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Why do esports players consume esports?: A case study of an esports platform

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ABSTRACT

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Title: Why do esports players consume esports?: A case study of an esports platform

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Abstract: Esports is one of the fastest growing industries in the world. An essential part of this growth are the competitive platforms, which allow players and teams to compete in their favourite esports titles. Esports platforms strengthen existing communities, build new ones and help form professional players out of amateurs. However, these platforms are also competitors to each other. The goal for each company hosting an esports platform is to gain more users and keep them active on its platform. To be successful in this, they must understand what their users want.

This study explores why esports players play esports games and what they want to do on an esports platform. A literature review of esports players was conducted to examine why they play esports games. The following factors were found to affect esports consumption: competition, socialization, exploration, challenge, diversion, peer pressure, escapism, skill building for playing real sport. These eight motivational factors were further utilized in a case study.

The case study consisted of four research participants who actively used an esports platform. A survey was conducted to measure the participants gaming motivations, while depth interviews were used as the method to examine what they want to do on an esports platform. The survey results showed that the following factors did have an effect on participants interest in esports: competition, socialization, exploration, challenge and diversion. Meanwhile the interview results showed that the participants wanted to do the following tasks on an esports platform: go into the game as quickly as possible, play the game in a competitive environment, inspect performance with advanced statistics and socialize with other players.

Keywords: Esports, esports player, esports platform, personas

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1. Introduction

The first chapter will firstly present the background information and underlying problem that form the foundation of this thesis. It will also present the aim, research questions and the structure of this thesis.

1.1 Background

Esports is one of the fastest growing industries in the world (Li, 2017). According to Newzoo's (2021) global esports market report, the global esports revenues in 2020 were around 947,1 million dollars and is expected to grow almost to 1.1 billion dollars in 2021. An essential part of this growth are the competitive platforms, which allow players and teams to compete in their favourite esports titles. Competition on esports platforms can take place in various formats, such as single matches, tournaments or leagues (GameBattles, 2020). Players can prove themselves against others and earn monetary rewards for their good performance. Some platforms even have additional challenges and missions that players can complete (Esportal, 2020). These platforms are important for the esports industry because they connect people all over the world with the same passion for competitive gaming. They serve as a portal to the esports industry. They strengthen existing communities and build new ones and help form professional players out of amateurs. However, these platforms are also competitors to each other. The goal for each company hosting an esports platform is to gain users and keep them active on its platform. To be successful in this, they must understand what the users want.

There are user experience tools that companies can utilize to understand what their users want to do on their platform. One of the most prominent tools is called *personas*. A persona is a fictional character that represents a group of users that might interact with a product, service or a brand in a similar way (Stickdorn et al. 2018). Although personas are fictional they help make user groups with similar goals and behaviour more understandable. A persona typically includes demographic variables, description of user goals and behaviour as well as information related to the product area (Goodman et al. 2012). The benefit of using personas is that companies can talk precisely about

which people they want to target rather than generally talking about their users or user groups. Thus, personas help companies live in their user's shoes (Mulder and Yaar, 2006).

1.2 Problem

Esports is still a new phenomenon that dates back to the late nineties (Wagner, 2006). Therefore, some areas within esports have not been explored in the scientific literature. Some questions regarding esports platforms and esports players are still unanswered in the scientific literature. Why do esports players join an esports platform? What makes them to choose a certain esports platform over the other? What motivates them to keep using an esports platform? Furthermore, the literature of the user experience tool *persona* is very limited in the context of esports and gaming in general. Therefore, the challenge is also to understand what type of information should be included in the persona.

1.3 Aim and research questions

This thesis is conducted as a case study of an esports platform called Esportal. The objective of this thesis is to understand what esports players want to do on an esports platform. To achieve this objective, the literature part of this thesis will examine previous studies of esports, esports players and personas. The aim with the literature review is to gain valuable background information for the case study. It should explain the key aspects of esports, why players want to make a career in esports and why they play esports games. The literature of personas will be utilized in the case study to show what esports players want to do on an esports platform. The research questions have been defined as follows:

RQ 1: Why do esports players play esports games?
RQ 2: What do esports players want to do on an esports platform?

1.4 Structure

The first chapter of this thesis covers the background, problem, aim and research questions of this thesis. The second chapter will include a presentation of the case company and the game that is being played on its platform. The third chapter will include a literature review of esports, esports

players and personas. It will start with an introduction to esports. It will then go on to examine literature about the psychological profile of esports players. Next, the chapter will define personas and explain the benefits of using them. It will then go on to cover different elements of a persona and how they can be created. Following this, the chapter will define journey maps and give an example of a persona's journey map. The third chapter will end with a literature review conclusion. Next, the fourth chapter will explain the methodology of the case study. It covers the design of the research and how the data is collected. The fifth chapter presents the results of this thesis. It begins with a short introduction of each research participant and summarizes the findings of the study. In chapter five, a discussion will be conducted of how this study have contributed to the understanding of esports players and esports platforms. The chapter will end by going through the limitations of the study and proposing ideas for future work in the field.

2. Case company Esportal AB

This thesis will be conducted as a case study of an esports platform called Esportal. Esportal is an esports platform founded in Stockholm, Sweden in 2014. Esportal is currently focusing on the esports title Counter-Strike: Global Offensive. Esportal has approximately half a million registered players in Finland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Germany and Poland. The platform aims to provide an engaging gaming experience which removes disrupting influences such as cheaters, disconnects and trolls (players who ruin other players gaming experience). Using Esportal, players can find opponents and teammates at their skill level, follow their development with updated statistics and use social features to hang out with friends or connect with new players. Esportal operates a freemium business model including two subscription services: prime and premium, which gives players access to additional features on the platform. Esportal also offer companies a way to reach the Esports community with sponsored tournaments and advertising. Furthermore, Esportal is the owner of the world's biggest gaming center Inferno Online in Stockholm, Sweden.

2.1 Counter-Strike: Global Offensive

As mentioned, the case company is currently focusing on the esports game CS: GO (Counter-Strike: Global offensive). CS: GO is an objective based first-person shooter video game developed by the company Valve (Menasce, 2017). The rules in the competitive mode of CS: GO are simple:

players are divided into two teams of five, one team play as the counter-terrorists and the other as terrorists. The objective of those on the terrorists' side is to plant the bomb on one of the two bomb sites and have it exploded, while the objective of those on the counter-terrorists side is to prevent the bomb from being planted and exploded (Menasce, 2017). Terrorists can also win by eliminating all counter-terrorists before the time runs out, while counter-terrorists can also win by eliminating all terrorists, they have to make sure they have enough time to defuse the bomb if it has been planted. It takes five seconds to defuse the bomb.

CS: GO competitive matches are played as a best of thirty rounds matches. After a total of fifteen rounds, players will switch teams from counter-terrorists to terrorists and vice versa. The team that first achieve sixteen round wins is the winner of the match. If the game is tied after thirty rounds, it goes to overtime, which consists a best of six rounds series, with teams playing three rounds on each side. The team that first achieves four round wins will win the overtime. If the overtime goes to a tie, the match will continue with a new overtime until a winner is decided. Rounds usually last around two minutes and matches between 20-45 minutes. At the end of each round, players are rewarded with in-game currency that they can spend on armour, weapons or other utilities that will help them to defeat the opposing team. Winning a round will generally reward more in-game currency than losing. Also, completing objectives such as killing enemies or planting a bomb will give additional currency (Heath and Villanueva, 2020). The strategic setting in CS: GO has made it a success in the esports industry. Esports viewership reports have showed that CS: GO is currently one of the most popular esports titles in the esports scene (Esanu, 2020; Webster, 2020). The esports scene in CS: GO consists of leagues and tournaments hosted by third party organizations, and major championships hosted by the game developer Valve. Since 2016, the prize pool for major championships have risen up to $1,000,000.

2.2 Presentation of the platform

As mentioned in the case company introduction, Esportal operates a freemium business model including two subscription services: prime and premium, which give players access to additional features on the platform. The prime subscription cost 3.49€/per month for 1 month subscription, 2.99€ per month for 3 months subscription and 2.49€ per month for 12 months subscription. Meanwhile, the premium version costs 9.99€ per month for 1 month subscription, 8.99€ per month

for 3 months subscription and 7.99€ per month for 12 months subscription. In this section, all the features on Esportal will be explained in detail, including the differences between the free version, prime and premium subscription service.

The current version of Esportal was released in February 2021, see figure 4. The objective with the updated version was to create a user friendly website that is easy and fun to use.

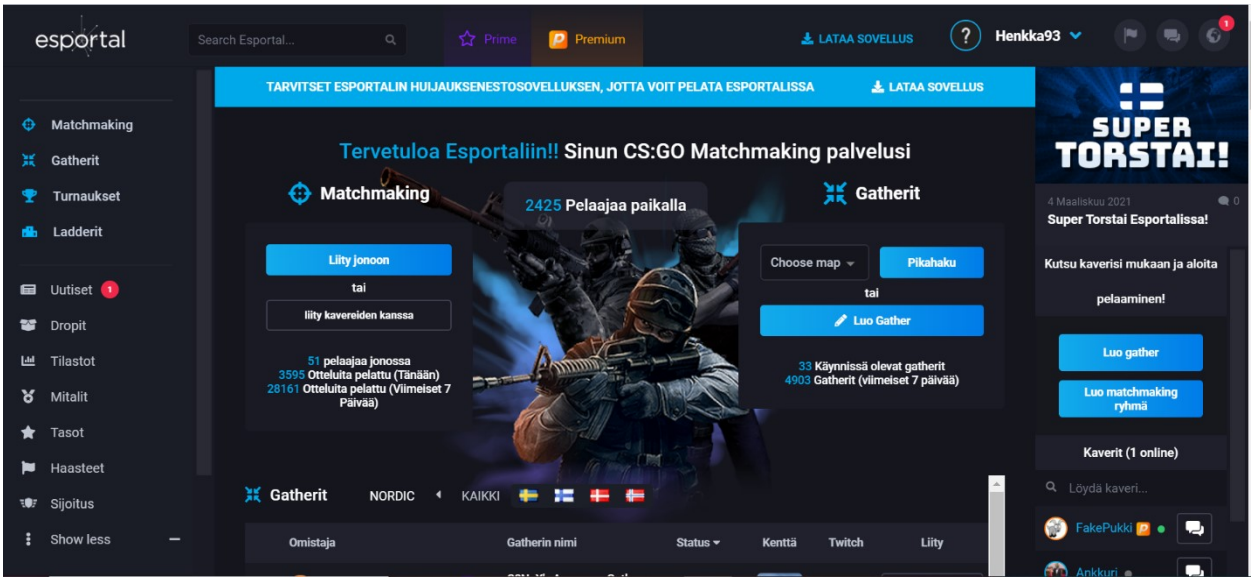

Figure 1. Esportal version 3.0. Source: Esportal (2021).

(Esportal, 2020). All the essential features were moved to the left side on the website. Starting with the essential features, players have four different options to play competitive video game matches on Esportal: regular matchmaking, ladders, gathers and tournaments. In regular matchmaking, a player will play solo or with friends against other players to gain Elo points. If a player wins a match, they will gain Elo points and move up in rank but if a player loses a match, they will lose Elo points and move down in rank. The matchmaking prioritizes players from the same country and who has a similar Elo rating. Furthermore, prime and premium players have the option to participate in prime matchmaking games where they are only matched against other prime and premium players.

Meanwhile, a “ladder” is an individual ranking system that a player signs up to. In a ladder, a player gains or lose points based on their wins/losses in regular matchmaking games. Players moves up and down in rank exactly as in regular Matchmaking, with the addition of their Elo

points showing up in the Ladder their signed up to. Ladders lasts for 1 week, 2 weeks, 1 month or 2months. Ladders often include prizes for those players who have the highest Elo score in the ladder and for those players who have played the most matches in the ladder. There is always at least one ladder which is open for all players, one which is restricted for prime and premium players and one which is restricted for premium players only. Also, from time to time there might be country specific ladders which are open for all players in one specific country (e.g., Finland only).

A “gather” is where a player creates a custom matchmaking lobby, and which then other players can join. A standard gather match is unranked, meaning that the match does not affect Elo points. However, premium players have the option to play ranked based gather matches. In a ranked gather match, players will be balanced in teams based on their Elo points. Like regular matchmaking, a player will gain Elo points for winning a ranked gather match and lose Elo points for losing a ranked gather match. Furthermore, premium players have the option to play gathers with their friends and participate in star gathers. Star gathers are created by popular streamers and professional players in the CS: GO community.

The fourth option to compete on Esportal is through tournaments. Esportal host tournaments that either country specific or open for all players in the European region. Players can choose between 1 versus 1, 2 versus 2 and 5 versus 5 tournaments. In 1v1 and 2v2 tournaments players/teams compete in a single elimination bracket. Meanwhile, in 5v5 tournaments teams usually compete in groups to qualify for the single elimination bracket stage. Some tournaments might have a rank restriction where a player needs to be on a certain rank to participate in the tournament and some tournaments might include a qualification stage where teams need to compete against other teams to qualify for the tournament. Most tournaments include prize money for top 2-3 teams.

Esportal has several features outside of matchmaking. Firstly, there is a news section where a player can read information about ladders and tournaments as well as updates regarding the platform. A player can leave a comment on each news post which will be visible to other players. Next, there is a feature called “drops” which only premium users have access to. All premium players can receive a random drop from time to time if they play matches on Esportal. Premium

players who participate in star gather events have a higher chance of receiving a drop. A drop is essentially a virtual loot box that may include CS: GO skins, accessories, vouchers or gift cards.

Furthermore, Esportal has a feature called “statistics” which show the top 10 global and daily players in kills, matches played and kill-death ratio (the percentage of how many kills a player has received compared to deaths). Players have the option to filter the statistics by country or friends. Esportal also has a separate feature called “placement” where the players can view more detailed statistics that show their Elo points, kills, deaths, assists, kill-death ratio, win ratio and played matches. The placement leaderboards will not show top 10 players for each category as the statistics leaderboards does, it will show the whole player base with 100 players at a time. Also, in the placement menu, players have the option to filter leaderboards by country, prime and premium players, verified players (players who have verified their account) and friends. Players can also search the statistics of a certain player. Furthermore, Esportal has an additional feature called “challenges” which show the top 10 monthly players for highest win streak, most matches played, MVP (most valuable player) awards in a match, KDR (kill-death ratio), Elo rank progression, HS (Headshot) ratio, average damage per round, most kills and most kills with certain type of weapons.

Players can also complete missions and earn medals on Esportal. The “levels” feature includes 20 levels with 3 missions on each level. Each level has three types of missions: experience related, social related and in-game related. Experience related missions has mostly to do with playing and winning a certain number of games. Social related missions include social activities such as adding a certain number of friends and playing matches with them. In-game related missions include performing certain in-game activities such as achieving a certain number of kills with a specific weapon or defusing/planting the bomb a certain number of times. When a player has completed all three missions at a level, they progress to the next level. Level 1-10 can be completed without a premium subscription, however, level 11-20, can only be completed with a premium subscription.

Similar to levels, the “medals” feature includes missions where players receive medals for completing the missions. Esportal have five categories of medals: individual, silver, gold, premium and theme specific medals. An individual medal stays permanently with one player. A player receives an individual medal for being the first player to reach a certain milestone on the platform

such as being the first to reach level 20 or being the first to receive 100 000 kills. Individual medals are valuable and only a few players have one. Meanwhile, silver medals can be unlocked by any player. To unlock silver medals, a player must complete experience and in-game missions similar to those in the levels feature. For example, a player receives a silver medal for playing and winning a certain number of games or receiving a certain number of kills with a specific weapon. Furthermore, to unlock gold medals, a player must have reached level 5 in the levels progression system. The missions for unlocking gold medals are similar to silver but a bit harder to earn. The same applies also to premium medals. However, premium medals can only be unlocked with a premium subscription. Lastly, theme based medals are medals which are mostly tied to a specific theme during a year. For example, a player can earn a theme based medal by playing a certain number of games around Christmas, New Year or Eastern.

