

An Analysis of the Importance and Influence of YouTubers on the Gaming Community

by Robert Frood

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An Analysis of the Importance and
Influence of YouTubers on the Gaming
Community

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Dissertation submitted as part of the requirements for
the award BA (Hons) Business Management

Supervised by Christopher Thomas

May 2016

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An Analysis of the Importance and Influence of YouTubers on the Gaming Community

Undergraduate Dissertation

Robert Froom, P134458

9th of May 2016

Abstract

The overall aim of this dissertation is to evaluate the current situation regarding gamer YouTubers, understanding the type of relationship and influence that they potentially have

with their respective audiences. This will include information of audience demographics, communication media available to YouTubers, the specific appeal of gaming YouTubers and the challenges experienced by YouTubers in relation to morality and ethics. Then, recommendations are constructed from the findings as to the best practices for YouTubers to become more professional. The research methods used in the collection of data for this dissertation were interpretivism and an inductive method. Online surveys, created through Survey Monkey were the specific form of data collection used in this study to collect quantitative data, with a combination of open and closed-ended questions. The survey was shared through the online forum website Reddit.

There were three main theories used in understanding YouTubers, influencer marketing, personal branding and consumer-brand relationships. The major finding of this dissertation were that the average individual is male, under the age of 30 and has a higher than average level of income. There are wide variety ways that YouTubers can communicate with their audiences through a variety of different medias but audiences do not perceive them as having a large impact on not do they damage a YouTuber's content. Trust and honesty were the most valued attributes by audiences to the relationship they have with YouTubers, however the primary reason audiences watched YouTubers was for entertainment purposes.

Conclusions from this dissertation were that this research agrees with previous literature that has been creating, through the definition of the average consumer in the community and the similarities in the research. Marketing on YouTube is effectively integrated into YouTuber content. The main appeal of gaming YouTubers to audiences is the entertainment value that they provide, however on the side of YouTubers it was the interaction and relationship created that they felt was most appealing. Regulation is a big challenge for YouTubers in this area as it can be unclear as to what is classed as advertising and what is not and therefore whose responsibility that marketing is. Implications of this research were that the results of this study matched the results of a much larger scale study, showing that these results are the case for the overwhelming majority and not out shadowed by different larger communities.

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1.0 Introduction

The aim of this dissertation is to critically evaluate the effect of YouTubers on video game marketing. An analysis of the current situation will be carried out looking at contemporary practices, regulation and instances of video game content creation on Google's video sharing platform YouTube and its relation to marketing. As social media becomes more popular, more accessible and further reaching than ever, marketers have turned to it as an innovative way to reach new audiences and generations of customers (Thomsett-Scott, 2013).

This research looks to add to the breadth of knowledge and information as compared to other types of marketing; this area is in its adolescence, only recently being considered as a more important form of marketing which should be considered for investment. The researcher has an interest in the area of study being an active member of the YouTube community for the past 5 years as well as being an avid gamer. There is currently a lack of research in the area and it has been identified by the researcher that current research is more general with regards to YouTube. Other research looks at YouTube as a business and how it is possible to make money on YouTube, as well as general research into how organisations utilise YouTube as a marketing tool.

The researcher has decided to investigate further into a specific genre of YouTubers; this being YouTubers that solely produce video game footage and related videos. This has been identified as important because the user with the largest following on YouTube is a video gamer who goes by the name "Pewdiepie". As of 15/11/2015 he has amassed a following of over 40 million subscribers. (YouTube, 2015)

The key themes that this dissertation will focus on is the community of individuals that are linked to this area of interest; how YouTubers communicate certain messages to these communities; how much influence these YouTubers may have, and the ethical considerations that come with the influence they could potentially have. There have been incidences in the past where YouTubers have been seen to be exploiting their audiences for monetary gain and there is a grey area as to whether this is then the responsibility of the YouTuber or the organisation that is paying them.

This dissertation will review secondary research and conduct primary research to achieve the research aim. This study will ask members of these communities what their opinions on these subjects are, whether they feel it matters or if it affects the YouTube content they are consuming. Another issue this dissertation looks to tackle is with the improvements of marketing integration, through tools like product placement, are consumers fully conscious of when they are and are not being marketed to and also if they care.

Five research objectives have been created to ensure the specific research aim is achieved. These are objectives from the original question; removing any obstacles leading to superior specificity as expressed by Clough & Nutbrown (2012).

Objective One: Analyse the consumer demographics within the YouTuber gaming community.

Objective Two: Review of communication media available to YouTubers, and the impact they may have on content.

Objective Three: Explore the appeal of YouTubers to the gaming community.

Objective Four: Identify challenges in the specific research area, considering ethics and transparency.

Objective Five: Construct key recommendations for best practice by YouTubers to see themselves as 'professionals' and to understand the strong influences they have as a marketing communication medium.

2.0 Review of Literature

This chapter looks at reviewing published literature relevant to gaming YouTubers and the marketing associated with them as well as satisfying the second, third and fourth objectives stated previously.

These objectives are:

Objective One: Analyse the consumer demographics within the YouTuber gaming community.

Objective Two: Review of communication media available to YouTubers, and the impact they may have on content.

Objective Three: Explore the appeal of YouTubers to the gaming community.

Objective Four: Identify challenges in the specific research area, considering ethics and transparency.

Objective Five: Construct key recommendations for best practice by YouTubers to see themselves as 'professionals' and understand the strong influences they have as a marketing communication medium.

2.1 Objective Two: Review of communication media available to YouTubers, and the impact they may have on content.

It is necessary to look at the elements of YouTube and how they interact to understand the way the social media platform works before specifically inspecting the practices of gaming YouTubers.

