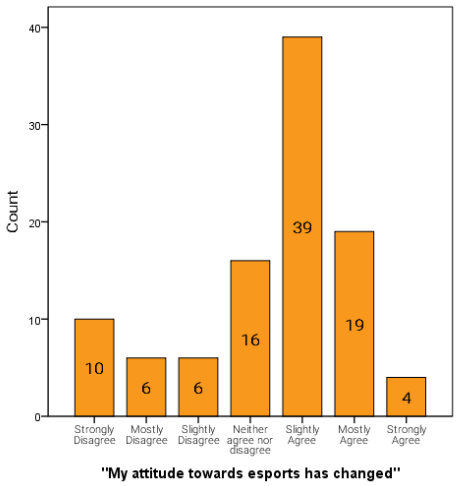

Figure 5.6: Bar chart showing responses to Item 18 (Group B)

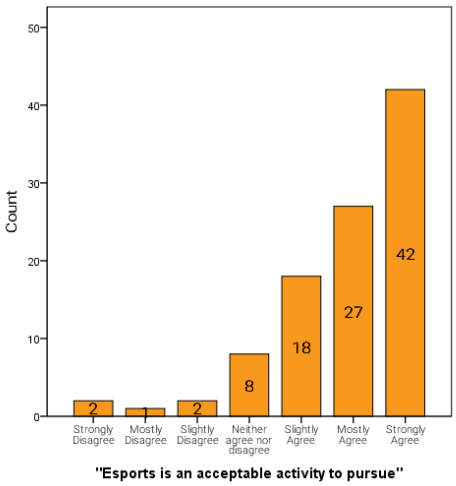

Figure 5.7: Bar chart showing responses to Item 19 (Group B)

For item 18, Figure 5.6 shows the mode answer is “slightly agree”, whilst 69 respondents out of 100 have selected an answer that ranges between “slightly agree” to “strongly agree”. This aligns with the positive change in mean value demonstrated by the paired t-test. Item 19, displayed in figure 5.7, also shows a heavily favourable attitude towards esports following the positive stimulus, with a significantly large number of participants strongly agreeing with the statement “esports is an acceptable activity to pursue”.

4.3.5 Additional Analyses

An additional analysis was conducted to see if perceived convincingness of a stimulus had an effect on attitude towards esports. This analysis was conducted across all 200 participants from both surveys and used item 7 and item 14 that featured in the “*attitude towards stimulus*” scale. The answers were first recoded to a nominal basis under two binary terms: “unconvincing” and “convincing”, as were the attitude towards esports responses after the negative and positive stimulus, as shown in Table 3.

	Old Value	New Value
Attitude towards Stimulus	**1, 2, 3, 4**	Unconvincing
	5, 6, 7	Convincing
Attitude towards Esports	**1 thru 4.49**	Negative
	4.5 thru 7	Positive

Table 3: Recoding of Attitude towards Stimulus and Attitude towards Esports to nominal values

As both variables are nominal, Chi-squared is the most effective test for association where:

H_0 = There is no association between the two variables

H_1 = There is an association between the two variables.

The p value for the negative stimulus and corresponding attitude towards esports (EspAttNS) was 0.002, meaning that we can reject the null hypothesis in favour of the alternate hypothesis. The p value for the positive stimulus and corresponding attitude towards esports (EspAttPS) was 0.000 meaning that the null hypothesis is also rejected because the p value is less than 0.05. We can conclude with a fairly high degree of certainty that there is a slight association between the convincingness of a stimulus and attitude towards esports.

5. Conclusion

5.1 Addressing the Hypotheses

The findings of this study offer insights into the efficacy of using positive stimuli as a means of mitigating negative attitudes towards esports. The results are as follows: first, there was a small significant difference between control and treatment groups in attitude towards esports following a negative stimulus. However, the mean value for both groups showed an unfavourable attitude towards esports and suggested that a negative stimulus can form unfavourable attitudes in non-consumers, particularly since convincingness of a stimulus has an association with attitude towards esports. Second, a significant difference exists between the attitudes of groups A and B towards esports at the end points of each survey. This suggests that group B participants had an overall more favourable attitude towards esports than group A and that formation of attitude is dependent on the messaging conveyed by a stimulus. Third, the true mean difference is not equal to zero when comparing group B's attitude towards esports at two different influence points. At IP3 (following positive stimulus) attitude towards esports was more favourable than at IP2 (following negative stimulus), which indicates that a positive community-curated stimulus has a positive impact on attitude even following an initial negative influence.