As mentioned in the case company introduction, Esportal has also some social features. Each player has a profile page that shows the following information: username, profile likes/dislikes, team name (if the player has one), Elo rank, statistics, recent matches, level progression and unlocked medals. Players can add a profile picture, link their Twitch, Twitter and Lemondogs (website of an esports organization) accounts to their profile and send friend requests to other players. The players friends will be shown in the profile page as well as in the friends list in the bottom right corner of the website. Players can use a chat function in the friends list to chat with their friends. Up in the right corner of the website, there is an account drop down menu where players can inspect their statistics, create a team, change their account information, send support requests and view their subscription history. Premium players have access to more advanced statistics while also being able to reset their statistics and compare them directly with other players. Also, support requests sent by prime and premium players have a higher priority and shorter response time. Furthermore, premium players have the option to block players. Blocked players will be visible in the account settings menu.

3. Literature review

The third chapter will review literature of the subjects of this thesis. It will start by introducing the global phenomenon of esports and go on to review literature about the psychological profile of esports players. It will then go on to examine literature of personas and the different elements they

include. Lastly, the chapter will shortly explain journey maps and give an example of a persona's journey map.

3.1 Esports

Video game competitions have existed for as long as video games have been played. In 1980, the video gamer publisher Atari hosted the "Space Invaders Championships", where thousands of players competed (Li, 2017). Back then, video game competitions were used as a marketing tool for selling consoles and games, and the participants were only hobbyists (Sharrabi and Jerkrot, 2016). However, these competitions started to gain more traction in the late nineties. One of the first reliable sources to define competitive video gaming as "esports" is a 1999 press release discussing the launch of Online Gamers Association (Wagner, 2006). The purpose of the Online Gamers Association (OGA) was to represent professional gamers and to promote esports (Eurogamer, 1999). Shortly after this, the term "esports" started receiving more recognition in the general public. In the early 2000's independent competition organizers expanded into professional companies as a result of an increasing interest from sponsors and advertisers who wanted to reach the young male demographic (Sharrabi and Jerkrot, 2016). The explosive growth in competition organizers increased the prize money in tournaments, which resulted in more professional players and teams.

The biggest boom for esports happened around the shift of the last decade when streaming services arrived in the industry (Jenny et al. 2016). Streaming services made it easier for people to broadcast and spectate esports competitions. Also, it became easier for players to participate in esports, because esports providers started hosting daily competitions with prize money almost up to $50,000 each month (Jenny et al. 2016). This was the starting point of becoming one of the fastest growing industries in the world. Today, "millions of viewers watch competitions every month and players train full time to compete for cash prizes that reach seven figures" (Li, 2017, p.2).

Although, esports have recently enjoyed wide international adoption, there is still resistance as to whether esports can be considered as a sport. Many argue that esports is close to but not yet equivalent to traditional sports due to the missing physical activity (Hamari and Sjöblom, 2016). However, there are other sports which are comparable to esports in terms of the physical activity,

such as darts and chess (Hamari and Sjöblom, 2016). The key question is then why hasn't esports been accepted as a real sport? Defining esports role in the sports industry is difficult because unlike traditional sports, esports is an interconnection of multiple platforms. Esports is computing, gaming, media, and a sports event all wrapped into one package (Jenny et al. 2016). Due to this unique setting, the definitions of esports varies in the academic literature. In 2006, Wagner defined esports as "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, p. 3). Wagner's definition has later received criticism for leaving too much room to interpretation and thus not truly defining esports (Hamari and Sjöblom, 2016; Jenny et al. 2016). Later, Hamari and Sjöblom (2016, p. 213) have defined esports as "a form of sports where the primary aspects of the sport are facilitated by electronic systems; the input of players and teams as well as the output of the eSports system are mediated by human-computer interfaces. Meanwhile, Jenny et al. (2016, p.4) have defined esports simply as "organised video game competitions".

Although there is no generally accepted definition of esports, it can be concluded that esports is unique from all other sports due to its technological nature. In traditional sports, all outcome-defining activities happen in the real world. However, in esports, the outcome-defining activities happen in a virtual world or in other words, within an electronic environment. Scholz (2020. p. 4) claim that "the eSports industry is driven by innovations and technologies, but also by the interconnection of creative the people trying to exploit technologies to the fullest". Innovations and technologies bring players around the world together through organized video game competitions. Players are the core in the esports ecosystem, see figure 1. They have a crucial for esports in the process of becoming accepted as a real sport.

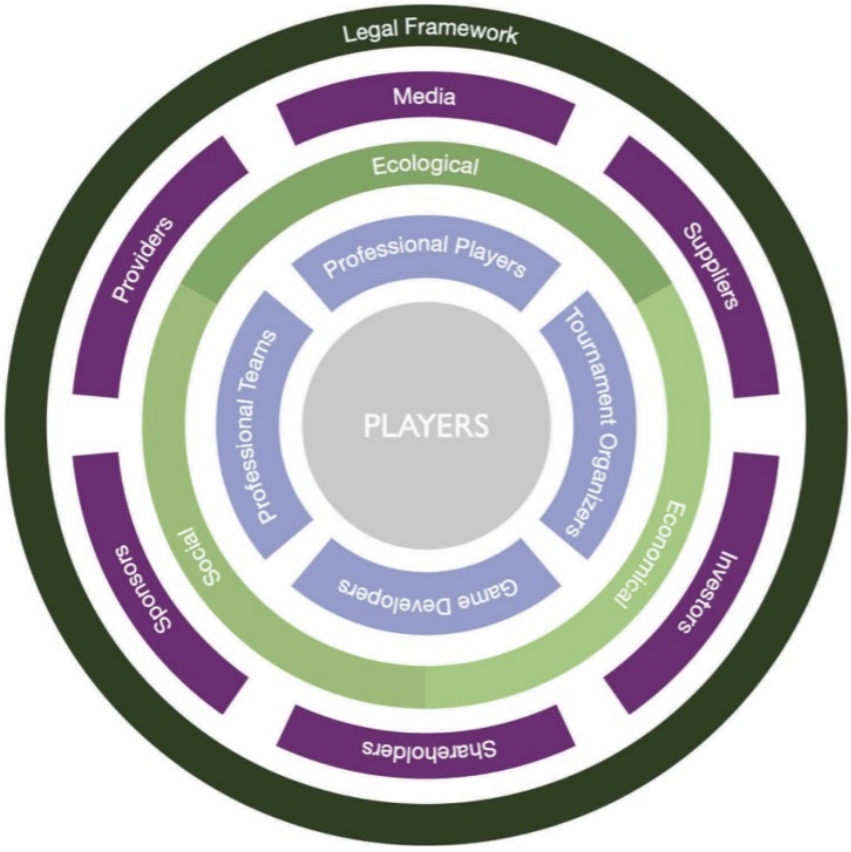

Figure 2. Categorization of the esports ecosystem. Source: Scholz, 2020.

3.1.1 Psychological profile of video game players

Players of esports games are generally divided into two categories: casual and competitive players (Zarrabi and Jerkrot, 2016). According to Kuittinen et al. (2017) gaming is casual when the player perceives it as just one activity among others (e.g., Movies, Sports, Reading). Thus, a casual player is someone who plays games in a casual manner or who has a casual attitude towards gaming. Meanwhile, a competitive player is someone who invests a significant amount of time into gaming and plays for competition rather than for relaxation (Banyai et al. 2018).

There has been a good amount of psychological research into video game players in general. Although researchers have used different theoretical frameworks and examined different video game genres throughout the years, some common motivational patterns have been found among players. Vorderer and his co-workers (Vorderer 2000; Vorderer et al. 2003) found interactivity (i.e. communication, cooperation) and competition to be the most common motivations for playing video games. Sherry and colleagues (Greenberg et al. 2010; Sherry et al. 2006) showed that

competition, challenge, social interactions, arousal and distraction motivates people to play video games. Yee (2006) discovered three underlying needs for playing video games: the seeking of immersion (discovery, role-playing, customization, escapism), the desire for achievement (advancement, mechanics, competition), and social factors (socializing, relationship, teamwork). Similarly, Fuster et al. (2014) found achievement, socialization, exploration and dissociation to be important motivations for playing video games. Finally, Kahn et al. (2015) identified six types of player motivations: socializers (an interest in forming and maintaining social relationships), completionists (an interest in exploring the game to the greatest extent possible), competitors (an interest in winning games and playing in a way that contributes to victory), escapists (an interest in escaping from reality), story-driven (an interest in characters backgrounds and game's plot) and the smarty-pants (an interest in strengthening mental capacity).

Furthermore, a few researchers have studied the connection between gaming motivations and personality. Jeng and Teng (2008) used the big five personality traits (extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness) on subscales from Yee's (2006) motivational dimensions (i.e., discovery, role-playing, teamwork, advancement, and escapism) to investigate the connection between player motivations and personality. Players who scored high on extraversion and emotional stability, were positively linked to teamwork. Individuals with high levels of conscientiousness were positively associated with escapism. The personality trait agreeableness was positively related to advancement and the trait openness was positively linked to discovery and roleplaying.

Park, Song and Teng (2011) also identified connections between motivations for playing online games and personality traits. However, the way in which gaming motivations were associated with traits, differed a lot from those of Jeng and Teng (2008). Player motivations were only linked to two of the big five personality traits: extraversion and agreeableness. Players who scored high on extraversion were motivated by achievement, adventure, escapism and relaxation. Meanwhile, players with a high score on agreeableness were motivated by achievement, adventure and escapism but not on relaxation. Personality traits had no influence on game genre preference or playing time.

Graham and Gosling (2013) studied the links between motivations for playing the massively multiplayer online role-playing game (MMORPG), World of Warcraft, with personality traits. The

authors found several connections between player motivations and personality traits. As expected, players who were motivated by socialization, had a higher score on extraversion but interestingly also relatively high on agreeableness, neuroticism and openness. Players motivated by achievement showed greater scores on extraversion and neuroticism. Those motivated by immersive factors, were positively linked to neuroticism and agreeableness. Individuals playing for leadership reasons tended to be open, extraverted and conscientious. Players with independence motives were positively associated with openness.

3.1.2 Becoming an esports player

Although there has been a great number of studies on video game players in general, only a small number of studies have researched the psychological profile of esports players. These studies have mainly focused on two topics: becoming an esports player (the process of transforming from a casual gamer to an esports player) and the characteristics of an esports player (mental skills, motivations, needs).

Banyai et al. (2018, pp. 352) define an esports player as "a professional gamer who plays for competition, rather than for fun and/or relaxation, and define gaming as their job". Seo (2016) studied different aspects of esports and aimed specifically to answer three elements: the elements of esports consumption that make it an attractive career option for players, the reason why players want to pursue a career as professional esports players and the process of how players transform from casual gamers to esports players. In Seo's (2016) study, esports players stated that the main elements that attract them to pursue a career in esports, is the need of self-improvement, celebration of mastery of skills and the importance of fairness and mutual respect in online and LAN (Local Area Network) tournaments. Furthermore, esports players felt that the journey that made them professional players, increased their self-esteem and gave them accomplishments and social recognition. Even though the nature of esports is competitive, players valued it as fun and self-motivating.

Furthermore, examining the mental transformation of becoming an esports player, Seo (2016) identified three different stages using Campbell's (1965, as cited in Banyai et al. 2018) "hero journey's monomyth" as a theoretical base. In the first stage "the call to adventure" players were playing video games for fun but started forming initial perceptions and relationships in the world

of esports. In the second stage “the road of trials”, players begin the personal transformation to becoming an esports player. Their attitude towards gaming changes, they start to practice and specialize their skills and knowledge of the game mechanics. In the final stage “the master of two worlds”, players acquire a new esports player identity. This simply means that they view themselves as esports players and want people to recognize them as esports players. Esports becomes a substantial part of their identity and they try to manage that with other important parts of their lives.

Similar to Seo (2016), Kim and Thomas (2015) studied the process how a casual gamer evolves to an esports player utilizing activity theory (Engeström, 1999). The authors developed a model for describing players motivations, goals and learning styles while becoming esports players. Moreover, the authors argued that when defining esports, it is important to study the phenomenon from all perspectives, including players, fans, sponsors, teams etc. From this viewpoint, Kim and Thomas (2015) developed a theory model, by interviewing esports players, coaches, team managers and an esports psychologist. As a result, five different stages were developed where the players attitude, motivations and performance might differ.

At first, players are unexperienced and must solve tasks they are unfamiliar with (enjoying stage). Next, players must compete and struggle to receive recognition from others to be chosen as a starting player in a team. Therefore, they lose their intrinsic motivations and the fun factor of playing video games (struggling stage). When players have secured their spot in a team, they gain trust from teammates and play the game without feeling much stress or anxiety. Thus, they enjoy the daily life of being professional esports players (achieving stage). Unfortunately, many players are not able to hold their spot in the achieving stage and can no longer play professional esports matches. They go through a similar process as in the struggling stage, where they need to adapt, learn new skills and compete to become a part of a starting roster again. Therefore, they struggle to maintain the satisfaction they experienced before and enter the slumping stage. Some players can recover from the slumping stage to become professional players again (recovering stage). However, many do not have the competency to do this, and some might want to change their career path within esports to become a team coach, analyst, commentator or some other position in gaming. Although they are no longer professional esports players, they benefit from the experiences they had as a player in their new career path. Kim and Thomas (2015) also highlighted

from the five staged model that esports players think differently about video games than casual gamers. In the higher stages of the theory model, playing video games is always considered as work for esports player while casual gamers always consider it as a spare time activity.

3.1.3 Characteristics of esports players

Himmelstein et al. (2017, as cited in Banyai, et al. 2018) studied the factors behind success and the barriers for executing a good performance in esports. The researchers found that to have a successful performance, an esports player needs to have 1. great knowledge of the mechanics in the game 2. think strategically and be able to make fast and smart decisions, 3. separate personal life from performance, 4. be motivated to push forward and forget past performances, 5. stay focused and avoid being distracted, 6. maintain a growth mindset and 7. warm up mentally and physically before performance. Furthermore, it was emphasized that players should be able to strategically adapt to their opponents playing style, communicate effectively with their teammates, be capable of developing themselves and their team (i.e. analyze individual and team performance) and set both short term and long term goals. In addition to the mental factors of performing optimally, the barriers of good performance were also identified. These barriers were low self-confidence, inadequate coping strategies with anxiety, thinking about past accomplishments or mistakes, harassment, inability to develop as an individual or as a team (e.g., low individual skills, poor team dynamic, ineffective team communication, not enough knowledge of the game), and problems in separating daily life from gaming (Himmelstein et al., 2017, as cited in Banyai et al., 2018).

A few studies have focused on the motivations of esports players. Firstly, Lee and Schoendstedt (2011) compared esports and traditional sports consumption motives by utilizing the theoretical framework of uses and gratifications theory. Based on earlier video game uses and gratifications research (Lee et al. 2010), Lee and Schoendstedt (2011) evaluated the following video gaming related motivations: competition, skill building, peer pressure (influence from members of one's peer group), social interaction, fantasy, diversion, permanence, arousal, design/graphics, identification with sport, sport knowledge application, passing time, control and entertainment. The findings indicated that competition, peer pressure, skill building for playing real sport had an impact on players motivations for consuming esports.

Weiss and Schiele (2013) also utilized the uses and gratifications theory to study the needs of esports players. However, the need gratifications assessed by Weiss and Schiele (2013) were for the most part different than those chosen by Lee and Schoendstedt (2011). Based on previous uses and gratifications studies in virtual worlds, Weiss and Schiele (2013) chose five competitive need gratifications (competition, achievement, challenge, reputation, and rewards) and five hedonic need gratifications (social relationship, escapism, self-fulfillment, fun, and virtual identity) for closer inspection. After having semi-structured in-depth interviews with ten industry experts, five of the ten need gratifications were determined relevant for esports. The five selected gratifications were: social relationship, competition, challenge, fun and escapism. These gratifications were included in a follow-up survey with esports players. Survey results showed that escapism, competition and challenge had a positive effect on players motivation for playing video games in a competitive way.