YouTube is the largest video sharing platform on the internet and one of the largest social media platforms alongside Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. YouTube works by the creation and release of videos through channels. Users create channels, and then

produce and release content through the platform. The user generated content attracts viewers; those views then translate into capital through advertising (Strickland, 2016). One of the few resources on YouTubers that this dissertation will relate to is a report completed by Nevaly and NewZoo, in which they conducted a large data collection into YouTube gaming comparing it to more traditional types of marketing media.

Advertising

Adverts are placed on videos by users' choice; this is known as monetising the videos. YouTube pays channels per every one thousand views that they attract, in 2013 the average cost per thousand (CPM) views was \$7.60, so a video with one hundred thousand views would generate \$760 for the content creator. Advertising on YouTube also allows organisations to target certain audiences, displaying their adverts to an audience with specific attributes like age, interests, location, gender and more. There are also tools for advertisers to utilise to see how their adverts are performing, see what type of viewers are watching them through the same attributes as previously mentioned (Benady, 2009). This allows advertisers to assess success and adjust adverts to improve effectiveness, through changing advert length or when the advert is seen, before, during or after the video.

YouTube as an organisation takes a percentage of the revenue generated; the current percentage split is 45:55 with the latter percentage going to the user. Channels can also charge more to allow organisations to display specific adverts on and next to their videos, depending on how many views the channel attracts, they can also push up the CPM on their videos if advertisers are drawn to them (Klein, 2016).

Product Placement

Product placement is also known as embedded marketing or brand integration, and can generally be defined as the incorporation of specific brands or products into media, through the combination of entertainment and advertising, rather than traditional

advertisements. There is a long history of product placement in media, but it hit the height of popularity during the 1980s (Galician, 2004).

The Rise of Product Placement

Due to the lack of research around product placement and YouTubers in the gaming community, parallels can be taken from other forms of media such as television and films.

Traditional advertising is based on interrupting television shows to promote a broad message to the audiences; this advertisement model is seen as intrusive and bothersome. During the last few decades devices have been created that allows users to skip these advertisements straight to the programme itself, much to the dismay of several television studios. Further improvements in technology including faster internet, now allow consumers to download television episodes directly to their computers or stream them with zero advertising (Plunkett, 2010).

Because of such trends, advertisers responded by created product placement strategies that denied viewers the ability to avoid product branding (La Ferle & Edwards, 2006). At first products took a back seat in the programmes as they were just in the background or being used and therefore passively shown to the audience. This then evolved into products taking more central roles in programmes. By including a brand or product in this way, it shows the viewer what the company is trying to achieve, the target customer for each product and the benefits of each product (Steinberg, 2008). More recent product placements have been when a show or series is sponsored by a product or brand.

The film industry does not suffer as much from the ability to skip advertisements through the use of technology, as it is usual to rely on product placement in films. However, this does not mean that the use of product placement has not increased in recent years. This has been the reaction to improved technology specifically relating to increased bandwidth speeds of the Internet; it has become easier to download films (Wiles & Danielova, 2009). There are two main types of product placement in films, screen placements where the product is just a part of the film set, and plot placement, where the product takes a central role in the film or becomes a major part of the plot line.

Product placement in the YouTuber Gaming community consists of organisations sending YouTubers products to use in the content they create. This can include being sent games to play; equipment to use in and for the creation of videos, like headphones, microphones, computer monitors, keyboards, laptops etc. Other products include clothing and accessories like computer glasses. Though the YouTubers are not forced to make comments about the products they are sent and use, viewers are inquisitive to know about the products the YouTuber uses (Rodriguez, 2015).

Video Sponsorship

In the same way that television programmes are sponsored by organisations, where there is a specific sponsorship advert shown just before and after programming, the same occurs in the YouTuber community. Organisations can approach YouTubers to pay for certain videos to be sponsored with the payment made by the organisation usually going toward the production of the video. Commonly in the gaming community these sponsored videos are special videos outside the YouTubers' usual content to promote a new game release, the sponsor being the video games publisher. Another reason for sponsorship is it can cover travel costs for YouTubers to attend certain events and conventions around the world. In other genres of YouTube, regular content is sometimes sponsored if the videos generate a high viewership but this is uncommon in the gaming community (Walker, 2015).

YouTubers

Content creators that use YouTube as a sharing platform are known as YouTubers, they create a wide variety of content that spans several different genres. Some examples of different genres included music, unboxing, gaming, live action, comedy. YouTubers amass a following through a subscriber system; if a viewer likes the content then they can 'subscribe' to that channel or YouTube and be notified when they release new content. Therefore there are a variety of reasons YouTubers do what they do, ranging from sharing their personalities, showing off talents or even in an effort to make money and share information. For some it starts out as a hobby they do in their spare time and then

transitions into a career once they have gained a larger following or consistent amount of views. However, large organisations also have YouTube channels usually with a specific purpose, like promoting products or services, through direct adverts, informative videos or attempts to make "viral" videos that gain major viewership numbers maximising the audiences it reaches (Mohr, 2014).

YouTubers can amass followings from countries all over the world running into the millions; those that do attend events and conventions to meet their subscribers, performing signings and meet and greets. Some of the most popular YouTubers have released merchandise, ranging from clothes, toys, books, games, mobile apps, also their own make up lines. This has allowed many YouTubers to create vast amounts of wealth; big channels with a high viewership bring in millions just through advertisement revenue on their content. Some YouTubers have also used their online personalities to launch other careers, moving into areas like television gaining their own talk shows, while others have launched music careers gaining No.1 singles and albums on iTunes (Biggs, 2008).