5.2 Limitations

There are three notable limitations in this study that must be acknowledged. First, the number of participants in both preliminary and secondary studies was limited (189 and 200 respectively) meaning that conclusions cannot be drawn with as much reliability as a large sample size might. Furthermore, the risk of committing a type II error would be decreased by ensuring that the statistical power of tests is substantial enough, such as by increasing sample size. Second, the scales used in this report were newly developed due to the limited existing scholarship available in this field of study. As a result, they were not able to be tested at length before being applied in actual research and, despite being tested through

inter-item correlation and Cronbach's alpha scores, there could be a potential for overestimated reliability in the scales. This report would have benefited from further testing of the scales to ensure suitable use in data collection. Third, due to the distanced position of the researcher from participants, a large amount of trust and responsibility was placed on participants to be honest with their responses. There was an inability to ascertain the actual degree of knowledge of participants in the secondary study and the possibility of undesired respondents answering must be considered. The outliers removed in the testing of hypothesis 1 are an example of this, where the outlier cases showed an extremely different trend of responses across all questions that did not align with other respondents of the same declared knowledge group.

5.3 Future research and practical implications

Moving forward, there are multiple different areas of research that should be considered for future study. A possible direction for investigation would be to test the efficacy of different media-types as stimuli for a similar study into attitude formation of non-consumers. The comparison of video stimuli versus text stimuli to identify whether there is any impact on the power of their influence on a participant's attitude could be particularly fruitful in offering forwards more in-depth insights into best practices for attitude formation towards a particular subject by marketers. A second suggestion would be to analyse whether emotional messaging or rational/factual messaging is the most effective at conveying a positive or negative tone within a stimulus. Finally, testing across different age groups for esports-acceptance and conducting more specific tests across age-based samples would be an effective step in evaluating which methods are the most suited for particular demographics.

In practice, esports marketers should aim to use positive messaging through textual and visual stimuli as a means of combatting negativity – particularly in outreach to non-consumers that may already have been influenced by mainstream media critique of the industry. Mainstream media journalists can also look to work with the esports community and

read further into the multitude of benefits that esports carries outside of the traditional notions that have accompanied gaming previously. A communicative framework between esports marketers and mass media could be fruitful in understanding the most impactful outreach to the wider public by combining non-consumer and consumer insights. Whilst this report hopes to offer forwards a measure to reduce the harmful impacts of negative reporting on esports, it also looks forward to an augmented understanding of esports as systematic prejudices against gaming are becoming less prevalent. Figure 6 sums up the findings of this study in relation to existing literature.

