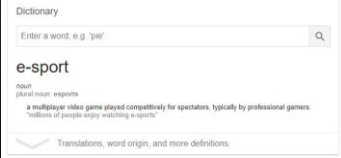


THE RISE OF ESPORTS

WHEN SUBCULTURE BECOMES CULTURE

WHAT IS ESPORTS?



WHAT IS ESPORTS?

- Multiplayer computer games played professionally, for prize money, salaries and sponsorships
- Usually involve small teams or individuals competing in games that require extreme reflexes, precision, speed and co-ordination with others
- Increasingly popular as a spectator sport

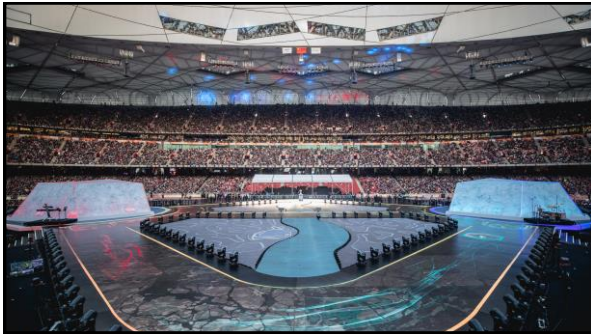


HOW IS THIS RELEVANT?

- Viewership and participation is growing at a rate of 40-70% per year, and is already high. 14% of young Americans consider themselves eSports fans
- It is being backed by major brands: Coca Cola, Samsung, LG, McDonalds
- Hundreds of millions of dollars in prize money, sponsorships etc
- eSports is no longer a youth subculture, it is a part of youth culture – and there are a whole lot of potential impacts

EXAMPLE: LEAGUE OF LEGENDS

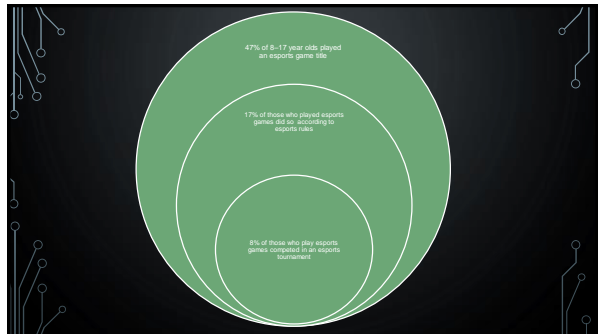
- \$5,000,000 USD prize pool (and this is small compared to DOTA2s 2017 prize pool of \$25 million)
- Tickets to the grand finals in Beijing's National Arena (80,000 seats) sold out in seconds
- One of the star players, Lee 'Faker' Sang Hyeok on a salary of over \$2.5 million USD
- 27 million daily players, 65 million monthly players



IN AUSTRALIA

- 15% of Australians have watched eSports, 44% are aware of what it is.
- 40% of those aged 18-24 have watched, or expressed an interest in watching eSports in the future
- 79% of those who have watched are interested in doing so again
- Over half of those who watch eSports, watch at least once a month

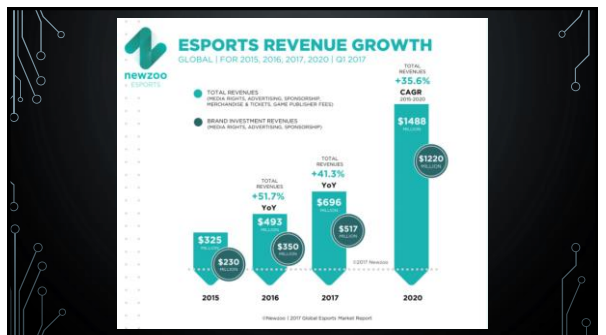
Source: Just a game? Understanding the existing and future eSports market in Australia – YouGov Reports



WORLDWIDE VIEWERSHIP

- Globally, people watch an average of 1.35 hours of sports online per week, and 1.03 hours of eSports
- For young men (18-25) this becomes 1.67 hours of sports and 1.95 hours of eSports
- For young women, 0.74 hours of sports and 0.82 hours of eSports
- For young men and women, eSports has already overtaken traditional sports as a passion and interest. This is no longer subculture, this is *mainstream*