Networks

Some YouTubers are now managed under larger parent YouTuber personalities to form YouTuber networks. Parent organisations work as a management agency, the same way a modelling agency works. They manage talent under their name, broker brand deals and collaborative projects between content creators and organisations outside of the YouTube space and generally help the content creator with issues they are not equipped to handle, copyright claims (Robertson, 2012). Networks help YouTubers through other ventures they may have as well, like managing their clothing lines or producing them if they don't have one (Burgess & Green, 2009).

One of the largest YouTube networks is called Maker Studios; they manage more than 55,000 channels, and collectively have 380 million subscribers and 5.5 billion page views per month. Maker Studios is a Californian based organisation managing some of the largest channels on YouTube including PewDiePie, Epic Rap Battles of History, KSI, Olajidbt, Markiplier and Captain Sparklez. In Q3 2014 Maker Studios closed an acquisition deal between themselves and the Walt Disney corporation. Disney paid Maker

Studios shareholders around \$500 million initially, but rising to \$950 million for reaching financial targets, for the rights to the organisation (Grover, 2014).

Growth

In recent years YouTube and YouTubers have grown exponentially; this is a result of advancements in technology, increased internet speed; access and availability has led to the growth in online media and movements away from traditional forms of media like television and film. Content produced by organisations and individuals is more easily shared and accessible globally via the internet. Retiring the need for traditional television subscriptions, where the user pays for a number of channels which they do not require, modern technology allows for the user to tailor their subscriptions so they only receive the media they desire. YouTube is an embodiment of this as users pick and choose what they want to view and when they want to view it, allowing for a customised experience (Efrati, 2013).

However another reason for YouTube's growth is it also has benefits in terms of the ability to share media, by levelling the playing field as it were; traditional media like television, film and even music requires large amounts of capital to produce and maintain. Whereas a platform like YouTube anyone can use it for next to nothing, hence why huge multinational corporations like Procter and Gamble have YouTube channels, but so too does any teenage boy who likes to talk over videos of him playing Call of Duty; there are no significant barriers to entry (Bonson, et al., 2014).

2.2 Objective Three: Explore the appeal of YouTubers to the gaming community.

Personal Branding on YouTube

Personal branding is not a new concept; it has been around for centuries; politicians, pop stars, movie stars and models are all examples of parties that have a personal brand. These figures look to market themselves to create worth and or power, they put themselves into the limelight and try to portray themselves positively. Personal brands seek to put a spotlight on the best aspects of a person or persons and use them effectively to achieve a certain goal (Ward & Yates, 2013).

Utilisation of social media, in this case YouTube, breaks down real world barriers between consumers, such as appearance, social status and wealth. It makes online experiences more free and open, allows them to interact and exchange with less resistance. Consumers on YouTube feel empowered in that they gain control over issues that are personal to them easily. As YouTubers are presenting these ideas and satisfying these concerns, they create relationships with consumers. As a result of these relationships between one party and many other parties, YouTubers become head marketers for their own personal brands (Fred, 2015).

YouTubers use their personalities to determine key identifying attributes and use them to create the uniqueness of a personal brand. These identifying factors range from the way the YouTuber behaves speaks or acts, to the way they edit their creations, using more or less technical tools and differentiating in length of the videos they upload. All this is used to create a positive image representing the YouTuber as a brand to consumers.

This style or uniqueness all contributes to the statement that the YouTuber is trying to make about their brand. This statement can be very broad such as just wanting to provide entertainment to consumers, or be very specific such as providing information to specific consumers about a specific subject and a specific point in time. This is all drawn from the YouTuber themselves (Henny, 2007).

Ultimately this creation of a personal brand and a statement of said brand are to generate a global viewership spanning multiple countries. YouTubers use a variety of strategies to achieve this also as part of a personal brand using specific skills as mentioned previously but some also using YouTube as a mask to empathise other aspects of the YouTubers personality or even allowing them to create a completely new character/persona, and be someone completely different (Chen, 2013). Effectively YouTubers are selling themselves or at least some form of themselves through their videos.

The videos they create reflect who they are and attempt to share the best aspects of themselves, looking to generate interest and in some cases value in what they do, say or how they act.

Consumer-Brand Relationships

YouTubers create consumer-brand relationships through their videos as, in contrast with traditional media like television and film, the experience is more interactive, the audience or consumer can make comments directly to the creator and sometimes enter into a dialogue with that creator. This interaction creates a sense of belonging and commitment to each other; the consumer is then committed to watching the videos and feels like they belong to the community of that YouTuber and the YouTuber feels they have commitment to the consumer to consistently create new content for them to consume. YouTubers also feel that they are appreciated for their content, instilling confidence in them and motivating them to progress and grow as a content creator and as a personal brand (Keller, 2014).

Another reason the consumer-brand relationship is so important is because it is quantifiable by both the consumer and the YouTuber. More so for the YouTuber, in the creator studio section of the YouTubers channel it provides a wide variety of information and graphics, from viewership, to comments, subscriptions as well as geographic, age and viewer type demographics. This allows YouTubers to track their performance and see where they may require improvement. Consumers can also see some of this information; therefore they know they are part of a community and that there are other consumers with similar interests. This means the consumer-brand relationship they have has also created

a consumer-consumer relationship in the form of a community and this will further strengthen the bond they have with the YouTuber (Park & Kim, 2014).

YouTube does not follow one directional brand relationship development, meaning YouTubers personal brands can form stronger bonds with their target consumers, hence the formation of personal brand communities. These communities support the YouTuber and further their growth without requiring the YouTuber to input any effort (Iglesias & Saleem, 2015).