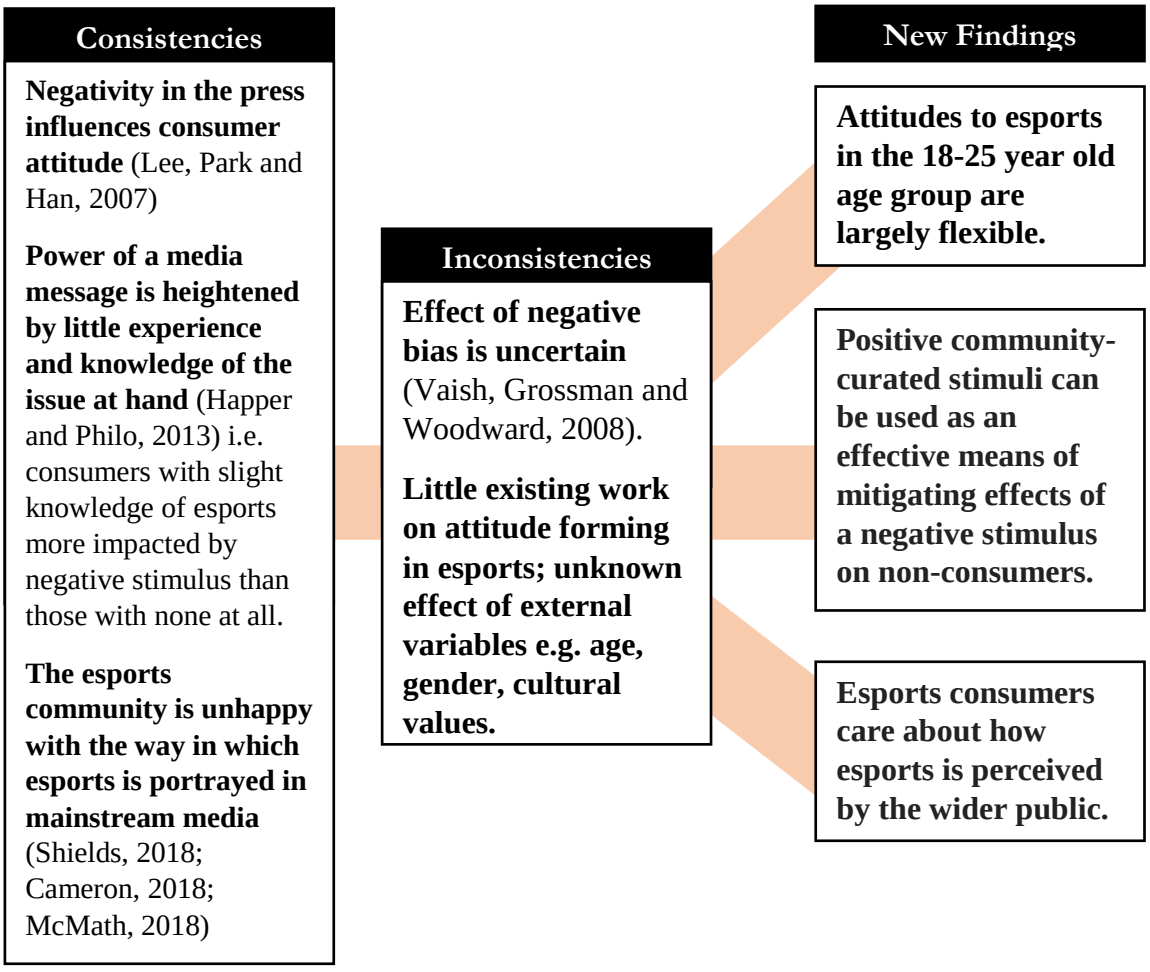

Figure 6: Summary diagram of findings in relation to existing literature.

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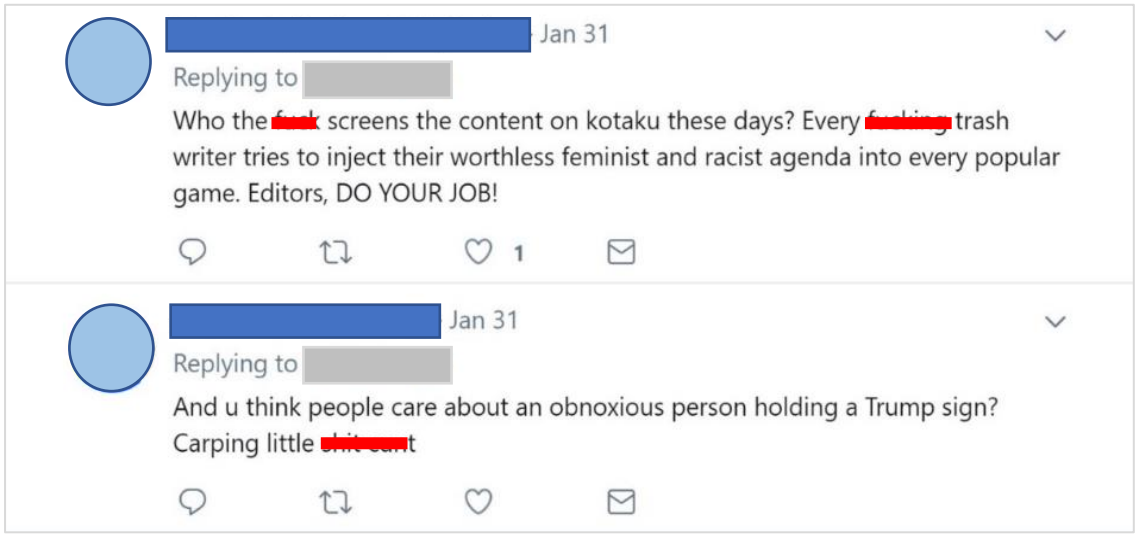
Appendix A: Twitter backlash examples

From https://twitter.com [Accessed 7 Mar. 2018].