Source: The State of Online Video 2017, Limelight Networks



WHY IT MATTERS

- Any new phenomenon creates opportunities as well as potential issues
- Many of the issues that exist around traditional sports also exist around eSports – but are not as well acknowledged or addressed
- Young people are heavily involved in this culture, while adults are still largely unaware of the potential issues and may not well placed to help young people navigate these:
 - Exploitation of young people
 - Unrealistic expectations and aspirations
 - Potential gaming addiction issues
 - Drug use
 - Physical and mental health problems
 - Gambling in parallel to eSports

WHAT'S THE APPEAL

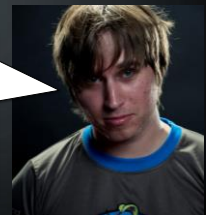
- Games are fast-paced, highly competitive, challenging and stimulating
- They give direct feedback on your performance, giving a sense of accomplishment and potency
- Players who perform well are celebrated and seen as 'stars'
- There is a strong social element and sense of being 'part of a team'
- There's a lot of money on the line




EXPLOITATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE

- Largely unregulated industry due to how new it is, and lack of oversight
- Players are pushed to the limit, often expected to work 10-12 hours per day, 7 days per week for months at a time
- Many younger players signed on exploitative contracts – end up not being paid, or are paid unlivable wages
- Has led to suicide attempts, serious depression and addiction problems

"You never know who is out there and what their objectives are. If you look at Quantic Gaming, for example: The owner promised quite a bit to his players, capitalized on it, they got extremely famous, he didn't pay out, and then they just kind of disappeared."




Brandon "puCK" Quai
Professional Starcraft II player



"The problem itself is not for the mature players, but more for the new, ambitious guys that come in every year and are willing to sacrifice everything to make it pro. Often, these young players end up stuck with contracts that are almost abusive."

Enrique "xPeke" Cedeno Martinez
Professional LoL player



"The way I see it organisations just, they exploit young people, because we are young people. We don't have the head for business, our minds are in DotA (a computer game). What organisations do is they comfort players telling them about stability".

Kuro "Kuroky" Takhasomi
Professional DOTA 2 player

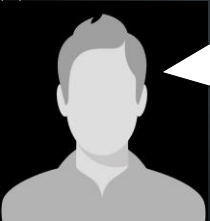
UNREALISTIC ASPIRATIONS

- 27 million people play League of Legends daily
- At best, about 400 players in the world make a livable earning from playing the game professionally
- To succeed, you need to be in the top 0.00148% of players.
- Even including all the people who make money as coaches, analysts, streamers, casters etc, far less than 1% of gamers can make money this way
- Careers are short (often less than 5 years), and trends come and go quickly
- End result: You'd better be really good, or have a backup plan...



"A lot of pro players will retire probably around 25. Older players get dethroned by younger players, because they take the stuff they do and then do it better."

Jesse "RuFF" Hall
Professional Starcraft II player



"We used to spend more than 10 hours per day on training. Four to five team members stayed in a small rented apartment. Sometimes the investor refuse to pay our salaries on time. There was one time that I only had 2 RMB left in my pocket. I had to borrow money from my friends to buy food. The lifespan of a pro player is five to six years. If you fail to make it to the top, you will be in big trouble after retirement. Nobody in the e-sports industry would offer good jobs to average players"

Zhong "Alex" Wei
Former professional Starcraft player


PROBLEMATIC AND ADDICTIVE GAMING

- Depending on the criteria used, studies suggest that around 4-5% of young people game at a level that is considered addictive, 8% at a problematic level
- If people see their heavy involvement in gaming as working towards playing professionally, they are less likely to reflect on how it is affecting their life
- As a result, some young people don't recognise the negative impacts that gaming might be having due to seeing it as investment in a future career
- Young people need help to reflect on the *function* of their gaming, and the *impact* of their gaming



"I'll play games my whole life. I think I can never stop."

Liu "PDD" Mo
Professional League of Legends player



"These games were my safety net; my home-away-from-home. And for ten years I was massively addicted. Games were more than just a place to pass the time. They were life. And thus, everything that didn't involve gaming got pushed to the back burner."

Ben "GatoRed" Brewer
Former Professional Starcraft II player

DRUG USE

- Extremely prevalent use of stimulants – particularly amphetamines including Adderall
- At many tournaments, amphetamines have become normal and are available cheaply
- Players can develop habits and addictions that last far beyond their gaming careers
- Coupled with the stresses and physical/emotional damage caused by an intense career, this can lead to long-term problems

Interviewer: Everyone does Adderall at ESEA LAN [eSports Entertainment Association League events] right?