The consumer-brand relationships formed also allow the YouTuber and their personal brand evolve. YouTubers traditionally create content for a specific audience, people the same age and geographical location as themselves, as that is what they know and are familiar with. As these relationships are formed and attract audiences of different locations and ages, the different interactions they have change and begin to vary, this causes the YouTuber to adapt their personal brand to these interactions as they have a bond with these consumers therefore want to satisfy that commitment they have to each other (Dimitriadis, 2012).

It is likely that a consumer will have multiple consumer-brand relationships; this is a factor that a YouTuber has to consider as the strengthening of their relationship may be the key to maintaining current viewers and encouraging new ones. The relationship built is what keeps both parties interested and motivated to interact (Fetsche, 2012).

Influencer Marketing

As the popularity of social media like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube rises, influencer marketing and the research of influencer marketing has become more necessary. Influencer marketing takes traditional word-of-mouth (WOM) marketing and combines it with the internet and social media to amplify the effect. This can be business to customer (B2C) or Business to Business (B2B). WOM marketing is the most trusted form of marketing above any other available, customers and organisations are more trusting of the relationships that they have.

Through influencer marketing one individual or brand has that relationship with hundreds of thousands, sometimes millions of people. Therefore they have an influence on those

people, and can use that influence in a variety of ways (PR Newswire Association Llc, 2015).

Specifically in this example, using it to market a product or service to those individuals, however this influence may not always be good and could work against an organisation. Individual influencers can be influenced through a variety of things like money, personal opinion or experiences, whereas an organisation or brand will mostly be influenced to influence others to benefit themselves (Gierasimczuk, 2011). Also influencer marketing can be used without even realising, whether this is by the party doing the influencing or the party being influenced. This is mostly due to the integration of social media into everyday life, many people do not realise the effects of what they do or say. Therefore it has become increasingly important for individuals and organisations to monitor their activities to make sure they do not give influence accidentally and are then affected detrimentally. Some organisations presently have whole departments to manage their social media presence (Weiss, 2014).

Brand influencers, also named mavens by Malcom Gladwell are individuals or people that have a following as well as expertise in a specific area; mavens actively share the knowledge they have. When brands want to identify someone as a maven they can use the following formula:

“Influence = Audience Reach (# of followers) x Brand Affinity (expertise and credibility) x Strength of Relationship with Followers”

(Wong, 2014)

Mavens have an extensive knowledge in a specialised area; this knowledge, and not their persuasiveness, is what makes them so effective. The advice provided by mavens is usually what allows other individuals to spread their ideas, as they are trusted. It would be difficult for other individuals to make the important ideas they want to share appealing to consumers without the trusted knowledge of the mavens. Instagram and YouTube have seen the rise of a new generation of niche influencers that amass large fan bases and

eventually become trusted sources for customers, so much so, that organisations are now partnering with these mavens in an effort to boost sales (Gladwell, 2002).

Influencer marketing agencies Nevaly and NewZoo released a report in February 2016 specifically evaluating YouTube influence on the gaming industry. They made several discoveries in the area that stated on a regular basis over 470 million gamers watch online gaming content; across Europe, North and South America, Asia and Oceania this made up 56% of all gamers. In 2016 the audience figure is expected to hit the 500 million mark. Another finding they concluded from the report was that television is half as effective when reaching big spending gamers as online video. It was found that 14% of gamers discovered new titles through television whereas 35% discovered them via YouTube. Their report also determined that the average viewer of gaming content on YouTube is 28 years old, male and has a high income. Another finding they had was that as a video on demand service, YouTube was the largest, and half of gamers from the United States of America watched gaming related content on YouTube more than once a month (Nevaly & NewZoo, 2016).

2.3 Objective Four: Identify challenges in the specific research area, considering ethics and transparency.

Transparency

Transparency in marketing refers to whether the target audience of the marketing knows that they are being marketed to or not, and are influencers being paid, and therefore influenced themselves. Influencers may make a certain statement about a product or service, and audiences should know whether it is a genuine opinion or they are being paid to say it. Relationships formed between influencers and the influenced can be abused in this way, swaying audiences to purchase products or services they do not require. Endorsements made by organisations affect this as it gives the influencer more incentive to make statements that are not of their own devising and therefore misleading to the influenced party (Powell & Ralls, 2010).

Exploitation of Vulnerable Audiences

Some internet marketing can target vulnerable audiences and exploit them on purpose or accidentally by the advertiser. Certain audiences that are attracted to a specific type of content on the internet can then be targeted by organisations to generate sales for their specific product or service. For example a younger teenage male audience may be attracted to gaming or football content on YouTube; at this age the audience would be very impressionable and therefore more susceptible to certain types of marketing communications (Shields, 2011).

Regulation

Internet marketing regulation on social media platforms in the UK currently comes under the jurisdiction of the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA). The ASA is the independent regulator of advertising across all media platforms. In this case, they protect users from misleading and inappropriate advertisements on their websites, like using banners, pop-ups or emails. The ASA published several rules and regulations to ensure that advertisements do not offend, harm or mislead consumers. If the ASA receives a complaint about a website displaying inappropriate images then the website would be investigated (Advertising Standards Authority, 2015).

All claims about products and services made on social media, like a Facebook page or Twitter account, that represent an organisation have to be legal, decent, honest and truthful. Any marketing communication made over social media are seen as an 'invitation to purchase', therefore any statements made by an organisation have to ensure that they are correctly constructed. For example; making statements about promotions an organisation has is a marketing communication but statements about the performance of the organisation are not deemed marketing communications (Sweeney, 2014). However, due to the uncensored nature of social media and the presence of user-generated content (UGC), statements made by users are not controlled by the organisations they are about and therefore would not be investigated by the ASA. However, an organisation that

decided to use UGC as part of a marketing communication strategy would be subject to the jurisdiction of the ASA, and any claims made that do not fall inside the guideline would be investigated (ASA, 2014).