Appendix B: Negative media groupings and description

Group	Description	Key Words
BBC	Responses that linked to BBC articles or referred to the publication as a whole	"BBC"
Youtube	Responses that linked to Youtube videos that were not linked to any major publication i.e. independent channels or shows	"Youtube"
The Guardian	Responses that linked to Guardian articles or referred to the publication as a whole	"Guardian"
Sky Sports	Responses that linked to Sky Sports articles or referred to the publication as a whole	"Sky", "Sky Sports"
Mainstream Media in General	Responses that did not have specific articles or publications in mind but focused on the idea of most media sources being negative/ineffective	"Any", "All", "Most", "Many"
None	Responses that did not believe there were any examples of negative mainstream media	"No", "Don't know", "None"
Other	Individual answers that were the only one of their type i.e. no other respondents put forward the same piece	N/A

Appendix C: Positive media groupings and descriptions

Group	Description	Key Words
Event Video or Live Stream (EV/LS)	Responses linking tournament or event videos, or videos saved from live streams	"tournament", "match", "event", "livestream", "finals"
Riot "Our Game"	Responses suggesting videos produced from Riot (game developer of League of Legends), or specifically linking to Riot's "Our Game" video	"LoL", "League of Legends", "Our Game", "Riot video", "showcase"
Documentary	Responses linking to or referencing a particular documentary.	"documentary", "Netflix", "Vice", "Valve", "Free to Play", "doc", "series"
Educational	Responses linking to official organisation or association websites or reports that had educational descriptions of esports	"British Esports Association", "infographic", "report", "study"
Media Publications	Responses referencing articles from various publications such as ESPN, BBC and SBS	"article", "BBC", "ESPN", "Esports Observer", "Forbes"
Other	Individual answers that were the only one of their type	N/A
None	Responses that did not believe there were any examples of positive media	"Nope", "No", "Not really"

Appendix D: Information for Participants (Preliminary Survey)

Information for Participants

I am exploring perceptions of esports by non-consumers, particularly in relation to press put out by mainstream media. This preliminary questionnaire is to gather information from the esports community to help inform the basis of my study.

If you are aged between 18 to 40, and are an esports consumer (frequent player, spectator or industry professional) I would love for you to continue with this study. If not, thank you for your time but unfortunately you are not suitable for this study. If you know of any suitable participants, passing this study on to them would be greatly appreciated!

How is the study being carried out? What will my participation involve?

You will be asked several questions about your personal esports experience and the impact of negative press via an online questionnaire. The study should take somewhere between 5-10 minutes.

Do I have to take part? Can I withdraw from the study and what will happen to my data if I do?

Taking part in this study is completely voluntary, and if you decide you no longer wish to take part then you can withdraw from the study at any time, for no reason and without prejudice.

What happens with my data, including after the study?

I will keep all data gathered only on my University account Google Drive. It will not be saved in any private files or on personal items (such as a laptop, hard drive or USB). I will delete all the data I have gathered for the whole study from the Google Drive after the dissertation has being awarded a confirmed mark, and all participants will be kept anonymous.

What are the possible benefits and risks of taking part?

Taking part in this study allows you the opportunity to contribute to exciting research into a rapidly growing field. I hope that taking part will be an interesting and enjoyable experience for you. There are no apparent risks in taking part, but you are free to stop participating in the study at any time. All the data I gather from you will be anonymous.

Will my contributions be confidential?

Yes. There will be no names, email address or other personally identifiable details recorded as part of this study.

Only myself, my supervisor (Snehasish Bhanerjee) and other University academic staff (e.g. a moderator or external examiner) will see the data in its raw format. There will be no association between an individual and the data though, so you will not be able to be identified by any of these people.

Appendix E: Information for Participants (Secondary Survey)

Information for Participants

I am exploring attitudes towards competitive video gaming (also known as "esports"). You will be presented with information about esports and asked some questions about what you have just seen.

If you have little to no knowledge of competitive video gaming, I would love for you to continue with this study! If not, thank you for your time but unfortunately you are not suitable for this study. If you know of any suitable participants, passing this study on to them would be greatly appreciated!

How is the study being carried out? What will my participation involve?

You will be asked several questions about your personal esports experience and the impact of negative press via an online questionnaire. The study should take somewhere between 5-10 minutes.

Do I have to take part? Can I withdraw from the study and what will happen to my data if I do?