Martoncik (2015) aimed to discover differences in gaming motivations and lifegoals between casual gamers and esports players. Players were presented with a questionnaire including lifegoals from six major categories: intimacy, affiliation, altruism, power, achievement, and diversion. The only significant difference between the two player types were found in affiliation (i.e., the need of intense interaction with others and to help others) and diversion (i.e., the need for new experiences, tension, and excitement), with esports players showing greater scores in both variables. According to Martoncik, (2015) the higher score for affiliation among esports players, can be explained by the fact that esports players develop more friendly relationships through team memberships. Martoncik (2015) argue that an important motivation for esports players is not only the competition but also the social nature of playing video games. Players can interact with each other in a virtual environment, they can train together and compete in tournaments and leagues. Esports players often meet in real life at LAN (Local Area Network) parties, where they play video games together. LAN parties are more about meeting online friends than competing. Furthermore, Martoncik (2015) the higher score for diversion among esports players can be explained by the thrill of competitions and everything that goes into it, i.e., training, studying the game and developing strategies. Martoncik (2015) also emphasized that those esports players who were leaders in their team, satisfied their need for power by controlling and directing others as well as achieving a higher status in the virtual environment.

Chamarro and Lanzo (2018) researched several variables on amateur and semi-professional esports players, including age, hours of play, motivations and passion. In Chamarro and Lanzo's (2018) study, the three most common motivational factors were: interest in forming and maintaining social relationships, desire to explore the elements in the game and compete against other players. Moreover, it was discovered that semi-professional players tend to be younger, spend more time playing and have more interest in improving mental capacity. On the contrary, amateurs tend to be more story driven (interested in characters background and game's plot) in their motivation. However, the variable "passion" did not contribute to explaining the distinction between amateurs and semi-professional players. In video gaming, it is possible to draw a distinction between two types of passion: harmonious passion and obsessive passion. When a person experiences harmonious passion, it plays an important role in his or her identity, but it does not disturb with other aspects of the identity and it can harmoniously work with other parts of the person's life (Chamarro & Lanzo, 2018). Meanwhile, when a person is experiencing obsessive passion, the activity is not under his or her control. Therefore, the passion towards the activity, slowly occupies a substantial part of the person's identity and eventually disturbs with other parts of the person's life (Curran et al., 2015). The findings in Chamarro's and Lanzo's (2018) study indicated that both amateur and semi-professional esports players tend to experience harmonious passion when playing the game.

3.2 Personas

A persona is a fictional character that represents a group of users that might use a product, service or a brand in a similar way (Stickdorn et al. 2018). Although personas are fictional, they help make user groups with similar goals more understandable (Stickdorn et al. 2018). A persona is often made as human as possible to intensify the feeling that it represents a real person (Buley, 2013). Personas often include demographic variables, user goals and behaviour as well as information related to the product area (Goodman et al. 2018). Figure 2 shows an example of a persona in the esports domain.

A persona should be an active document. Personas express an image of an audience at a specific moment (Caddick and Cable, 2011). As companies discover new insights about their users, their personas need to be updated to mirror them. Doing so, makes the personas an ongoing user

experience tool that continuously reveal new opportunities (Caddick and Cable, 2011). The benefit of using personas is that companies can talk precisely about which people they want to target instead of generally talking about their users or user groups. Mulder and Yaar (2006) claim that if companies actively use personas to guide their decisions, they start to feel like real people for them. For example, when a company faces a business decision, they might imagine what its persona would do in that specific situation and not what they would do themself. Thus, personas help companies live in their user's shoes (Mulder and Yaar, 2006).

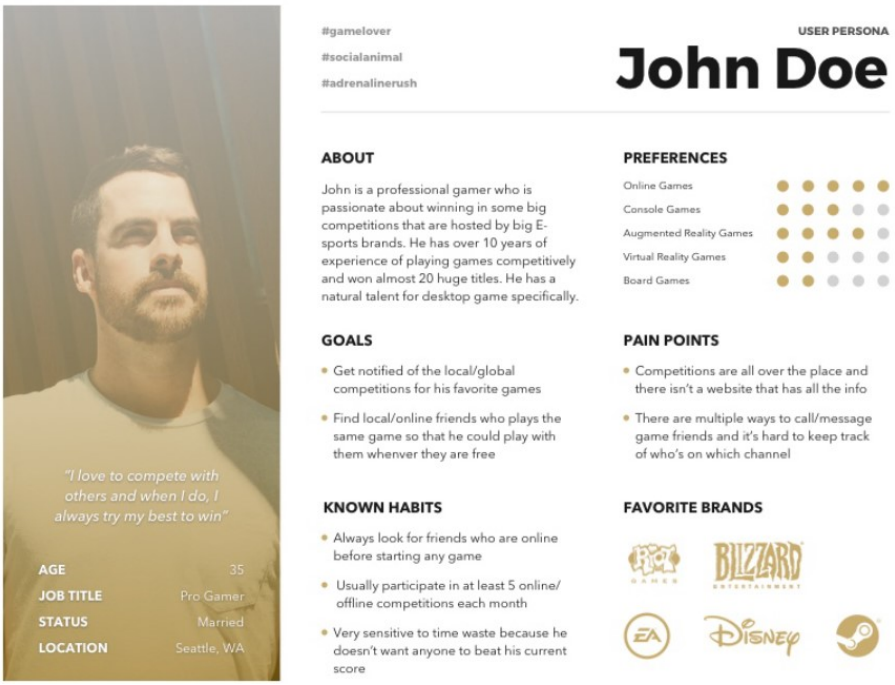

Figure 3. An example of a persona in the esports domain. Source: Lee, 2020.

3.2.1 Personal information

"A persona is not a persona without a name" (Mulder and Yaar, 2006, pp. 87). A name is important because it makes the persona feel like a real person. Talking about a specific person is way more exciting and effective than just talking generally about different user groups. Giving the persona a first name is usually enough because it might be hard for people to remember the names of each persona if they include surnames (Mulder and Yaar, 2006). It is important to choose a real name that the persona user could have. A good alternative is to choose a first name of a specific person that participated in the user interviews, one who would fit the specific segment well (Caddick and Cable, 2011; Mulder & Yaar, 2006).

Diversity is also essential when choosing a name because it is not optimal to have a bunch of homogenous personas, who do not show the diversity of all users (Mulder and Yaar, 2006). For example, if the company's data shows that each segment has more male than female users, it might still be a good idea to make one female persona because it helps the company to think about all their users, not just about stereotypes in their minds (Mulder and Yaar, 2006). Also, the names of each persona should be somewhat different from each other to avoid any confusion. For instance, naming a persona as Amy and another persona as Annie can cause employees to mistake Annie for Amy or the opposite. If each persona has a distinct name, they are easier to remember (Mulder and Yaar, 2006).

After the name is decided, it is time to include a photo. A photo can be a valuable part of a persona, but more often than not they are poorly used (Caddick and Cable, 2011). Photos are often used to put human face on the persona, so a portrait of a smiling person is attached at the top of it (Caddick and Cable, 2011). However, a photo can do considerably more than that. A photo can show the reader something about the associated user group just from looking at it. For example, if the persona represents a group of esports players, then the photo should be of an esports player playing an esports game. A photo should not only reflect age and gender but also user behaviour (Caddick and Cable, 2011).

A company should avoid using stock images (Caddick and Cable, 2011). They are cheap and make the personas feel less real. Ideally a company should use photos of real users who it met during ethnographical research. Photos of real users doing relevant tasks will help the company to base its personas in reality (Caddick and Cable, 2011). However, this is not always possible. An alternative solution is to use an online photo sharing website such as Flickr (Caddick and Cable, 2011). These websites have plenty of photos of people doing relevant tasks in real situations. However, companies need to be conscious of the licensing that is linked with the photos and might need to ask for permission from the photographer before they use them.

A good addition is to include a photo of the persona's environment (Caddick and Cable, 2011). If a company show the space that the persona inhabits while trying to use its system, it can come up with some interesting ideas of the personas constraints and behaviour (Caddick and Cable, 2011). It could tell if the persona uses the company's system in a messy environment full of distractions. It could show the type of devices that the persona use: computers or gaming consoles. It could

show any additional resources that the persona uses to complete his or her goals: laptops, mobiles or notepads.

Once the persona has a name and photo, it is time focus on details that makes the persona feel like a real person. Personas are all about inventing realistic people and that is why details make all the difference (Mulder and Yaar, 2006). A persona with a name and a photo is only a vague character before other personal information is specified. The following variables are often used on personas:

• Occupation.

• Age.

• Location.

• Home/family life.

(Buley, 2013; Mulder & Yaar, 2006).

3.2.2 Key attributes

The next step is to define the attributes that explain the key differences between personas. Caddick and Cable (2011) argue that a well-designed persona focuses on the user's goals, behaviours and attitudes while completing their goals. The tasks that users are trying to do or trying to achieve is often the most valuable piece of information that drives decision-making (Mulder and Yaar, 2006). If companies know what their users want to do on their website or with their product, they can make sure they have everything in place for them to do it (Caddick and Cable, 2011). User behavior is important because different users may approach the same goal in various ways. Behavior variables might also reveal that users with similar goals might actually have different goals (Caddick and Cable, 2011). For example, a goal of playing competitive matches on an esports platform might split those people who simply do it for playing video games competitively and those who do it for becoming an esports player.

Goodman et al. (2012) argue that personas can also be created through patterns that drive user goals and behaviors. Patterns can for example be frequency of use (the amount of time the user is using the software) intensity of use (the amount of features the user is using), business size (the business size of the user type) or something else that matter to the use of the product (Goodman et

al. 2012). However, this approach is more challenging since it requires an extensive amount of usage data to distinguish patterns that drive user goals and behaviour as well as subsets of users of those discovered patterns (Goodman et al. 2012).

3.2.3 Domain specific attributes

Companies may want to add details to their persona that are specific to their product area (Goodman et al. 2012; Mulder and Yaar, 2006;). Domain specific details should not overlap with the key differentiators (goals and behaviours), they should instead be viewed as secondary differentiators (Mulder and Yaar, 2006). Companies should only include domain specific details that are important for differentiating personas from each other (Mulder and Yaar, 2006). As an example, the literature review about esports and esports players showed that gaming motivations is a key characteristic of esports players (Banyai et al. 2018). Therefore, when creating a persona in the esports domain, gaming motivations should be included as a domain specific attribute.

3.2.4 Profile

Personas are user stories which is why each persona should have a narrative profile (Mulder and Yaar, 2006). The profile summarizes the key attributes, while also giving background information about the persona (Mulder and Yaar, 2006). The profile should be as specific as possible to make the persona feel realistic. It should not only be based on facts but also on attitudes. Hence, Mulder and Yaar (2006) define persona profiles as “psychologically based mini biographies” (p. 202). Profiles are better understood with examples. The following example shows the profile of the esports persona Henry:

“Henry is a 22-year-old male, who is a senior in college. He is majoring in computer science and has been playing Call of Duty for 5 years. Henry started playing games competitively on Game Battles 3 years ago. He has been watching eSports for two years. He loves watching eSports streams on both Twitch and YouTube and uses Adblocker because the ads are repetitive and annoying. He likes to feel like he is part of eSports, not just a consumer. As a fan of eSports, Henry is far more worried about the game than about the advertising surrounding it. His personal experience with gaming makes him an active participant in the community, and so he isn’t moved by advertising that doesn’t feel relevant” (Alford et al. 2015, p. 6).

3.2.5 Quote

After the profile is done, there is still one thing left to do: adding a quote. According to Howard (2014) the quote should be short, memorable and cover the personas *ethos,* which translates from Greek as "character" (Campbell, 1995). The quote is one of the initial facts that people read to get a quick sense of the persona (Mulder and Yaar, 2006). It should be created in the end of the design process when all information about the persona is available (Mulder and Yaar, 2006). The following examples show the quotes of three different gamer personas:

- "Gaming is in my DNA! There are few things I love more. I spend my free time and money on games" – The ultimate gamer
- "I do not watch other people play games much. I own plenty of hardware, so I would rather be playing myself" – The conventional player
- "Playing video games may not be my favorite hobby, but I definitely enjoy watching others play" – Popcorn gamer

(Newzoo, 2020).

As the examples show, the quote should be simple and focused on one or two points that set the persona apart from the others (Mulder and Yaar, 2006).

3.2.6 Prioritizing personas

Some personas are more important than others, so the company should prioritize them (Goodman et al. 2012) Prioritization may be dictated by business needs, in which case the personas will be prioritized by the target market order (Goodman et al 2012). Prioritization can also be dictated by the needs of design (Goodman et al. 2012). Satisfying the needs of the target audience might be important for the success of the product or service, however, it's possible that its needs might not be as crucial as those of another user group. Thus, a company may sometimes need to focus on the smaller and more challenging group to satisfy both their needs and those of the target market (Goodman et al. 2012). From a development standpoint, prioritization creates a consistent way of deciding between different solutions (Goodman et al. 2012). When the company have multiple options to resolve a problem, they should always choose the one that favours the needs of its primary persona (Goodman et al. 2012).

3.2.7 Using personas

The process of designing personas is useful, however, to get the full benefit from personas, companies need to use them in everyday product development (Goodman et al. 2012). It's easy for companies to go through the process of creating personas and then never use them again. An easy way for companies to get employees to think in terms of personas is to use the persona names in documentation and specs (Goodman et al. 2012). For example, when describing a new feature, the documentation could explain how it would help Annie or Jamie and how they would appreciate it. Companies could also use personas to evaluate their competitors. For example, a company could use a competitor's product and try to determine how the personas would use it, where they would succeed and where they would fail to complete their goals (Goodman et al. 2012).

Also, an important part of using personas updating them on a regular basis (Goodman et al. 2012). Let's say a company first discover that the persona named Erik is a 25-year-old father of one. However, when the company run a survey, it discovers that there aren't many 20-something men who fit the Erik's persona. It mostly consists of people around the age of 20 who have no children at all. Since Erik's age and the number of children he has is not essential to the product, the company can just change his persona (Goodman et al. 2012). When a company is doing other research, it should compare users who match the description of the persona. If the company find that most users do not match with the persona, then the persona should be adjusted to reflect the actual user base (Goodman et al. 2012).

A company should also consider how the user experience will change over time. What happens to Erik after he's used the product regularly for six months? If the company develop new features or an entirely new product, it should resist the temptation to re-use its existing personas (Goodman et al. 2012). Say a company created a few user personas when it developed an esports platform meant for esports players, and now the company want to create a platform for casual gamers. The gamers that the company is targeting may be similar to esports players in terms of demographics and their values, but their goals and behaviour might be different.

3.3 Mapping the persona's journey

Customer journey maps are generally created from personas (Micheaux and Bosio, 2018). A customer journey map visualizes the overall experience customers have with a brand (Stickdorn et al. 2018). The customer experience is a dynamic and iterative process that flows from prepurchase to purchase and to postpurchase phase. The prepurchase phase involves all aspects of the customers interaction with the brand before purchase. Marketing literature has characterized prepurchase as behaviours such as need recognition, search and consideration (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016). Meanwhile, the purchase phase, is generally the shortest of the three phases. It includes all customer interactions with the brand during the purchase event itself. It is characterized as behaviours such as choice, ordering and payment (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016). Furthermore, the postpurchase phase covers all customer interactions with the brand after the actual purchase. It is characterized by behaviours such as consumption, usage, postpurchase engagement and service requests (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016). In postpurchase, the consumption of the product or service itself becomes a critical touchpoint. Curran et al. (2009) has suggested that the consumption process includes a "loyalty loop", where a trigger occur that either leads to customer loyalty (e.g., repurchase, further consumption and engagements) or to customers re-entering the prepurchase phase and considering another set of alternatives. Hence, customers build expectations based on their past experiences and may either choose to be loyal to a brand or evaluate other options if the current experiences do not meet their expectations (Curran et al. 2009).