In the case of YouTube this means a YouTuber that makes comments and presents opinions on specific products and services they have obtained themselves, then they would not be investigated if the claims were false or misleading, but if a gaming publisher pays a YouTuber to play their game and they then make false claims about the game, the organisation and the YouTuber would be investigated as the YouTuber is therefore a part of the organisations marketing communications to audiences (Hancock, 2011).

YouTube, however, regulates the content on their platform as well, though only to abide by YouTube specific rules and guidelines. Recently YouTube has made moves against brand-sponsored content, encouraging more YouTubers to rely on Google's services, instead of going directly to organisations. As of February 2015, video overlays with product branding and onset logos are only permitted if the sponsor pays Google to advertise on the channel. YouTubers also have to select a specific setting on a video if it contains a paid product placement (Pike, 2007). In a statement made by YouTube they said it was also in an effort to stop viewers being bombarded with advertisements, as monetised videos already have adverts attached (Blattberg, 2015).

3.0 Research Methodology

This chapter describes and justifies the research methods employed to achieve the research objectives:

Objective One: Analyse the consumer demographics within the YouTuber gaming community.

Objective Two: Review of revenue models available to YouTubers, and the impact they may have on content.

Objective Three: Explore the appeal of YouTubers to the gaming community.

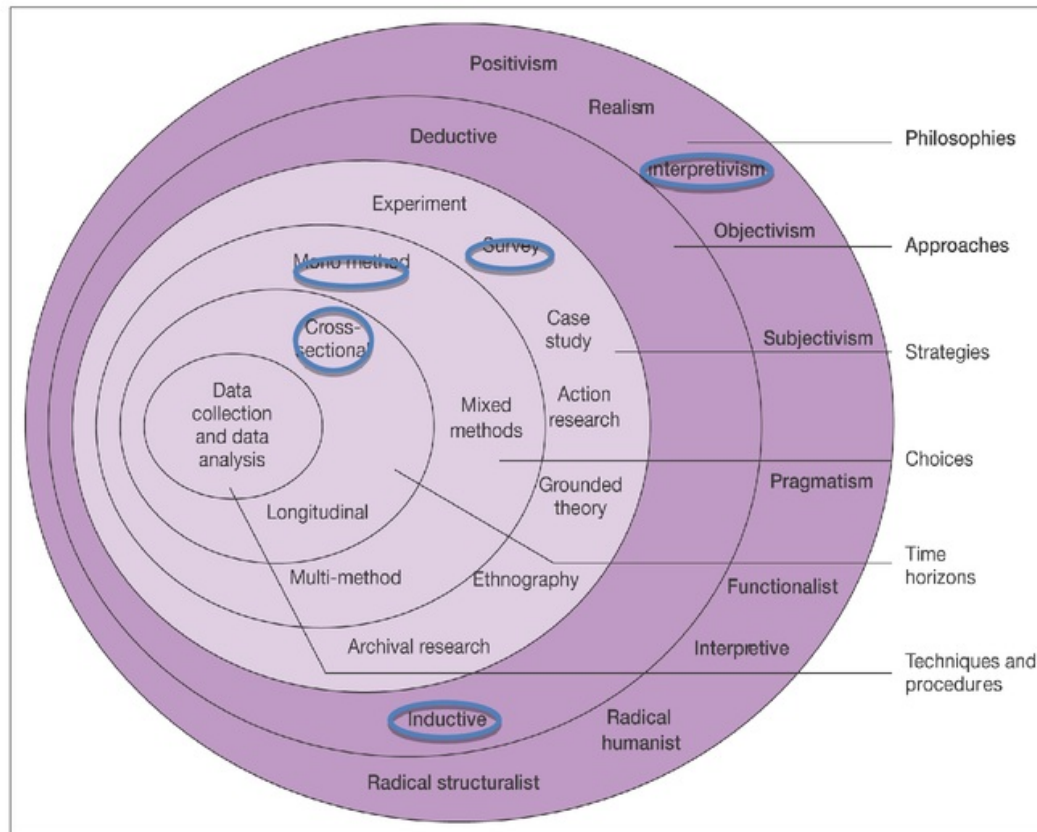
Objective Four: Identify challenges in the specific research area, considering ethics and transparency.

Objective Five: Construct key recommendations for best practice by YouTubers to see themselves as 'professionals' and to understand the strong influences they have as a marketing communication medium.

The chapter begins by describing the research strategies, data collection methods and data analysis techniques used in the study.

This section will look at appropriate research procedures, methods, results and analysis used for this dissertation study. Looking at research it can be said it is "a scientific and systematic search for pertinent information on a specific topic" (Kothari, 2006).

This process can be displayed through the method of a diagram known as the 'Research Onion', developed by Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009).



Source: © Mark Saunders, Philip Lewis and Adrian Thornhill 2007

Figure 3.1 The Research 'Onion'

When conducting research many pathways can be taken; several diverse phases will be used by the researcher when designing a research approach, this is demonstrated by the 'Onion' (Saunders, et al., 2009). The selected pathway that will be used for the research process for at this study is identified by the research onion shown previously.

3.1 Research Philosophy and Approach

The research collected will be used to justify the conclusion signifying use of the interpretivism pathway. Interpretivism states that it is necessary to realise the differences between human beings and their role as social actors. Humans have the ability to interpret their surroundings and interactions to form specific meanings and opinions. Interpretivism takes this into account, requiring empathetic approach towards the study. The researcher

has to be able to see from the point of the participant to fully understand. This can be difficult as no two research participants are the same and the ability to empathise will have to be adjusted for different participants (Saunders, et al., 2009). The interpretivism method has been appropriate for this research because the questions being asked in the surveys will be very much subject to opinion. Responses can easily be correlated and graphed, but the researcher has to be able to interpret the results and explain them to readers (Corrado, 2015).