Taking part in this study is completely voluntary, and if you decide you no longer wish to take part then you can withdraw from the study at any time, for no reason and without prejudice.

What happens with my data, including after the study?

I will keep all data gathered only on my University account Google Drive. It will not be saved in any private files or on personal items (such as a laptop, hard drive or USB). I will delete all the data I have gathered for the whole study from the Google Drive after the dissertation has being awarded a confirmed mark, and all participants will be kept anonymous.

What are the possible benefits and risks of taking part?

Taking part in this study allows you the opportunity to contribute to exciting research into a rapidly growing field. I hope that taking part will be an interesting and enjoyable experience for you. There are no apparent risks in taking part, but you are free to stop participating in the study at any time. All the data I gather from you will be anonymous.

Will my contributions be confidential?

Yes. There will be no names, email address or other personally identifiable details recorded as part of this study. Only myself, my supervisor (Snehasish Bhanerjee) and other University academic staff (e.g. a moderator or external examiner) will see the data in its raw format. There will be no association between an individual and the data though, so you will not be able to be identified by any of these people.

Appendix F: Consent Agreement (Google Forms)

Agreement of Consent

Please answer the following statements to confirm whether or not you agree to take part in this study. If there is anything you do not understand, or if you want more information, please contact me before proceeding any further.

1. **Please answer the following questions:** *
   Tick all that apply.

	Yes	No
Have I explained the purpose of the study?	☐	☐
Do you understand that the information you provide will be held in confidence by the researcher?	☐	☐
Do you understand that you may withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason?	☐	☐
Do you agree to your answers being recorded?	☐	☐

2. **Do you agree to take part in this study?** *
   Mark only one oval.

   ◯ Yes
   ◯ No

Appendix G: Preliminary Survey (Google Forms)

Please choose the statement you feel is personally most relevant to each of the following questions.

3. **How long have you been interested in esports for?** *
Mark only one oval.

- ◯ Less than a year
- ◯ 1 to 2 years
- ◯ 2 to 4 years
- ◯ More than 5 years

4. **Which statement best describes you?** *
Mark only one oval.

- ◯ I do not spectate or play esports
- ◯ I do not play much but I frequently spectate esports events/watch esports-related content (online and offline)
- ◯ I play competitively and take esports beyond a casual level
- ◯ I consider myself to be an esports professional working in the industry (e.g. as a caster, player or other professional role)
- ◯ Other: _____

5. **How frequently do you watch esports?** *
Mark only one oval.

- ◯ I watch esports on a daily basis
- ◯ I watch esports a few times a week
- ◯ I watch esports on a monthly basis
- ◯ I watch esports once or twice a year
- ◯ I never watch esports

6. **How much do you follow esports news?**
Mark only one oval.

- ◯ I follow esports news every day
- ◯ I keep abreast of esports news on a weekly basis
- ◯ I only look at esports news every month or so
- ◯ I don't follow esports news with any particular attention
- ◯ I don't follow esports news at all

7. **Most people don't know what esports is** *
Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly Disagree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly Agree

8. **The perceptions of others affect my own enjoyment of esports** *
Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly Disagree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly Agree

9. **I care about how esports is perceived by the wider public** *
Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly Disagree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly Agree

10. **I am happy with how esports is portrayed in mainstream media** *
Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly Disagree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly Agree

11. **I have strong opinions about the benefits of esports** *
Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly Disagree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly Agree

12. **I have strong opinions about the disadvantages of esports** *
Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly Disagree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly Agree

13. **Attitudes towards esports have shifted significantly in the past year** *
Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly Disagree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly Agree

A crucial part of this study is in gathering your experiences of the negative representations of esports in mainstream media (if any) and, on the flip side, media that you feel represents esports accurately - whether it be from esports news sources or mainstream media.

14. **Is there any media (article/tweet/video) that you believe is a misrepresentation or negative portrayal of esports?**
    Please link to the example in the field below. Alternatively, please describe the media in question.

15. **Can you think of an article or video that you would show to someone that did not know anything about esports?**
    Please link to the example in the field below. Alternatively, please describe the media in question.

16. **Are there any esports-related articles that you feel strongly about (negatively or positively)?**
    Please link to the example in the field below. Alternatively, please describe the example in question.

Appendix H: Secondary Survey (Google Forms)

Background Information

Please tell me a bit about you!