During each phase, customers encounter both direct and indirect points of contacts with a company. These points of contacts are defined as "touchpoints" (Baxendale, 2015). Lemon and Verhoef (2016) distinguish four different categories of touchpoints: brand-owned, partner-owned, customer-owned and external. Brand-owned touchpoints are interactions managed by the company itself which means they are under the company's control (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016). They include all brand owned-media (e.g., advertising, websites, social media channels) and brand-controlled aspects of the marketing mix (e.g., elements of a product, price, convenience, service). Meanwhile, partner-owned touchpoints are customer interactions during the journey that are managed or controlled by both the company and its partners (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016). Partners can include multichannel distribution partners, marketing agencies and communication channel partners (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016). Furthermore, customer-owned touchpoints are customer

actions that are a part of the customer journey but which the company, its partners or others cannot control (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016). An example of a customer-owned touchpoint would be the customers thinking about their own needs and desires about a product or them using a product and forming opinions about it. Finally, external touch points recognize the roles of others in the customer journey. Customers are surrounded by other customers, peers, third party information sources such as review sites and in some cases even externalities such as sporting and political events. According to Lemon and Verhoef (2016) the effects of these externalities can be even bigger than advertising effects.

The customers might experience each of these touchpoint categories during each phase of the journey (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016). Depending on the nature of the product/service or the customer's own journey, the strength or importance of each touch point category may differ. The customer's experience at each touchpoint may influence his or her satisfaction and loyalty with a company (Fournier, 1998). The objective with a customer journey map is to not only identify each touchpoint between the customer and the company but also to map out the customer's needs during each touchpoint (Howard, 2014) Journey mapping is an excellent tool for finding gaps in customer experiences and exploring solutions (Stickdorn et al. 2018). The tool has been mainly used in marketing and service design (Asbjørn and Knut, 2018).

3.3.1 An example of a gamer persona's journey map

As mentioned, customer journey maps are often created from a persona. Figure 3 shows an example of a gamer persona's journey map. The objective with this map was to research the needs and priorities of hardcore gamers (gamers who play more than ten hours a week) to help improve a gaming website (Kalbach and Kahn, 2011). Data was collected from both in-person and phone interviews. The interview data showed that hardcore gamers generally spend a lot of time on social channels and gaming stores with friends, before deciding to make a purchase. The creators of the gamer journey map wanted to show how different experiences shapes a gamers behaviour (Kalbach and Kahn, 2011). The map is based on a persona named Richard. It shows Richard's story from researching to purchasing and from playing to sharing experiences about a video game. The map includes details about the activities that Richard performs throughout the journey. The

map does also include supporting quotes that describe Richard's needs during each touchpoint. The following text summarizes Richard's journey:

In the awareness phase, Richard reads blogs, forums and game reviews. He also listens to podcasts, watch TV shows, commercials, visit gaming sites and tell his friends about games. During this phase, Richard is very focused on the "latest in gaming" and want to read information about upcoming games. Next, in the "choose" phase, Richard performs activities that helps him to decide whether to buy a game or not. His activities include talking to friends, reading user and pro reviews, downloading demos for test playing and evaluating the price of a game. The number one priority for Richard is the multiplayer/online aspect of the game because he feels it provides him more variety than offline games. Richard makes choices based on his desired mood and his willingness to invest his time into the game. The purchase phase shows that Richard is price conscious. He is always seeking for deals and prefer to purchase in person. The "play" phase reveal that Richard plays on a daily basis, one or two games at a time. He often plays multiplayer games with friends, mostly action and fantasy games. Richard likes to maximize the investment he made into buying a game by exploring it to the greatest extent possible and using possible cheats as well as looking through walkthroughs (guides that can assist the player or improve the player's skill in the game). The share phase shows that Richard often posts to gaming blogs and forums. He wants to have influence and status in the gaming community. Richard also likes to show off his game library to his friends, compare the scores with his friends, trade games with friends and recommend them to others.

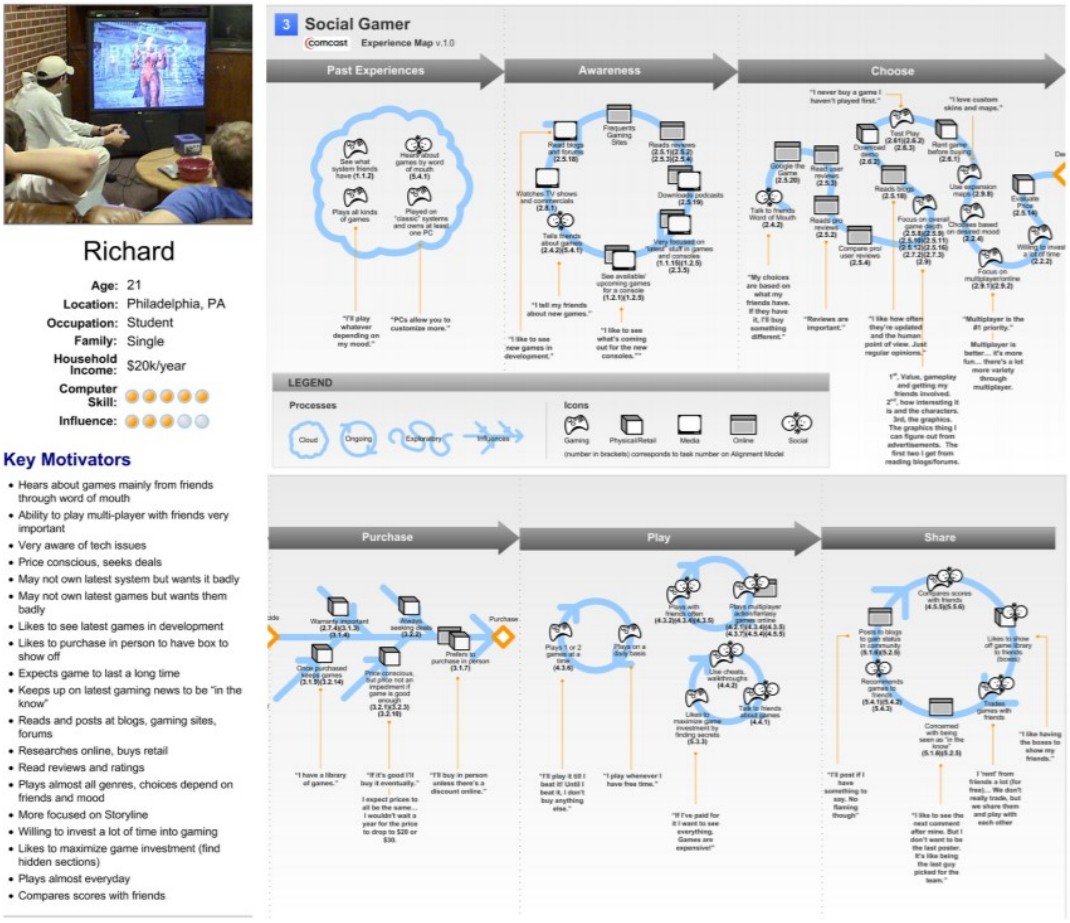

Figure 4. An example of a gamer persona's journey map. Source: Kalbach and Kahn (2011).

3.4 Literature review conclusion

This chapter started with an introduction to esports. Based on the academic definitions of esports, it was concluded that esports is unique from all other sports due to its technological nature. In traditional sports, all the outcome-defining activities happen in the real world, in esports, however, the outcome-defining activities happen in a virtual world. As stated by Scholz (2020, p. 4) "the eSports industry is driven by innovations and technologies, but also by the interconnection of creative the people trying to exploit technologies to the fullest". Innovations and technologies enable esports players around the world to participate in organized video game competitions (Jenny et al. 2016).

Next this chapter reviewed literature of esports players. Banyai et al. (2018, pp. 352) define an esports player as "a professional gamer who plays for competition, rather than for fun and/or

relaxation, and define gaming as their job". Previous research of esports players have mainly focused on two topics: the process of becoming an esports player and the characteristics of esports players. Seo (2016) highlighted that the main elements that attract players to make a career in esports is the need of self-improvement, the celebration of mastery of skills and the importance of fairness and mutual respect in online and LAN (Local Area Network) tournaments. Furthermore, in Seo's (2016) study esports players stated that the journey that made them professional players, increased their self-esteem and gave them accomplishments and social recognition. Although esports is a serious leisure activity, esports players valued it as fun and self-motivating (Seo, 2016).

Four studies have focused on researching the motivations of esports players, examining why they play esports games. Lee and Schoendstedt (2011) showed that competition, peer pressure, and skill building for playing actual sport influenced players interest in esports. Meanwhile, Weiss and Schiele (2013) discovered that competition, challenge and escapism are important factors for playing esports games. Furthermore, Martoncik demonstrated that diversion and affiliation does have an effect on esports consumption. Finally, Chamarro and Lanzo (2018) emphasized that socialization, exploration and competition motivate esports players to play video games. Table 1 summarizes all motivational factors that had an effect on esports consumption.

Table 1. Motivational factors that had an effect on esports consumption.

Motivational factors that were found to have an effect on esports consumption	**Studies which found the motivational factors to have an effect on esports consumption**
Competition	(Chamarro and Lanzo, 2018; Lee and Schoendstedt, 2011; Weiss and Schiele;)
Socialization (also similar to affiliation in Martoncik's (2015 study)	(Chamarro and Lanzo, 2018; Martoncik, 2015)
Diversion	(Martoncik, 2015)
Challenge	(Weiss & Schiele, 2013)

Exploration	(Chamarro & Lanzo, 2018)
Skill building for playing actual sport	(Lee & Schoendstedt, 2011)
Escapism	(Weiss & Schiele, 2013)
Peer pressure	(Lee & Schoendstedt, 2011)

Next, this chapter reviewed literature of personas. A persona is a fictional character that represents a group of users that might use a product, service or a brand in a similar way (Stickdorn et al. 2018). Although personas are fictional they help make user groups with similar goals more understandable (Stickdorn et al. 2018). A persona is often made as realistic as possible to reinforce the feeling that it represents a real user (Buley, 2013). A persona typically includes personal information, user goals, behaviour, information related to the product area, a profile as well as a quote that describes the persona's character (Goodman et al. 2018). The benefit of using personas is that companies can talk precisely about which people they want to target instead of generally talking about their users or user groups. Hence, Mulder and Yaar (2006) claim that personas help companies live in their user's shoes (Mulder and Yaar, 2006).

Finally, this chapter showed that customer journey maps are generally created from personas (Micheaux and Bosio, 2018). A customer journey map visualizes the overall experience customers have with a product, service or a brand (Stickdorn et al. 2018). The customer experience is a dynamic process that flows from prepurchase to purchase and to postpurchase phase. During each phase, customers encounter both direct and indirect points of contacts with a company. The objective with a customer journey map is to not only identify all point of contacts between the customers and the company but also to map out the customers' needs during each point of contact (Howard, 2014).

4. Methodology

The aim of this thesis was to answer the following research questions:

1. Why do esports players play esports games?
2. What do esports players want to do on an esports platform?

A literature review of esports players provided the base for the first research question. All gaming motivations that were found in the literature to have an effect on esports consumption will be measured on research participants in a case study of an esports platform. The case study will answer the second research question through a user persona. The user persona will display esports players goals, behaviour and gaming motivations while using an esports platform. This chapter will explain how to do research for personas and then go on to design a research framework and explain the data collection process for creating a persona.

4.1 How to do research for personas

Personas are typically created from qualitative research (Caddick and Cable, 2011; Goodman et al. 2012; Mulder and Yaar, 2006). Bell et al. (2018, p. 355) explains that "qualitative research is a research strategy that usually emphasizes words rather than numbers in the collection and analysis of data". Furthermore, University of Southern California research guides (2021) explain that "qualitative researchers attempt to describe and interpret human behavior based primarily on the words of selected individuals [a.k.a., "informants" or "respondents"] and/or through the interpretation of their material culture or occupied space".

The most common type of qualitative techniques for creating personas are depth interviews and field visits (Caddick and Cable, 2011; Goodman et al. 2012; Mulder and Yaar, 2006). Depth interviews allow companies to speak to a small number of users but as the name suggests, they can collect some in-depth information (Mulder and Yaar, 2006). Meanwhile, field visits allow the company to go to the users' natural environment, watch and interview them while their trying to complete their goals (Mulder and Yaar, 2006).

Although personas are generally based on qualitative research, there are a few different approaches to creating them. Mulder and Yaar (2006) argue that companies should start the process by conducting internal interviews with a range of people, including executive team members,

marketing representatives and people who have direct access to customers such as salespeople and support staff. These interviews should give the company some initial assumptions about the different types of users that exist in its userbase. The company should then talk with as wide a range of users as possible (Mulder and Yaar, 2006). However, an important rule to remember about finding a range of users is that goals matter the most (Mulder and Yaar, 2006). Talking to users of different ages and demographics might be useful but not essential for segmenting personas. Meanwhile, talking to users with different goals is not only critical for segmenting personas but also for understanding what different user types want to do with the company's product.

Meanwhile, Caddick and Cable (2011) suggest that companies should start with a hypothesis. They should theorize the key goals of different user types and recruit research participants based on those goals. Companies should base their theories on what they already know about their existing users. They should think of what type of goals their users need to achieve and what type of scenarios they might be in. For example, if a gaming retailer is doing research of gamers it should not recruit based on goals such as: "needs to buy a game" or "needs to buy a gaming controller". Instead, it should recruit based on wider goals and scenarios, such as:

- "a first-time gamer trying to buy everything he needs "
- "an experienced gamer who needs to make a large necessary purchase"
- "a relative looking for a gift for a gamer".

The goals should cover all relevant part of the company's project (Caddick and Cable, 2011). Once the company has a theory, it can carry out its research. The research will either disprove or prove those theories.

Meanwhile, Goodman et al. 2012 advise companies to use the following framework when doing research for personas:

Internal interviews. Companies should start the process by learning what they already know about their existing users by conducting a few short interviews with stakeholders and experts. If the company's product has an established user base, it should talk to employees who work directly with it, i.e., support staff, salespeople, trainers etc. If the company is attempting to expand the target audience or enter a new market, it should talk with the employees responsible for that work. These people should be interviewed about their personal experiences with users and about the

ways in which users might differ from each other. What types of users have they distinguished? What impacts do they see these users have on their daily work or on the business?

Research with participants. Majority of the data that companies utilize to create personas should come from qualitative research with potential or existing users. Companies should structure the interviews or field visits around the user's entire experience with the product, not around specific tasks or goals. When recruiting participants, companies should focus on the entire range of their user base. While interviewing, companies should keep a record of good quotations, problems and anecdotes.

Market research review. Sales and marketing usually have market research and detailed demographic profiles that can give companies a big picture breakdown of their userbase. If a company has a market segmentation, especially one that is based on usage data or other behavioral data, it's worth reviewing.

Usage data and customer feedback review. Companies should review community sites (both managed by the company and others), customer forums and support systems for recurring questions and problems, which can give supporting data for making this information part of their personas.

Furthermore, Buley (2013) argue that if companies do not want to invest much time into creating personas, they can create proto-personas instead of traditional personas. A proto-persona is a modified version of a persona that encourage the same type of user-oriented and empathetic thinking, but with less investment in time. While traditional personas are based on firsthand user research, proto-personas are based on whatever insights the company might have, which can include secondhand research or insights from a team of people. Proto-personas are less accurate and scientific than classic personas but help companies to maintain an empathetic mindset about their users' needs (Buley, 2013). Buley (2013) explain that the research process for proto-personas include the following steps:

1. **Plan a workshop.** Companies should schedule about an hour-long workshop with a cross-functional team to help them create the proto-personas. Since creating proto-personas is a group activity, the number of employees involved in the process does matter. Companies should aim to include at least 4 employees but no more than 12. Any more than 12 people

and the group becomes somewhat unmanageable. Companies should consider including employees who have direct access to users such as call center representatives or salespeople. They will have the most valuable insights about users.