Friesen: Yeah.

Interviewer: Just throwing that out there for the fans, that's how you get good.

Friesen: And you can hear it in the comms right? That's what was so funny to me. Like [people saying] "shit comms [are] so hectic." So yeah that might clear up some of the questions of why it was like that.



Kory "SEMPHIS" Friesen
Professional CS:GO player

"It's very, very, very widespread," he says. "I was friends with most of the top pro Halo players and most of them took Adderall. In amateur play it's huge too." Steven claims that pills are regularly sold at professional tournaments. "People manage to get an Adderall prescription then they either take the drug themselves or sell it on. I've seen people sell it at tournaments for anything from \$10 to \$40 a pill."

Interview with former professional Halo player
<https://www.eurogamer.net/articles/2015-04-08-winners-might-use-drugs>

PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS

- Carpal tunnel
- Sleep deprivation, fatigue, exhaustion
- Depression, anxiety, addiction issues

"Injuries in esports are going to become an economic burden in the near future. Medical treatment is costly. But, health benefits in player contracts isn't common. Moreover, there is no union or association to deal with this aspect of player protection, and teams with dedicated medical staff remain a vain wish."

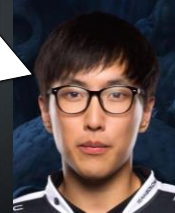


Lee "Flash" Young Ho
Professional Starcraft II Player

<https://esportsobserver.com/esports-needs-face-injury-problem/>

"It just seems so bad. It's such a bad life to scrim 10-12 hours a day for 10 months, 11 months in a row, and then at the end of it... 99 percent of pro players don't win. So at the end of it, to feel empty and disappointed."

"I haven't been to the doctor since I was a teenager, I've never had a physical or checkup because there was no time."



Yilong "Doublelift" Peng
Professional LoL player

"If you don't perform you die. There's no other way out of it; you have to go as fast and as hard as you can for as long as you can. I think that the entire ecosystem of eSports has been set up to grind players into the ground, and we need to address this systemically to solve it."



Devin Nash
CEO of Counter Logic Gaming

GAMBLING

- Players bet using cash, or 'skins' (in-game items) that can be exchanged for real money, sometimes worth multiple thousands of dollars
- As a result, online gambling on eSports is accessible to anyone, of any age
- Estimates of around \$3 billion changed hands on eSports betting in 2017
- eSports teams increasingly being sponsored by gambling companies
- Gambling promoted as fun, a way to be more involved, normalised
- End result: The same problems that arise around sports betting are replicated in eSports



Ian Smith
eSports Integrity Commissioner

"It's entirely possible that there's quite a number of young men currently in fairly high profile athlete roles who have no idea that gambling occurs on what they're doing, what that means, if they were to be approached what that might look like, and what to do about it if it happens. Education within the esports context is enormously important."

WHAT'S IMPORTANT FOR US

1. We need to understand and identify young people who might be at risk:
 - Typically young men
 - Who often are already heavily into gaming
 - Who can use aspirations of playing/streaming professionally as a way to justify excessive use
 - Who often have not looked closely at the realities of gaming professionally
2. And then find ways to help them by helping them to explore their way of engaging with gaming and eSports

TAKE-AWAY MESSAGES

- As parents, and as adults working with young people, we need to understand the world that they are growing up within
- To help young people avoid potential problems, we need to understand those problems and:
 - Help them explore how realistic it is as a career aspiration
 - Talk with them about the reality of this sort of career/lifestyle
 - Explore with them their understanding and awareness of the risks to physical and mental health, and of exploitation, addiction and gambling
 - Help them balance these interests with other areas of their life, and make sure they develop a 'Plan B'

IF A YOUNG PERSON YOU KNOW IS INTERESTED..

"This does seem like the sort of dream a kid has when he hasn't had enough life experience to know what options are out there. That doesn't make his dream wrong or bad, but it's something to be aware of. You should know your kid well enough to tell the difference between commitment and a phase"

- <https://www.fatherly.com/play/raising-son-who-wants-to-be-pro-gamer/>

QUESTIONS OR FEEDBACK

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