3. **Gender** *

Mark only one oval.

- ◯ Male
- ◯ Female
- ◯ Other
- ◯ Prefer not to say

4. **Age** *

Mark only one oval.

- ◯ 18 - 25 years old
- ◯ 26 - 30 years old
- ◯ 31 - 40 years old
- ◯ 41 - 50 years
- ◯ Over 50 years of age
- ◯ Prefer not to say

5. **Which statement best describes you?** *

Mark only one oval.

- ◯ I have never heard of esports
- ◯ I have heard of the term esports before but do not know much about it
- ◯ I have a little bit of knowledge about esports
- ◯ I have not heard of esports, but I have heard about competitive gaming

Next is short extract from an article about gaming that was published by a mainstream media publication. Please take your time reading the piece before continuing onto the next section which will contain a few questions about what you have just read.

Gaming addiction is to be listed as a mental health condition for the first time by the World Health Organization.

Its 11th International Classification of Diseases (ICD) will include the condition "gaming disorder". The draft document describes it as a pattern of persistent or recurrent gaming behaviour so severe that it takes "precedence over other life interests".

Some countries had already identified it as a major public health issue. Many, including the UK, have private addiction clinics to "treat" the condition. The last version of the ICD was completed in 1992, with the new guide due to be published in 2018.

The guide contains codes for diseases, signs and symptoms and is used by doctors and researchers to track and diagnose disease. It will suggest that abnormal gaming behaviour should be in evidence over a period of at least 12 months "for a diagnosis to be assigned" but added that period might be shortened "if symptoms are severe".

Symptoms include: - Impaired control over gaming (frequency, intensity, duration) - Increased priority given to gaming - Continuation or escalation of gaming despite negative consequences

Dr Richard Graham, lead technology addiction specialist at the Nightingale Hospital in London, welcomed the decision to recognise the condition.

"It is significant because it creates the opportunity for more specialised services. It puts it on the map as something to take seriously." But he added that he would have sympathy for those who do not think the condition should be medicalised. "It could lead to confused parents whose children are just enthusiastic gamers."

He said he sees about 50 new cases of digital addiction each year and his criteria is based on whether the activity is affecting basic things such as sleep, eating, socialising and education

Please rate the following statements on a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 represents “strongly disagree” and 7 represents “strongly agree”.

6. **We can depend on getting the truth in most mainstream media.** *
Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly Disagree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly Agree

7. **The aim of mainstream media is to inform the consumer.** *
Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly Disagree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly Agree

8. **Mainstream media is generally truthful.** *
Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly Disagree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly Agree

9. **In general, mainstream media presents a true picture of the issue it is reporting on.** *
Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly Disagree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly Agree

10. **I feel I've been accurately informed about gaming after viewing this article.** *
Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly Disagree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly Agree

Please describe your overall feelings about the issue described in the article you just read.

11. **I felt that the article was....** *
Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Useless	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Useful

12. *Mark only one oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Unimportant	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Important

13. *Mark only one oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Unconvincing	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Convincing

14. **After reading the article, I think that competitive gaming is...** *
Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Bad	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Good

15. *Mark only one oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Harmful	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Beneficial

16. *Mark only one oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Worthless	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Rewarding

17. **Overall, my attitude towards competitive gaming is...** *
Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Negative	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Positive

You will now watch a short 2 minute video that portrays competitive gaming (esports) in a different way. Please watch the video and answer the questions that follow.

http://youtube.com/watch?v=j5QahFFHv0I

Appendix I: Secondary Survey Group B Continued Questions (Google Forms)

18. **I felt that this video was...** *
Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Useless	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Useful

19. *Mark only one oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Unimportant	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Important

20. *Mark only one oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Unconvincing	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Convincing

21. **After watching the video, I believe that esports is...** *
Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Bad	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Good

22. *Mark only one oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Harmful	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Beneficial

23. *Mark only one oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Worthless	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Rewarding

Please rate the following statements on a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 represents “strongly disagree” and 7 represents “strongly agree”.

24. **After watching the video, my opinion of competitive gaming (esports) has changed.** *
Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly Disagree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly Agree

25. **I have a better understanding of what esports is** *
Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly Disagree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly Agree

26. **Esports is an acceptable activity to pursue** *
Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly Disagree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly Agree

27. **I would definitely try esports in the future** *
Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly Disagree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly Agree