2. **Set expectations.** Once the employees are assembled, the company should explain that thinking of users as individual people helps them to design products that are user-friendly. The company should help them realize that user experience is a frame of mind and creating proto-personas will help them come into that frame of mind. However, the company should also remind them that proto-personas is an unscientific approach that will nevertheless get everybody thinking differently about the users who buy and use its products.
3. **Create teams.** The company should organize the group into teams of three people. It should advise each team to discuss what they know or feel to be true about its users, and then concentrate on one specific user type that they want to reinforce as a proto-persona.
4. **Fill in basic information for each proto-persona.** The company should give all teams a poster-sized proto-persona template and advise them to fill in basic information of a fictional but realistic person they assume to use their product. The company should inform each team to write a story for this individual, including a name, location, occupation, frustrations, and what they are doing before, during and after the use of its product.
5. **Bring the proto-personas to life.** The company should advise each team to attach photos, quotes and other forms of real-life "color" onto their posters. For this activity, the company can provide each team a set of photos or magazines and have them choose images to represent their proto-persona.
6. **Share and discuss as a group.** After the teams have completed their posters, the company should ask them to present their proto-persona. Each team should after their presentation discuss the reactions to their proto-personas. What questions did the proto-personas introduce that the company should research further? The company should discuss how they'd like to use these proto-personas in the future and if there are any specific proto-personas that are especially useful in getting the employees to think empathetically about their users' needs.

Buley (2013) argue that companies should treat proto-personas as a hypothesis. After the workshop, the company should look for opportunities to validate the information in the proto-personas against data from the field. In other words, the company should not let the process stop

here. However, Buley (2013) points out that proto-personas should not be confused with real personas. Proto-personas are helpful for creating empathy but when the opportunity to create traditional personas arises, the company should jump at it.

4.2 Research design

The research design process started with an evaluation about the different approaches for creating personas. The research design follows the framework suggested by Mulder and Yaar (2006). It was clear from the start that the proto-persona framework suggested by Buley (2013) was not going to be used in this study since it needed research participants to utilize the findings from the first research question. Meanwhile, the problem with the approach suggested by Caddick and Cable (2011) was that it would perhaps be difficult to define broad goals for different user types that would cover all the relevant parts of the case company's platform. Meanwhile, the issue with the approach suggested by Goodman et al. 2012 is that it includes multiple steps that would involve lots of details. The objective in this study is not to create detailed personas with lots of information but rather to create a basic persona that will provide insights about user goals and behaviour. Therefore, the approach suggested by Mulder and Yaar (2006) felt the easiest to execute with the purpose of the study in mind.

As suggested by Mulder and Yaar (2006). The research will start with an internal interview with the case company. Only one internal interview will be conducted since Esportal is a small sized business with only a few employees in Finland. The idea with the internal interview is to gather insights about the case company's users and define user types that might have different goals on the platform. This step should give some assumptions about what types of users should be interviewed to answer the second research question of this thesis. The next step is to do research with real users. Depth interviews will be used as the research technique to create personas. Depth interviews are easier to execute than field visits, especially during the on-going covid-19 pandemic. The interviews will be in the semi-structured format and cover topics about user goals and behaviour (Mulder and Yaar, 2006). Furthermore, the findings from the first research question will be utilized in the case study and further discussed in the case study. Therefore, the third step in the research is to conduct a survey that measures participants gaming motivations. To assess all

gaming motivations found in the literature review, the survey instrument is constructed from previous gaming motivations studies. The research design framework is shown in figure 5.

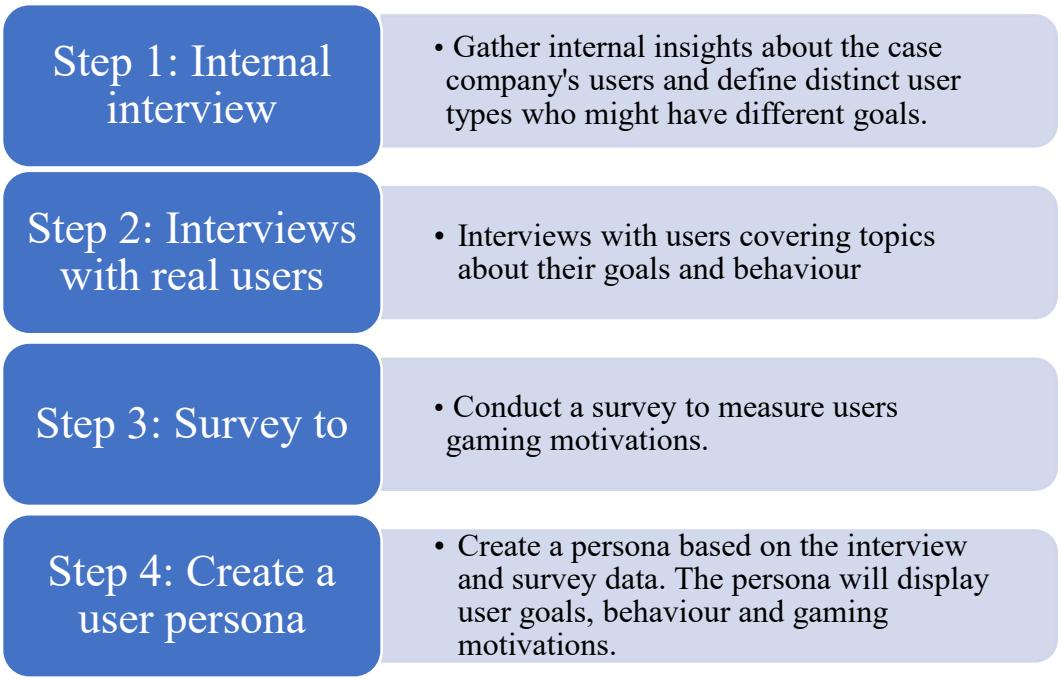

Figure 5. Research design framework.

4.2.1 Internal interview

As Mulder and Yaar (2006) suggested, the persona design process started with learning what the case company already knows about its existing users. Approximately one hour long internal interview was held with the country manager of Esportal in Finland, Felix Kaukiainen. Felix was notified beforehand that the topic of the meeting would be the case company's users. The objective with the interview was to define distinct user types that might have different goals on the platform. Based on internal data, the case company believes that the following user types exists on its platform:

- Casual gamers. Users who occasionally play regular matchmaking games and gathers. This user type wants to hang out with friends while playing casual games.
- Streamers. Users who live stream and mainly play games with their viewers. The main goal for this user type is to gain a bigger audience and thus build a bigger brand around themselves.

- Hardcore gamers. Users who actively use Esportal to compete either solo or with friends. Users who belong in this group mainly want to compete against other players and improve their Elo rank on the platform.
- Esports players. Users who are a part of a team and compete in bigger tournaments for prize money. These users want to improve individually and as a team. They do not only view gaming as a hobby but also as a possible career path.

Esportal's target users are hardcore gamers and esports players. Although streamers bring visibility and new players to the platform, hardcore gamers and esports players represent the majority of the user base while also being the most frequent users. However, esports players who have made a name for themselves can also attract new fans to the platform. The internal interview ended with a short discussion of what type of information Esportal would like to know about its users. Esportal would be especially interested to know if a user is using other esports platforms, and if so, why they use them.

4.2.2 Depth interviews

Mulder and Yaar (2006) suggested that when recruiting interview participants, the focus should be on the entire target user base and not only on one specific user group. However, the literature review and research questions of this thesis focuses specifically on esports players. Therefore, the aim in this study is to only interview esports players. The interview process started with Felix Kaukiainen, (country manager of Esportal in Finland), giving tips where to get in contact with users who represent the esports players user type. A good starting point was the active finnish player ladder on the platform which included 368 finnish players. The author tried to get in contact with esports players by sending friend invitations to the top 100 players in the ladder. However, only a few players responded, and one of them was willing to do an interview. Next, the author tried to send private invitations to active users in the Esportal Finland discord server. Out of approximately 80 invitations, 9 users showed interest for an interview. However, only 3 out of the possible 9 interviews were conducted due to several cancellations. Four interviews were conducted in total, with two of them being with esports players. However, one of the other two participants was a close resemblance to the esports player segment and the last participant was also an active user on the platform.

The interviews themselves were completed using the semi structured method. “A semi structured interview combines predefined questions like those used in structure interviews with the open ended exploration of an unstructured interview” (Wilson, 2014, p. 24). “Semi structured interviews are used when there is some knowledge about the topics or issues under investigation, but further details are still needed” (Wilson, 2014, p. 24). Basically, the objective of a semi structured interview is to gather information about a number of key topics, while also allowing some exploration when new topics or issues arise. The semi structured method was chosen because Mulder and Yaar (2006) claim that persona interviews are more useful when they include a checklist of topics instead of a strict questionnaire. Moments of insights often take place outside of the prepared questions (Mulder and Yaar, 2006).

Interviews lasted between 20-35 minutes. Three out of the four interviews were sound recorded. One interview was not sound recorded upon the interviewee's request; therefore, the author took detailed notes directly from the interviewee. Twelve questions were included in the interviews, see table 2. To answer the second research question, the author wanted specifically to know why and how esports players use an esports platform. Also, problems as well as tasks that players are not able to do on the platform to complete their goals, were central topics in the interviews. Additionally, a few questions were developed from the internal interview with the case company. The case company wanted to know whether the users are using other esports platforms, and if so, why they use them.

Table 2. Interview topics.

Interview topics
Why do you play games on an esports platform?
What brings you to Esportal in particular?
Which features on the platform do you like to use?
What is your typical process when using the platform?
Overall, how would you describe what it's like to use Esportal?
Things you wish were easier or different on the platform?
Things you’d like to do on the platform but can’t?
What would influence you to use the platform more?
Have you used any other esports platforms?
How often have you used them?
What do you like about them?
How do Esportal compare to them?

4.2.3 Survey

Previous esports studies have all measured gaming motivations through a survey (Chamarro & Lanzo, 2018; Lee & Schoendstedt, 2011; Martoncik, 2015; Weiss & Schiele, 2013). Three out of those four studies used multiple item measures while one of them used single item measures. Furthermore, two out of the four studies used a 7 point Likert scale to measure the items while the other two used a five point Likert scale.

The author developed a survey instrument for measuring the interview participants gaming motivations. The survey collected sociodemographic and game use data including age, gender, education, occupation and number of hours spent playing on Esportal and in total per week. The author decided to use the multi item approach since it has been widely used in gaming motivations studies (Banyai et al. 2018). The author chose the seven point Likert over the five point Likert scale, since it is a general rule to use as a wide Likert scale as possible (Allen and Seaman, 2007). The seven-point Likert scale have also been widely applied in gaming motivation studies. To assess all gaming motivations found in the literature review, the survey instrument was borrowed from previous gaming motivations studies. The items for competition, exploration and escapism were borrowed from Chamarro and Lanzo (2018), while the items for socialization, diversion, peer pressure and skill building for playing actual sport were borrowed from Lee and Schoendstedt (2011). The items for challenge had to be borrowed from Sherry et al. (2006) because Weiss and Schiele (2013) who found challenge to have an effect esports use, had measured it as a single item. The survey items are presented in table 2.

Table 3. Survey items.

Competition (Chamarro & Lanzo, 2018)
Winning is a big reason for me to play video games
I play to win
It is important to me to be the fastest and most skilled person playing the game
Socialization (Lee & Schoendstedt, 2011)
I play sport video games because it provides opportunities to be connected with others
I will spend time playing sport video game with others
An important reason for playing sport video games is spending time with others
I use video games as a reason to get together with others
Diversion (Lee and Schoendstedt, 2011)

Playing sport video games gives me a break from my regular routine
Video gaming provides a change of pace from what I regularly do
I play sport video games instead of other things I should be doing
Challenge (Sherry et al. 2006)
I feel proud when I master an aspect of a video game
I find it very rewarding to get to the next level
I play until I complete a level or win a game
I enjoy finding new and creative ways to work through sport video games.
Exploration (Chamarro & Lanzo, 2018)
I like to master all elements of a game
I like to figure out how the game works inside and out
I like to try everything that is possible to do in a game
Skill building for playing actual sport (Lee & Schoendstedt, 2011)
Playing sport video games helps me learn skills for real sport games
I play sport video games to build real sport game skills
Playing sport video games can be a good way of learning skills for real sport games
Escapism (Chamarro & Lanzo, 2018)
I like to do things in video games which I cannot do in real life
Video games allow me to pretend I am someone /somewhere else
Peer pressure (Lee & Schoendstedt, 2011)
Knowing many others playing sport video games makes me play more
I feel I need to play sport video games because others play
My friends force me to play sport video games

5. Results

This chapter will analyze the results from the research. It will start by providing background information of each research participant. It will then move on to analyze the interview data by extracting themes from the participants answers. Next, it will analyze the collected survey data for measuring participants gaming motivations. Lastly, this chapter will present a user persona based on the interview and survey results.

5.1 Research participants

As mentioned in the methodology section, the research included four participants. The following section will give a short introduction of each participant.

Table 4. Sociodemographic and game use data of research participants.

ID	Gender	Age	Occupation	Playing time on Esportal per week	Total playing time per week
Participant A	Man	41	No job or studies	45	50
Participant B	Man	25	Student and job holder	5	10
Participant C	Man	22	Student	3	50
Participant D	Man	34	Student	10	30

Participant A is a 41-year-old male who is currently dedicated to becoming an esports player. He wants to prove others that a person in the middle age can play video games on a high level. Participant A uses an esports platform because he wants to play competitive matches, improve as a player and view detailed statistics of his performance. He is playing esports games on Esportal up to 50 hours a week, which means that he is one of the most active users on the platform in Finland. Participant A is actively participating in player ladders, tournaments and sometimes in gathers as well. He is a member of an esports team; however, he also likes to play matches as a solo player as well.

Participant B is a 25-year-old male who is currently studying and working part time on the side of his studies. Participant B views gaming as a serious hobby rather than a career opportunity. He plays esports games on an esports platform because the environment is more competitive compared to the game application. Participant B thinks that esports platforms have better game servers, ranking system and statistics. Participant B plays esports games approximately 10 hours a week, with approximately 5 hours of that time being spent playing on Esportal. Participant B likes to play regular matchmaking, gathers and online tournaments with friends. He values social interaction and has made a lot of new friends while playing games on an esports platform, some of which he has even participated in LAN (local area network) tournaments with.

Participant C is a 22-year-old male student who views gaming as a career opportunity. He is part of a team that represent an esports company. He is using an esports platform because he wants to compete, improve as a player and play against other players who have the same goals. Participant C likes to play regular matchmaking and gathers with his friends and tournaments with his team. He also likes the solo experience because it gives him the option to socialize with unfamiliar players and make new connections in the esports domain. Participant C plays esports games around 50 hours a week, however, a lot of those hours are being spent practicing with his team on a separate gaming server outside of Esportal. He is only using Esportal about 3 hours a week because he is also playing games on another esports platform.

Participant D is a 34-year-old male student who play esports games approximately 30 hours a week. Similar to participant B, participant D views video gaming as an important hobby rather than a career opportunity. He plays esports games around 30 hours a week, with 10 of those hours being spent playing on Esportal. Participant D is using an esports platform and specifically Esportal because he wants to play competitive matches against other players in the Nordic countries. Similar to participant B, participant D value social interaction considerably when he is playing esports games. Participant D enjoys playing regular matchmaking with friends. When he is playing alone, he is mostly using the standard game application instead of Esportal.