An inductive approach will be used in this research. This method is suitable for this research because it is known as a bottom up approach; observations are used to create a description of the area being studied. Using an inductive method in combination with quantitative data collection, explained later in this chapter, allows for the level of data analysis to be more explorative, discovering new information (Lodico, et al., 2013).

To retrieve maximum information research design is used to ensure research is as efficient as possible (Kothari, 2006). The procedure that will be used in this study are surveys; the process has the benefits of gathering more quantitative information, as well as detailed answers and specific responses as data (Saunders, et al., 2009).

3.2 Research Strategy and Data Collection Methods

This research has been designed to be cross-sectional, with the possibility of being open to all depending on the number of responses. Cross-sectional means data is collected from a specific point in time and from a specific group of individuals. Repeat interaction with the same group will not occur (Bajpai, 2011). This research will not use a hypothesis and will instead create theories on the research gathered; therefore the study will be inductive (Crowther & Lancaster, 2008). This strategy is appropriate due to time constraints of the study.

This research will be mono-method, only utilising surveys as the primary form of data collection. The reason for this is that the research being done requires a large amount of data to provide a viable amount of results which can be interpreted into an output. Previously, a mixed method was going to be used and interviews were also going to be conducted, but due to time constraints. Another reason is the ability to analyse two

methods of data collection fully would be limited by the overall dissertation structure and size, therefore just analysing one method would provide more detailed information from the data collected.

3.3 Survey Design

An online survey has been chosen to be the primary form of data collection for this research as it has been deemed the most appropriate (See Appendix 1). There are three main reasons that an online survey has been chosen, first it is extensive, and in that it can provide information for a large population of people unlike other research methods. This allows for an accurate sample to gather targeted results, especially due to the community of individuals that this research includes. (Ackroyd & Hughes, 1992) Next, as surveys are anonymous participants are more willing to provide truthful and open answers, which mean a clearer representation of the research community. Last, surveys are inexpensive; the current financial situation of the researcher means the data collection is not well funded, but an online survey will provide a large amount of data for a minimal cost (Bourque & Fielder, 2003).

Closed and open-ended questions will be the two main types of questions used in the survey. Closed questions limit the number of possible answers a participant can give, providing definite quantitative answers through the use of statements and scales, whereas open-ended questions allow for the participant to express their opinions more freely. (Rapley, 2001) Both styles of question have advantages and limitations, open-ended questions require more time to review and analyse but provide a more extensive response (Coolican, 2009). The survey used in this study will be gauged more towards closed questions as it is easier for participants to respond and gives the researcher the ability to more easily quantify results and compare them (Jonker & Kosse, 2013). However, the use of open-ended questions will still be present as some questions may restrict the participant if in a closed style.

3.4 Primary Research

The primary research used in this study was collected by the use of the online survey platform Survey Monkey and distributed to members of the gaming community via the internet. Primary data collection consists of information that has been taken from original sources. Sapsford and Jupp (2006) say that *'primary sources form the basic and original material for providing the researchers raw evidence'*.

3.5 Quantitative Research

Quantitative research involves the use of statistical analysis to obtain findings, measuring data collected and visually manipulating it so it can be easily and clearly understood (Neuman, 2005). This data collection method is objective as well as being obtrusive and a controlled form of measurement of data. This type of collection looks to find the causes of social phenomena, the facts and figures of the research. It provides the researcher with an outside perspective of the situation, allowing them to see the whole picture. Data like this is very reliable and is able to be repeated numerous times (Ray, 2013). The data collected and process of quantitative data is reductionist, it looks to break down complicated data to produce fundamental results that can be easily understood (Marcsyk, et al., 2005).

Due to the nature of this study it has been deemed by the researcher that a quantitative approach research is the most appropriate as it will be more effective when satisfying the aims and objects of this study. For a qualitative approach to be used it would have been necessary to use a minimum of ten industry sources to acquire sufficient results for the study. This was deemed an unrealistic task due to the time frame in completing this study and the busy nature of the work of industry members (Strauss & Corbin, 2015).

3.6 Sampling, Sample and Sample Size

The sample size of the research will be aimed at being made up of, but not limited to, 100 individuals of any gender. Though, it is assumed that there will be a larger percentage of male participants due to the nature of the research area. The age range for the survey is to be 16 and above to ensure the validity of the answers and so that they can be interpreted efficiently and effectively.

The sampling to be used in this research will be purposive sampling also known as judgmental sampling, as it is by the judgement of the researcher who is to be chosen for the research. This is also a form of non-probability sampling (Palys, 2008). Participants for the surveys will be targeted as industry specific, using specifically YouTube Gaming related online forums. Online forums used to spread this survey will be from the internet website Reddit, which also allows users to create different forums for specific topics. Six topical forums were chosen to share the survey (See Appendix 2). Using purposive sampling is appropriate for this research as it will ensure that participants in the survey have a sound knowledge of the subject area and be able to respond to questions in an interpretable way.

3.7 Data Analysis

After all of the data has been collected it needs to be correlated, analysed, and interpreted. The researcher will use tools provided by the online survey platform Survey Monkey on the computer to analyse data collected thoroughly, as well as the manipulation of graphs in the spreadsheet program for Mac, known as Numbers.

Survey Monkey is a popular website for creating and distributing surveys but it also allows the researcher to implement complicated data manipulation. With a vast number of functions Survey Monkey is capable of handling data in almost any format that can then be read using spreadsheets or database software. These tools have been deemed suitable to this research as they provide the research extensive methods of interpreting data and

therefore retrieving as much information from it as possible and presenting it to the reader (Survey Monkey, 2016).