5.2 Analysis of the interview data

To answer the second research question, it was crucial to learn why and how esports players use an esports platform. It was also important to discover problems and tasks that players are not able to do to complete their goals on the platform. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the collected interview data. Thematic analysis is one of the most commonly used methods to analyze qualitative data (Bryman et al. 2018). In thematic analysis recurring themes and patterns in the data are recognized and interpreted to create insights (Bryman et al. 2018). To perform the thematic analysis, all recorded interviews were first transcribed, and the interview notes were read through. The data were then coded to identify reoccurring themes. Coding, in the context of qualitative research, is defined as “the process by which raw data are gradually converted into usable data through the identification of themes, concepts, or ideas that have some connection with each other”

(Castleberry & Nolen, 2018, pp. 808). All recurring phrases, sentences and topics were noted and grouped into bigger themes. Finally, all grouped themes were reviewed and given names.

The following themes were identified in the thematic analysis:

- Esports players want to go into the game as quickly as possible
- Esports players want to play esports games in a competitive environment
- Esports players like to inspect their performance through advanced statistics
- Esports players wants to socialize with other players

First, the identified goals will be explained within each theme. Next, the analysis will go through how Esportal is currently satisfying these goals within each theme. What are the problems? What are the players not able to do to achieve their goals? How is Esportal doing compared to other esports platforms?

Esports players want to go into the game as quickly as possible. Esports players use an esports platform mainly because they want to play esports games. Participants wanted a simple and an easy to use esports platform where they could quickly hop into a game and compete against other players. In their typical process of using Esportal, participants download the anticheat program and create or joins a matchmaking lobby to queue for matches. Three out of the four participants used different matchmaking features but were not interested of the other features on the platform, besides statistics and leaderboards.

The findings indicated that Esportal should design its platform more around the game and matchmaking features. For example, Participant C stated “Esportal is somewhat confusing, complicated and hard to use” (Participant C, personal communication, February 24, 2021) The process of starting a match on Esportal is more confusing and time consuming compared to the other esports platform that the participants have used, in thesis called platform x. Every time a player logs in to Esportal and search for a match, they have to download the anticheat program and fill in that they are using a microphone. A few participants also mentioned that the process of creating a matchmaking lobby and inviting friends is also more difficult on Esportal compared to platform x.

Furthermore, participants mentioned that there is a lack of information about certain matchmaking features and features that disturbs users from the core, in other words, playing esports games. For

example, participant D mentioned that he did not know what the matchmaking feature "gathers" is really about because there were no clear instructions of what the feature include and how it works (Participant D, personal communication, February 19, 2021). All participants stated that they had no interest of the news, medals, levels and challenges features. Participant C even said that these features are unnecessary because it makes the platform more confusing and do not contribute to the core purpose of the platform (Participant C, personal communication, February 24, 2021).

Esports players want to play esports games in a competitive environment. Esports players use an esports platform because they want to play esports games in a competitive environment. The findings from the interviews indicated that there are a few factors that determine if an esports platform is competitive. The first one is tick rate. Tick rate simply means how fast the game server sends information to the players (Win.gg, 2020). In general, esports platforms have a higher tick rate (128 tick rate instead of 64 tick rate) than the game servers on the game application. The findings from the interviews indicated that tick rate has an important role when playing esports games. The tick rate determines if the game feels good or bad. If a server has a high tick rate, the game feels smooth and competitive, however, if a server has a low tick rate, the game feels rough and can include screen tearing and general lag effects, in other words delay in movement (Win.gg, 2020). Esports players expect the tick rate to be higher on an esports platform compared to a game application. Furthermore, esports players want a good ranking system where they can continuously play competitive matches against players who are on a similar skill level as themselves. It is also important for esports players to play in an environment where cheaters are not tolerated and where they have different options to compete against others, including tournaments, leagues, single rank matches and unranked matches with friends.

Although participants liked the matchmaking features and the high tick rate servers (128 tick rate), there were multiple elements that failed to meet their criteria of playing esports games in a competitive environment. A few of the participants mentioned that the environment on Esportal is less competitive compared to esports platform x. There were several factors that contributed to this statement. First of all, the features outside of matchmaking, specifically medals, levels and challenges were described as unnecessary and that they do not belong in a Counter-Strike: Global Offensive environment. Respondents stated that there is no incentive for them to use these features

because they use an esports platform to play games, compete and improve as players. Some of the missions, medals and challenges goes against competing and improving as a player because they encourage individual play rather than team play. In other words, to complete some of the missions or top the table in monthly challenges, a player needs to value his own performance more rather than the performance of the team. This does not fit the overall theme of Counter-Strike: Global Offensive where the focus is on strategic team play. A player who would like to complete certain type of missions, such as complete 5 aces (kill all enemy players in one round five times) may have a negative impact on the overall team performance.

However, a few of the participants stated that these types of features could work if Esportal would make some changes to them. For example, participant B and D stated that they have no interest to complete these missions because there is no cool reward for completing them (Participant B, personal communication, February 16, 2021; Participant D, personal communication, February 19, 2021). They would like to receive in-game rewards such as skins rather than earning medals on the platform. Some of the missions should also be more competitive and achievable in a competitive environment. Participant B propose that the missions and levels features could be overhauled to daily, weekly and monthly challenges, where a player completes a competitive challenge and receives a cool in game reward for completing the challenge (Participant B, personal communication, February 16, 2021). A competitive challenge could for example be winning a certain number of games or achieving a certain number of kills with a certain type of weapon.

There were also a few other features that failed to satisfy the participants goal of playing in a competitive environment. Participants mentioned their dislike towards “smurfing”. Smurfing in video gaming is when a highly skilled player creates a secondary account as a disguise to play against less skilled opponents (Inverse, 2021). Smurfing is allowed on Esportal in regular matchmaking but not in prime matchmaking. Participants expressed their frustration about this since they view smurfing as cheating. They think that smurfing should be completely banned on Esportal since it is also banned on platform x.

The findings indicated that the tolerance towards cheating is in general slightly higher on Esportal compared to platform x. Participant C stated that he has played against players who have used severe cheats but received only a 1 or 2 week ban from the platform (Participant C, personal communication, February 24, 2021). He continued by saying that “if a player would use a severe

cheat on platform x, it would most likely result in a much more severe ban" (Participant C, personal communication, February 24, 2021). Participant also reflected whether it is possible that Esportal is more tolerant towards smurfing and cheating because it has a lower number of users on its platform compared to its competitor platform x (Participant C, personal communication, February 24, 2021).

Furthermore, the findings indicated that the anticheat on Esportal is worse than the anticheat on platform x. In other words, it is easier to use cheats on Esportal. The higher tolerance for cheating and a worse anticheat, is a big reason why participant C does not take Esportal as seriously as platform x (Participant C, personal communication, February 24, 2021). Participant C stated "Esportal is a place where I can play chill games with my friends who have not played that much Counter-Strike: Global Offensive" (Participant C, personal communication, February 24, 2021). Due to a lower number of players, the competition is not as high on Esportal as it is on platform x. A few of the participants said that the ranking system itself is good on Esportal, however, a player's Elo rank and statistics have more value on platform x. Someone who is a highly ranked player on Esportal might not actually be as good of a player but someone who has a high rank on platform x is a very good player.

Esports players like to inspect their performance through advanced statistics. As mentioned previously in this chapter, esports players use an esports platform to compete and improve as players. Statistics can help players to improve because it shows their in-game strengths and weaknesses. Statistics can for example give players details of how they are performing with certain guns, how many kills or assists they are achieving per round/game as well as their KDR (kills-deaths/ratio).

Behaviour details from the interviews showed that participants actively inspect their statistics from recent matches and sometimes also statistics of all their matches on the platform. Participants do also from time to time inspect leaderboards where they can see their position in the rankings and how well they are performing compared to other players on the platform.

A few of the participants mentioned that they would like to see some improvements in regard to the statistics features on Esportal. Participant A said that it would be cool to inspect statistics of his performance on different maps in the game. He also wanted a feature that would show the player's development over time in key statistics such as KDR (kill-deaths/ratio), win % and Elo

rank (Participant A, personal communication, February 12, 2021). Furthermore, participant C wanted a feature which would show more advanced statistics of recent matches (Participant C, personal communication, February 24, 2021). Esportal is currently behind in advanced statistics compared to its competitor platform x.

As mentioned earlier, some of the participants stated that Esportal is somewhat confusing, unnecessary complicated and hard to use. The statistics features do also contribute to this statement. Statistics feature in the main menu only shows the top 10 daily and global players for matches played, KDR (kill/death ratio), overall kills as well as kills with certain weapons. Meanwhile the "placement" feature in the main menu shows the Elo ranking but also similar stats as the statistics feature such as matches played, kills and KDR. However, the placement leaderboards will not show top 10 players for each category as the statistics leaderboards does, it will show the whole player base with 100 players at a time. Meanwhile, the challenges feature in the main menu shows the top 10 monthly players of the following statistical categories: highest win streak, most matches played, MVP (most valuable player) awards in a match, KDR (kill-death ratio), Elo rank progression, HS (Headshot) ratio, average damage per round, most kills and most kills with certain type of weapon. These features could be simplified to make the platform less confusing and easier to use. Players want an easy and fast way to view their statistics and compare them to other players.

Esports players wants to socialize with other players. The last identified theme from the interviews was that esports players use an esports platform because they want to socialize with other players in the esports field. Although participants were not interested of the social features on the platform, they mentioned that an esports platform is a great environment to get to know people who have similar interests and goals as themselves, i.e., to play competitive matches and improve as players. Players like the solo experience because it provides them the opportunity to make new friends in the esports field. For example, participant B stated, "I have participated in LAN (local area network) events with several of my friends that I have met while playing on an esports platform" (Participant B, personal communication, February 16, 2021).

The findings indicated that Esportal's competitive advantage compared to platform x is the social aspect. Participants stated that Esportal is a more friendly environment compared to platform x. The matchmaking on Esportal prioritizes players from the same country or countries nearby. For

example, finnish players often play against other finnish players or sometimes Swedish players. Participants stated that playing with or against other players from the same country or countries nearby is fun. It is easier to have social interaction with unfamiliar players when they speak the same language and share the same culture. Participants also said that teammates are in general more friendly on Esportal compared to platform x. Esportal has an active support team who tries to build a culture where a use of unappropriated language and behaviour is not tolerated. Players get easily banned for toxic communication and/or behaviour. All participants gave praise to Esportal's support team.

5.3 Analysis of the survey data

As mentioned in the methodology chapter, a survey was conducted to measure participants gaming motivations. The survey instrument was borrowed from previous studies focusing on gaming motivations (Chamarro and Lanzo, 2018; Lee and Schoendstedt, 2011; Sherry et al. 2006). Gaming motivations were measured with multiple items on a seven point Likert scale. The items for each motivation were placed randomly within the survey as suggested by literature (Kim and Ross, 2006). Participant A, B and C had similar answers throughout, while Participant D were somewhat of an outlier. Answers were in general on the positive side of the scale, except for some items in the peer pressure, escapism, challenge and skill building motivations. The answers for each item are shown in figure 6.

Since the survey results were only used to determine the gaming motivations of each research participant, there was no need for any advanced statistical methods. Simply calculating the means of each participant was enough to determine which gaming motivations should be included in the user persona. The means for each participant are shown in figure 7.

In general, participants scored high on competition, diversion, socialization, exploration and challenge, with the exception of participant D who scored low on exploration. Participant A scored high on building skills for playing actual sport while participant C had somewhat of positive score, participant B a neutral score and participant D a negative score. Furthermore, participants A and B scored low on escapism and peer pressure while participant C and D also had a low score on peer pressure but a neutral score on escapism. The means of the whole survey sample is shown in figure 8.

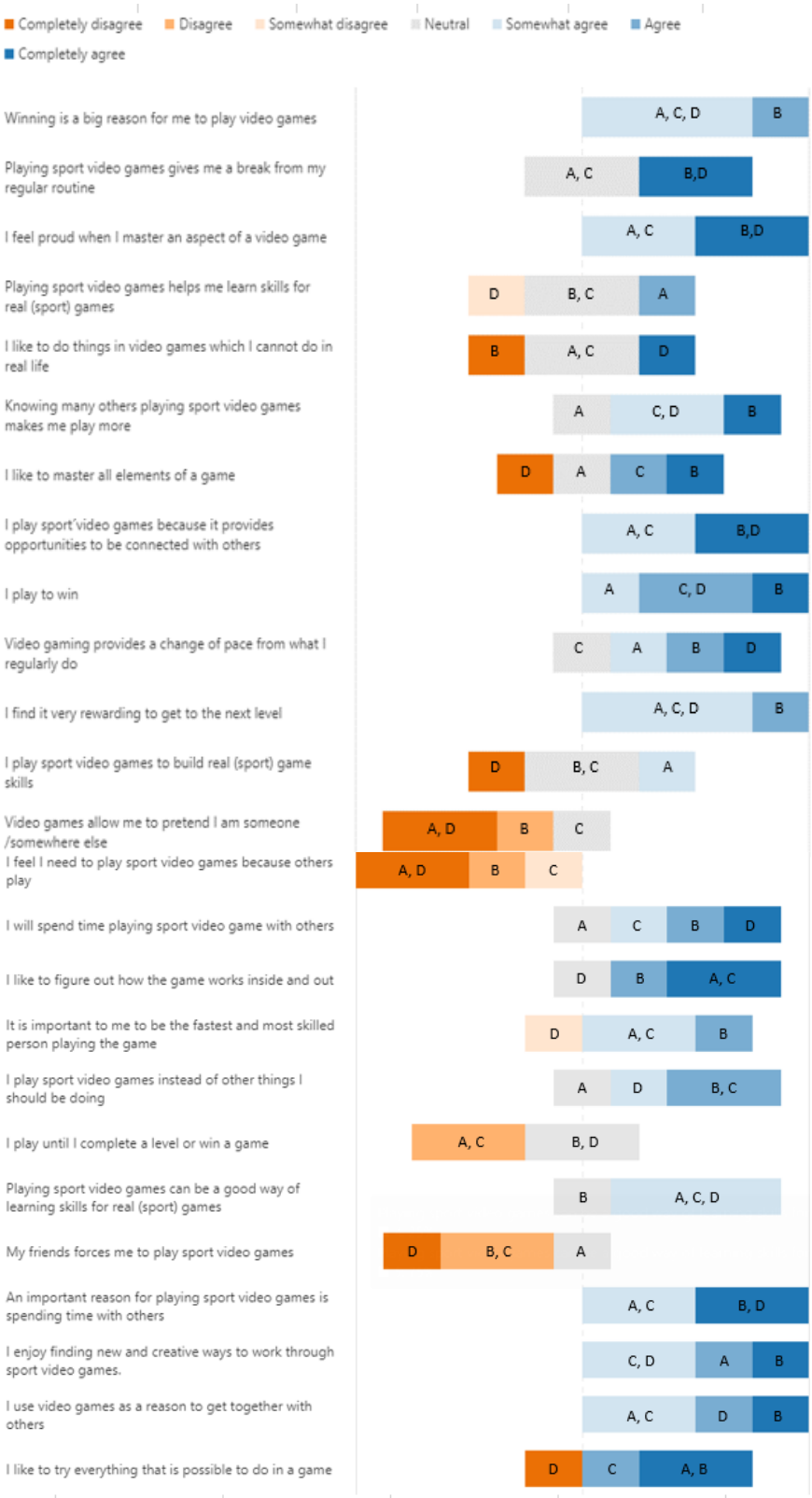
Completely disagree
Disagree
Somewhat disagree
Neutral
Somewhat agree
Agree
Completely agree
Winning is a big reason for me to play video games
A, C, D
B
Playing sport video games gives me a break from my regular routine
A, C
B,D
I feel proud when I master an aspect of a video game
A, C
B,D
Playing sport video games helps me learn skills for real (sport) games
D
B, C
A
I like to do things in video games which I cannot do in real life
B
A, C
D
Knowing many others playing sport video games makes me play more
A
C, D
B
I like to master all elements of a game
D
A
C
B
I play sport´video games because it provides opportunities to be connected with others
A, C
B,D
I play to win
A
C, D
B
Video gaming provides a change of pace from what I regularly do
C
A
B
D
I find it very rewarding to get to the next level
A, C, D
B
I play sport video games to build real (sport) game skills
D
B, C
A
Video games allow me to pretend I am someone /somewhere else
A, D
B
C
I feel I need to play sport video games because others play
A, D
B
C
I will spend time playing sport video game with others
A
C
B
D
I like to figure out how the game works inside and out
D
B
A, C
It is important to me to be the fastest and most skilled person playing the game
D
A, C
B
I play sport video games instead of other things I should be doing
A
D
B, C
I play until I complete a level or win a game
A, C
B, D
Playing sport video games can be a good way of learning skills for real (sport) games
B
A, C, D
My friends forces me to play sport video games
D
B, C
A
An important reason for playing sport video games is spending time with others
A, C
B, D
I enjoy finding new and creative ways to work through sport video games.
C, D
A
B
I use video games as a reason to get together with others
A, C
D
B
I like to try everything that is possible to do in a game
D
C
A, B

Figure 6. The answers for each item in the survey.

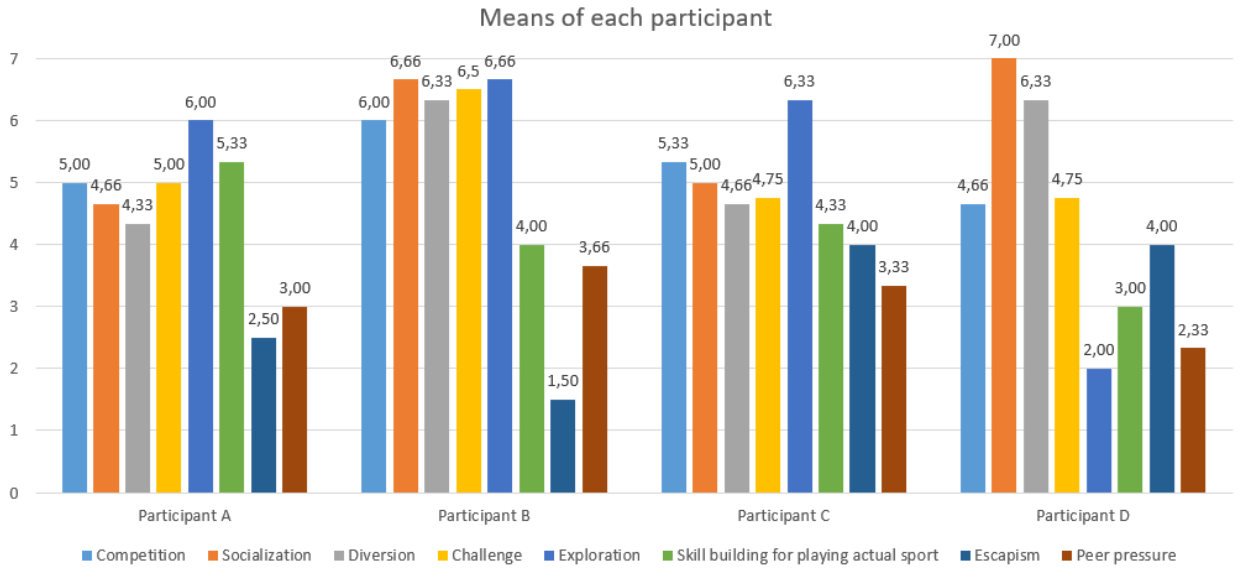

Figure 7. Means for participant A, B, C and D.

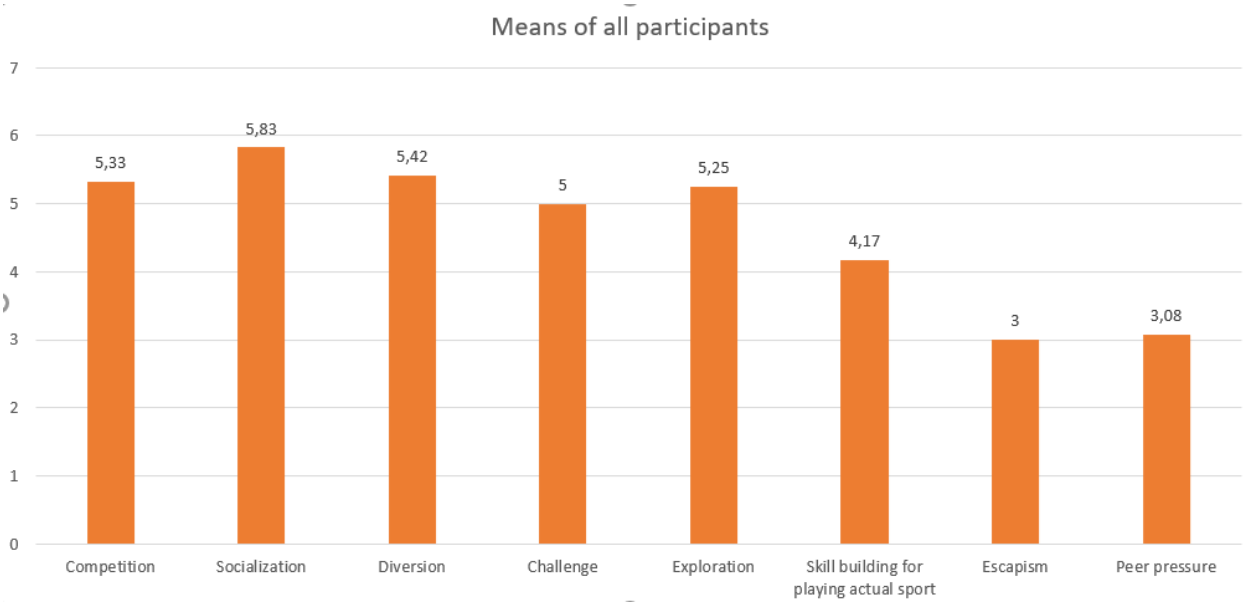

Figure 8. Means of the survey sample.

The conclusion is that competition, socialization, challenge, diversion and exploration had a positive effect on participants motivations for playing esports games, while skill building for playing actual sport had somewhat of a neutral effect and escapism as well as peer pressure had a negative effect on playing esports games.

5.4 Presenting the user persona

A user persona was created from the interview and survey results. As mentioned in the literature, it is a good idea to base a persona on one specific participant and enrich it with the findings from others (Caddick and Cable, 2012). The interview and survey results showed that participant A, B and C had similar goals, behaviour, and gaming motivations. Out of those three, participant C was be the best option to serve as a base for the persona. Although participant C only used Esportal about 3 hours a week, the interview with him gave the most insights. Also, the age of participant C was also suitable since esports players are in general young adults.

The online tool Xtensio was used to create the persona (Xtensio, 2021). The persona creation process started with adding personal information given by participant C. However, the name and location were changed to protect the identity of participant C. After personal information had been defined, a photo of a real user, doing a relevant task in a real environment was attached onto the persona (Caddick and Cable, 2011). After the photo had been added, the personas goals and behaviour were defined based on the identified themes in the interviews. As suggested by Mulder and Yaar (2006) the author used bullet points to create less effort for the reader. Next, the identified gaming motivations were added onto the persona based on the survey data. After the attributes had been defined, a profile story was written that gave background information about the persona and tied the attributes together (Goodman et al. 2012) Lastly, a quote was added based on the interview with participant C. The following quote: “I want to compete, improve as a player and play against others who have the same goals as I do” felt the most striking and described the personas character really well. The user persona named David is shown in figure 9.

David serves as a base for the case company to develop a journey map. The case company can use the gamer persona’s journey map presented in the literature review, as a base to develop a journey map for David. The gamer journey map example showed the activities that hardcore gamers perform from researching to purchasing and from playing to sharing experiences about a video game. Instead of mapping out the process of buying a video game, the case company should of course map out David’s process of joining an esports platform. Starting from the “awareness” phase, the case company could research what type of channels David uses to acquire information about different esports platforms. The case company should then research David’s needs and priorities when he is evaluating between different esports platforms. In the “play” phase, the case

company should not only focus on what David is doing on the platform but also consider other brand related channels that affect David's experience with the company. Finally, in the "share" phase, the case company could examine the ways in which David can and want to share content related to the platform. This is essential for gaining more visibility and users.

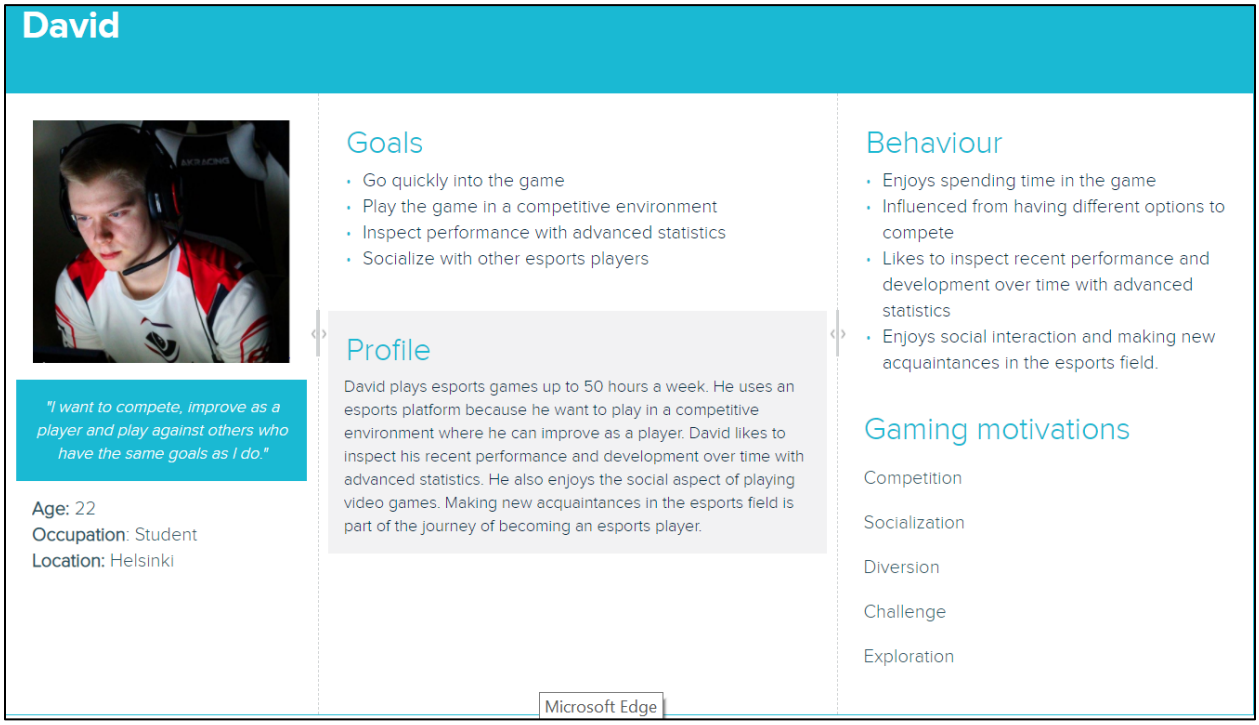

Figure 9. User persona named David.

6. Discussion

The concluding chapter discusses the theoretical and practical contributions of this study. It then goes through the limitations of the study and finally proposes ideas for future research in the field.

6.1 Theoretical and practical contributions

This thesis research was completed through a literature review and case study. The research questions were defined as follows:

RQ 1: Why do esports players play esports games?

RQ 2: What do esports players want to do on an esports platform?

A literature review of esports players provided the base for the first research question. Studies which had focused on the motivations of esports players, found that the following motivational factors does affect esports consumption: competition, socialization, exploration, challenge, diversion, escapism, peer pressure and skill building for playing real sport.

The results of this study are in many ways in consistent with the results of previous research. As previous studies, this study found that competition and socialization are important motivational factors for playing esports games. However, it was somewhat of surprise that socialization had the highest mean score by a clear margin while competition had the third highest mean score. However, looking at the mean score for each participant, it was participant B and D who did not represent the esports player user type, who scored remarkably high on socialization. Furthermore, participant D who were the least competitive player out of the four participants, scored lower on competition and thus lowered the total mean score for competition. Participant A and C who represented the esports player segment, had both a higher score mean score on competition than socialization. Therefore, it is possible that if all participants would have represented the esports player user type, competition would've had a higher mean score than socialization.

Furthermore, the survey data showed that diversion had the second highest mean score. This was consistent with the findings of Martoncik (2015) but not in line with the findings of Lee and Schoendstedt (2011) who found that diversion does not have an effect on esports consumption. However, it is important to point out that similar to socialization, it was again participant B and D who scored very high on diversion, while participant A and C had only a slightly positive score. On the other hand, participant A and C scored really high on exploration while participant D had a low score on exploration. Exploration had the third highest mean score and did affect esports consumption. This is consistent with the findings of Chamarro and Lanzo (2018) which is before this the only study that has measured exploration on esports players.

Furthermore, challenge had the fifth highest mean score, including a positive score for all participants. This is line with the results of Weiss and Schiele (2013) which was before this study the only study that has measured challenge on esports players. However, it is relevant to point out that Weiss and Schiele (2013) used a single item scale instead of a multi item scale for measuring the motivational factors. Therefore, the items for challenge were borrowed from Sherry et al.

(2006) who in their study found challenge to be the highest motivating factor for playing video games.

The motivation for skill building for playing real sport, received mixed answers. Participant A had a fairly high score, participant B a neutral score, participant C a slightly positive score and participant D a negative score. The mean score for skill building for playing actual sport was slightly above neutral; therefore, it was determined to not have a clear effect on participants motivations for playing esports games. However, it is again relevant to point out that participant A and C who were the most competitive players, had a higher mean score than the other two participants. It is also relevant to point out that Lee and Schoendstedt (2011) who found it to affect esports consumption, collected their data from students in sport management related courses. In this study, it was not mandatory to have a background in traditional sports.

Both escapism and peer pressure had a negative score and thus did not have an effect on esports consumption. In regard to escapism, the result is consistent with Lee and Schoendstedt (2011) and Chamarro and Lanzo (2018) but not in line with Weiss and Schiele (2013). However, it is again important to point out that Weiss and Schiele (2013) who found escapism to affect esports consumption used a single item scale instead of a multi item scale to measure motivational factors. Therefore, it is possible that in Weiss and Schiele's (2013) study, participants had a different interpretation of what escapism means in video gaming. Finally, in regard to peer pressure, the result is not consistent with Lee and Schoendstedt (2011) who found it to affect esports consumption.

The findings from the first research question provided the base for the second research question. While past research has examined the transformation of becoming an esports player and the characteristics of esports players, this study examines what esports players want to do on an esports platform. By measuring the research participants gaming motivations and examining their goals and behaviour, this study found that gaming motivations have a connection to what esports players want to do on an esports platform. Previous literature has shown that competition is an essential motivational factor for playing esports games (Chamarro and Lanzo, 2018; Lee and Schoendstedt, 2011; Weiss and Schiele, 2013), this study emphasizes that it is also an important motivational factor for using an esports platform. Esports players use an esports platform instead of a game

application because they want to play the game in a more competitive environment. This study highlights that there are multiple factors that affect whether an esports platform is competitive or not. Interviews with esports players revealed that the following factors increase the feeling of competition: high game server performance, non-cheating environment, different forms of competition and a ranking system that allow players to continuously play against others who are on a similar skill level as themselves.

In addition to competition, literature has shown that socialization is an essential factor for playing esports games (Chamarro and Lanzo, 2018; Martoncik, 2015). This study emphasizes that social interaction is also an important motivational factor on an esports platform. Esports players do not only use an esports platform to compete but also to socialize with players who have similar goals as themselves. Esports players like to play with or against players from the same country or countries nearby because it is fun and easy for them to have social interaction with players who speak the same language and share the same culture. Esports players do also a value a friendly environment where bad of use language and behaviour are not tolerated.