3.8 Reliability and Validity

The research method is required to be reliable for this study to be credible in nature. Reliability by definition is the ability for the study to produce stable results and also results that that can be consistently repeated. By specifically using a sample of individuals that have a sound knowledge and are involved in the specific research area it allows for the results to be as reliable as possible and because they have an interest in the area it would be in their best interest for the research to be a reliable and useful to them also (Moskal & Leydens, 2000).

In this research area there are a few aspects that could make the results unreliable. First, the sample size is a small percentage of individuals that make up a much larger community. Also, as online forums are being used as the method to distribute the survey then only members of the community that access these online forums will be exposed to the research (Kizlik, 2012).

Research is also required to be valid, this means the research being undertaken uses accurate methods, uses a wide range of sources to cover the entire subject area and also the ability to assess the outcome the study as a way to uncover improvements that could be made in future studies. As for validity of these results, the large sample size will contribute to this aspect of the research. The larger the number of survey participants then the greater likelihood that it is a valid representation of the community as a whole and not a specific individual speaking for the masses (Phelan & Julie, 2006).

3.9 Improvements Recommendations and Ethical Risk

The sample type used during the research may not be reflective of the community the research is about due to the researcher's judgement. Also the sample size is a limitation to

the research as the community researched as a whole is made up of millions of individuals and this research only looked at a small percentage of that. The survey was limited to the specific community forums that the survey was distributed to, also the community that was being researched has members all over the world and this research was conducted in English therefore limiting the potential people able to take part in the survey. Another improvement would be to use another method of research like interviews to collect qualitative data that could be interpreted and provide a more in-depth view of the research area (Miller, 2012).

Ethical considerations were made during the planning and administration of this research. Due to the online nature of the survey it will be anonymous; this was made clear at the beginning of the survey. This allowed respondents to answer the survey confidently and freely, without this a lack of participation can have been an issue (Coolican, 2009).

Another ethical consideration of the research was after the completion of a survey the participant had the full aims and objectives of the research explained to them, as well as being thanked for their time. Informing the participants of the research's true nature was a priority, as any issues with the study could directly affect the research outcome.

4.0 Analysis of Results

This section of the dissertation looks to address and satisfy objectives:

Objective One: Analyse the consumer demographics within the YouTuber gaming community.

Objective Two: Review of communication media available to YouTubers, and the impact they may have on content.

Objective Three: Explore the appeal of YouTubers to the gaming community.

Objective Four: Identify challenges in the specific research area, considering ethics and transparency.

Objective Five: Construct key recommendations for best practice by YouTubers to see themselves as 'professionals' and to understand the strong influences they have as a marketing communication medium.

A detailed analysis of the survey that was completed will take place, using a variety of methods to interpret data and define relationships that occur from individual questions. Analysis of this data was done through the use of grounded theory, to understand how accurate the data gathered was by comparing it to test current theory, and therefore also create new theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1999). Then, explaining what the information shows and how it is relevant to this dissertation and satisfying the previously stated research objectives. This chapter will also look to validate the findings of the literature review of this dissertation, by comparing and contrasting it with the data collected from respondents of the relevant community. A purposive sample of 878 respondents (722 male & 149 female) collected data that was analysed, correlated and interpreted. The data was then split into relevant themes in the form of the research objectives, alongside tables and graphs, and also including explanations that show the data's relation to the study. This chapter has been split into sections grouping questions that relate to specific objectives, objective one includes Q1, Q2, and Q3, objective two includes questions Q6 and Q8, objective three includes Q4, Q5, and Q10, and objective four includes Q7 and Q9.

*Data will be presented in the format: Percentage (Number of Respondents)

4.1 Objective One: Analysis of the consumer demographics within the YouTuber gaming Community.

As this research uses purposive sampling and was looking into a specific community of people it was necessary to understand the makeup of the community. These questions asked about a respondent's gender, age and occupation.

Question 1: Gender

There were a large percentage of male participants in the survey, 722 males made up 82.89% of respondents. Female made up 17.11% of respondents at 149, and 7 respondents skipped this question as there was no other option in the survey. It was decided to be necessary, by the researcher, to only have the two options in the survey as defining the community was a vital part this research and forcing respondents to choose would more beneficial to the research rather than providing an "other" or "prefer not to say" option. However, this did result in some respondents choosing to skip the question all together. From this question it is shown that the majority of the community is made up of males; however there is a female element to it.

Figure 4.1: Results of Q1: The majority of the community surveyed is male.

Question 2: Age

There were five different options for respondent when asking about their age. The largest age group was respondents between the ages of 18 and 29 at 65.14% (570), the second largest age group was the under 18's at 29.7%, and the rest of the responses were made up of the 30 to 44, 44 to 59, and over 60, at 4.57% (40), 0.57% (5), and 0.34% (3) respectively. Three respondents skipped this question as once again there was no 'other' or 'prefer not to say' option for the reason previously stated.

From this data it can be said that the majority of community members are in their very late teens and twenties. This could be due to the fact that at this age participants find that they have more available time to occupy with hobbies and activities like YouTube, but also this age group of people have grown up with the initial release of video games and social media platforms like YouTube.