Literature has suggested that one of the main elements that attracts esports players to pursue a career in esports, is the need of self-improvement (Seo, 2016). This study contributes to this finding by showing that esports players want to inspect their recent performance and development over time through advanced statistics. Esports players are interested to know their weaknesses and strengths in the game. They want to know how they are doing compared to others on the platform and whether they are improving or not. This is important information for esports players since literature has suggested that in order to have a successful performance an esports player need to be capable of developing individually and as a team (Himmelstein et al. 2015, as cited in Banyai et al. 2018). Statistics can help players to analyze both individual and team performance.

This study showed that esports players want a simple and an easy to use platform where they can easily and quickly hop into the game. It seems that an esports platform act similar to a game application in a sense. When a player opens a game application they want to play the game and barely use the features outside the game. In this study, many of the features that were not directly tied to the game such as challenges and missions, were perceived as confusing and unnecessary by the participants. However, a few of the participants mentioned that they would perhaps be interested to complete challenges and missions on an esports platform if they would receive a cool

in game reward for doing it. Receiving a medal on the platform does not influence players to complete missions because they spend their time in the game and not on the platform.

This study emphasizes that gaming motivations have an important role on an esports platform because as mentioned, players spend almost all their time in the game. Therefore, a key task for an esports platform is to explore how it can improve the gaming experience so that it satisfies the players gaming motivations. This study showed some examples of how an esports platform can do this in practice. For example, the players motivation for competition was satisfied by playing on a high performance game server, in a non-cheating environment with and against players who were on a similar skill level as themselves. Meanwhile, the players motivation for socialization was satisfied by playing with players from the same country or countries nearby. It is fun and easy for esports players to have social interaction with players who speak the same language and share the same culture. These examples show that the key task for esports platforms going forward is to examine the players gaming motivations and how they can be satisfied in the game.

6.2 Limitations

This study was limited to four research participants: participant A, B, C and D. This is a slightly small number considering Mulder and Yaar (2006) recommend interviewing at least 5 users per each user type. The internal interview showed that the case company has categorized its users into four user types: casual gamers, streamers, hardcore gamers and esports players. Since the literature review and research questions of this thesis were about esports players, the aim in the case study was to interview users who represents the esports player user type. However, since there were difficulties in finding research participants, only 2 out of the 4 participants could be categorized as esports players. Therefore, a limitation in this study is not only a small number of participants but also that multiple user types participated in the research.

Another limitation is regarding the survey instrument that was used to measure participants gaming motivations. The survey instrument was developed from multiple studies, while similar studies in the studies past have mostly used one study as a base for developing their survey instrument. Therefore, the approach used in this study may have not been the most optimal and thus may have slightly impacted the participants answers. For example, a few of the items for challenge and exploration were similar to each other. “I feel proud when I master an aspect of a video game”

were similar to “I like to master all elements of a game” and “I like to figure out how the game works inside and out” were similar to “I enjoy finding new and creative ways to work through sport video games”. The survey items were borrowed from studies published in 2006 and 2018. Therefore, it is possible that the understanding of some motivational factors in regard to gaming, have changed or improved during this time.

Also, other limitations about the survey are the number of respondents and the statistical analysis. This survey sample consisted of 4 respondents, while similar studies in the past have consisted of at least 162 respondents. Since the objective with the survey was to understand the gaming motivations of each respondent, only descriptive statistics was used to analyze the respondents’ answers. However, similar studies in the past have also used multiple linear regression to analyze the relationship between gaming time and motivations to determine which gaming motivations does have an effect esports consumption.

Finally, it is important to outline the potential of the researcher’s bias in the research. The researcher has a personal interest in the field and does regularly play esports games on an esports platform. Although the researcher has done his best to be as unbiased as possible when collecting, transcribing and coding the data, it is possible that his presence as an interviewer but also as a gamer, might have impacted the respondent’s behaviour in some way. For example, in addition to asking semi-structured questions, the researcher sometimes explained questions, asked additional questions and gave examples. Therefore, the researcher may have impacted the amount of which certain topics were discussed compared to others.

6.3 Future research

To begin with, future studies could improve the understanding of the role that esports platforms have in the esports industry. The esports ecosystem presented by Scholz (2020) does not consider esports platforms as an independent entity. Scholz (2020) categorized the esports industry into three sections: core, primary and secondary stakeholders. The core stakeholder are the players. Primary stakeholders are professional players, professional teams, game developers and tournament organizers. Secondary stakeholders are providers, shareholders, sponsors and investors. The question that arises from this study is where do esports platforms belong in the

esports ecosystem? Are they currently being viewed as a tournament organizer or perhaps as an esports provider? Future research could focus on studying whether esports platforms are a primary or secondary stakeholder and if they should they be considered as an independent entity in the esports ecosystem.

This study reviewed literature about the process of becoming an esports player, however, this literature was not directly utilized in the case study. Therefore, future studies could research how esports platforms are involved in the player's process of becoming an esports player. The transformation models presented by Kim and Thomas (2015) and Seo (2016) could be utilized in a case study to observe what type of role esports platforms have for esports players throughout different stages of their playing career. In which stage do esports players start using an esports platform? How do they use esports platforms through different stages? how do esports platforms help them to gain new connections in the esports field and attention from professional esports teams and organizations?

This study focused only on what competitive players want to do on an esports platform. Therefore, future studies could examine what other types of users want to do on an esports platform. It would be interesting to know how casual gamers and streamers use an esports platform compared to esports players. For example, casual gamers might be interested in completing missions and earning medals on the platform. Streamers might perhaps be interested in using social features on the platform. To have a complete understanding of what the users want to do on an esports platform, different user types must be studied.

This study found some correlations between esports players gaming motivations and their goals and behaviour on an esports platform. Future studies could explore these connections on a broader scale. This study only included motivational factors that was determined in the literature to have an effect on esports consumption. Future research could also include other motivational factors in their studies. They could also examine the gaming motivations of different user types on an esports platform. Future research could on a larger scale study how players with different gaming motivations interact with an esports platform and see if there are any connection between gaming motivations and what they want to do on an esports platform. Future studies could also research how gaming motivations can be satisfied in the game and how gaming motivations influence players behaviour in the game.

This thesis included a short literature review about journey maps. The literature showed that journey maps are often created from personas. However, this study only included a persona and not a journey map. Therefore, future research may study a personas journey with an esports platform. How does the process of joining an esports platform look like? What type of touchpoints do the personas have? What types of needs? Mapping the personas journey with the brand of an esports platform, will give a better understanding of how esports platforms should manage other brand related channels to gain more users.

Swedish summary

Introduktion

E-sport (elektronisk sport) är en av de snabbaste växande industrierna i världen (Li, 2017). Den globala marknadsrapporten för e-sport år 2020 visade att de globala inkomsterna för e-sportindustrin uppgick till 1,1 miljarder dollar (Newzoo, 2020). En betydelsefull del av denna tillväxt sker tack vare e-sportplattformarna som gör det möjligt för e-sportspelare att spela emot andra e-sportspelare via nätet. Tävlingar på e-sportplattformar sker i olika format såsom enskilda matcher, turneringar eller ligor (Gamebattles, 2020). E-sportplattformar är viktiga för e-sportindustrin eftersom de förbinder människor över hela världen med intresse att spela videospel i en tävlingsinriktad miljö. Man kan säga att e-sportplattformarna fungerar som en portal för e-sportindustrin. De bygger nya och stärker befintliga gemenskaper samt hjälper amatörspelare att utvecklas till professionella spelare. Målet för varje företag som upprätthåller en e-sportplattform är att hämta in nya spelare och hålla dem aktiva på sin plattform. För att lyckas med detta, måste företagen förstå vad användarna vill göra på sin plattform.

Denna avhandling genomförs som en fallstudie av e-sportplattformen Esportal. Syftet med denna avhandling är att få en djupare förståelse av fallföretagets användare genom att undersöka varför de spelar e-sportspel och vad de vill göra på en e-sportplattform. För att nå detta syfte, granskas i litteraturgenomgången litteratur om e-sport, e-sportspelare och användarupplevelseverktygen personas samt journey maps. Resultaten från litteraturdelen utnyttjas i fallstudien där en persona skapas åt fallföretaget. Denna persona kommer att fungera som en bas åt fallföretaget för att vidareutveckla en journey map. Forskningsfrågorna för denna avhandling är följande:

1. Varför spelar e-sportspelare e-sportspel?
2. Vad vill e-sport spelare göra på en e-sportplattform?

Teoretisk bakgrund

E-sport är unikt jämfört med alla andra sporter. I traditionella sporter såsom fotboll och hockey sker alla aktiviteter i den verkliga världen medan i e-sport sker alla aktiviteter i en virtuell värld, dvs. i en elektronisk miljö (Jenny et al. 2016). Enligt Scholz (2020, s. 4) är ”e-sportindustrin drivs av innovationer och teknologier, men också av kreativa människor som försöker utnyttja teknologier i den största möjliga utsträckningen”. Teknologier och innovationer gör det möjligt för e-sportspelare att spela emot varandra i organiserade e-sporttävlingar. E-sportspelare är kärnan i e-sportindustrin, utan dem skulle inte e-sporttävlingar existera.

Banyai et al. (2018) förklarar att en e-sportspelare är en professionell spelare som spelar för att tävla och definierar spelande som sitt jobb. Seo (2016) kom fram till att e-sportspelare vill göra en karriär inom e-sport på grund av deras behov för självförbättring, behärskning av färdigheter och naturen av rättvisa och ömsesidig respekt i LAN (lokala nätverk) turneringar. Studier som undersökte e-sportspelarnas motivationsfaktorer uppfann att följande faktorer har en inverkan på konsumtionen av e-sport: tävling, social interaktion, utmaning, omläggning, utforskning, grupptryck, verklighetsflykt och kompetensbyggande för att spela verklig sport (Lee & Schoendstedt, 2011, Weiss & Schiele, 2013; Martoncik, 2015; Chamarro & Lanzo, 2018).

En persona är en fiktiv karaktär som representerar en grupp av användare som använder en produkt eller tjänst på ett liknande sätt (Stickdorn et al. 2018). En persona görs oftast så verklig som möjlig för att förstärka känslan av att den representerar en verklig person (Buley, 2013). En persona innehåller vanligtvis demografiska detaljer samt en beskrivning av användarnas mål och beteende (Caddick & Cable, 2012). Fördelen med att använda personas är att företaget kan prata specifikt om vilka typer av användare de vill nå istället för att prata om sina användare som en helhet.

Journey maps skapas oftast ur en persona (Micheaux & Bosio, 2018). En journey map visualiserar kundens upplevelse av en produkt, tjänst eller varumärke (Stickdorn et al. 2018). Kundupplevelsen är en dynamisk process som är indelad i tre faser: förköp, köp och efterköp. Under dessa faser har kunden både indirekta och direkta interaktioner med företaget. Målet med en journey map är inte

bara att visualisera alla interaktioner mellan kunden och företaget utan även förstå kundens behov under dessa interaktioner (Howard, 2010).

Metod

I fallstudien skapas en persona som kommer att fungera som en bas åt fallföretaget för att vidareutveckla en journey map. Den praktiska handboken för att skapa personas till webben används som metod för att skapa en persona åt fallföretaget (Mulder and Yaar, 2006). Det första steget i metoden inkluderar en intern intervju med fallföretaget. Syftet med den interna intervjun är att samla interna insikter om fallföretagets användare. Följande steg är på basen av interna insikter, skapa teoretiska användartyper som existerar på fallföretagets plattform.

Följande användartyper teoretiserades på basen av interna insikter:

Fritidsspelare. Användare som besöker plattformen nu och då och spelar med sina kompisar.

Streamers. Användare som direktsänder på nätet medan de spelar med sina tittare.

Hardcore spelare. Användare som tävlar emot andra spelare och försöker förbättra sin rank på plattformen.

E-sportspelare. Användare som tävlar i större e-sport turneringar och ser spelande som en karriärmöjlighet.

Det tredje steget i metoden inkluderar semi-strukturerade intervjuer med e-sportspelare. Intervjuerna fokuserar på e-sportspelarnas mål och beteende på en e-sportplattform. Fallstudien fokuserar endast på användartypen e-sportspelare eftersom avhandlingens litteraturdel och forskningsfrågor handlar specifikt om e-sportspelare.

Det sista steget i metoden är en enkätundersökning om intervjudeltagarnas motivationsfaktorer. Enkätinstrumentet är uppbyggt från tidigare studier (Kim & Ross, 2006; Lee and Schoendstedt, 2011; Chamarro & Lanzo, 2018). Enkätinstrumentet innehåller olika påståenden för alla faktorer som visades i teoridelen ha en inverkan på konsumtionen av e-sport. Intervjudeltagarna svarar på dessa påståenden på en Likert skala med sju skalsteg.

Resultat

Fallstudien bestod av fyra intervjuer och enkätsvar. Intervjufrågorna fokuserade på e-sportspelarnas mål och beteende på en e-sportplattform. Tematisk analys användes som metod för att analysera intervjusvaren. I en tematisk analys grupperas liknande idéer, meningar och ord i större teman (Bryman et al. 2018). Följande teman utvecklades i den tematiska analysen:

E-sportspelare vill spendera sin tid i spelet och inte på plattformen. E-sportspelare använder en e-sportplattform för att spela e-sportspel och inte för att spendera tid på plattformen. Efter att e-sportspelarna öppnat och loggat in på en e-sportplattform, ansluter de sig till en spellobby för att söka efter en match och komma in i spelet. E-sportspelare önskar att denna process ska vara så enkel och snabb som möjlig.

E-sportspelare vill spela e-sportspel i en tävlingsinriktad omgivning. E-sportspelare gillar att använda en e-sportplattform där de kan tävla emot andra e-sportspelare på olika sätt. Detta kan betyda enskilda matcher, turneringar och ligor. E-sportspelare vill spela emot spelare som är på samma nivå som dem själva eftersom de anser att det är spännande att spela jämna matcher. Det är även viktigt för e-sportspelare att en e-sportplattform inte tolererar fusk och att den även har verktyg för att stoppa detta.

E-sportspelare gillar att kolla avancerad statistik över deras prestationer. E-sportspelare granskar aktivt avancerad statistik över sina senaste matcher och ibland även över alla sina matcher på plattformen. Det är viktigt för e-sportspelare att kunna studera sin utveckling över tid och jämföra sin statistik med andra e-sportspelare. Statistik berättar e-sportspelarnas styrkor och svagheter i spelet.

E-sportspelare gillar att ha social interaktion med andra e-sportspelare. E-sportspelare anser att en e-sportplattform är en bra omgivning för att lära känna andra spelare som har motsvarande mål och värderingar som dem själva. En av intervjudeltagarna nämnde att han träffat de flesta av sina spelkompisar på en e-sportplattform. Fallföretagets största konkurrensfördel jämfört med andra e-sportplattformar är den sociala aspekten. På fallföretagets plattform kan e-sportspelare spela emot spelare från samma land eller länder i närheten. E-sportspelare gillar detta eftersom det är enklare att ha social interaktion med spelare som pratar samma språk.

Efter intervjun, svarade deltagarna på en enkät. Enkäten mätte deltagarnas spelmotivationer på en Likert skala med sju skalsteg. Enkätinstrumentet var uppbyggt från tidigare studier som innehöll

olika påståenden för faktorer som visades i teoridelen ha en inverkan på konsumtionen av e-sport. Enkätresultaten analyserades genom att beräkna medeltalet för påståenden inom samma faktor. I beräkningen framkom det att följande faktorer har en inverkan på deltagarnas konsumtion av e-sport: tävling, social interaktion, utmaning, utforskning och omläggning.

En persona med namnet David skapades på basen av intervju och enkätresultaten. David svarade både på den första och andra forskningsfrågan genom att visa e-sportspelarnas motivationsfaktorer samt mål och beteende på en e-sportplattform. Fallföretaget kan använda David som en bas för att vidareutveckla en journey map.

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