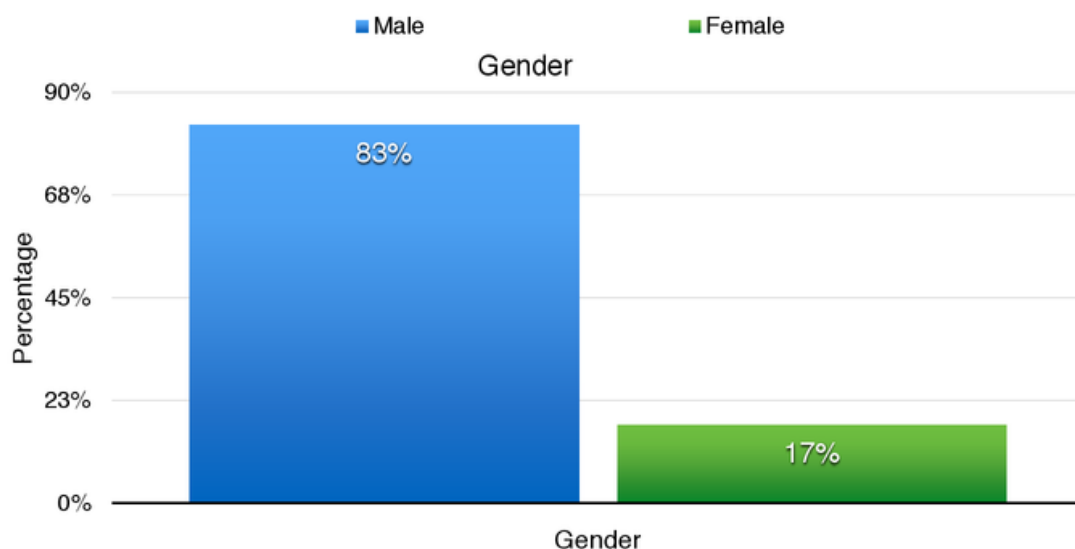
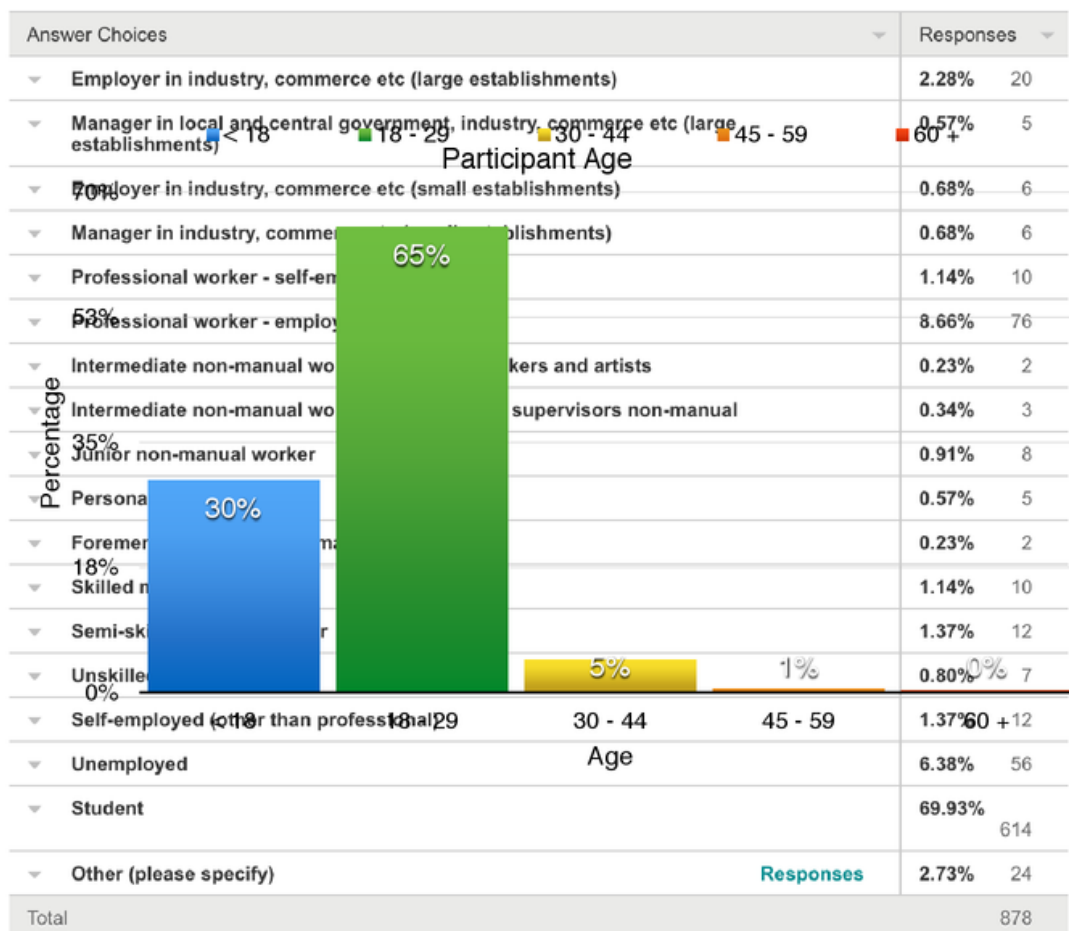


Figure 4.2: Results of Q2: The majority of the community is under the age of 30.

Question 3: Occupation

Standard Occupational Classifications (SOC) was used to identify a participant's occupation. There was one primary occupation for participants and two distinctive secondary occupations. The most popular occupation status for participants was student at 69.93% (614). The second largest occupation of participants was the category 'Professional Workers - Employees', which accounted for only 8.66% (76). The third most popular category for occupation, with 6.38% (56), was participants being 'unemployed'. All other participant occupations were accounted for by the rest of the categories, 10.53% (132), all remaining categories accounted for less than 3% (<26) of respondents each.

Figure 4.3: Results of Q3: The majority of the community is made up of students.



An explanation for this main categorisation of participants can be one of time and money. For the largest of occupation time would be the biggest contributing factor to the participant's membership of the research community. 'Students' participants have more free time to occupy, and being part of the community would satisfy this time. Also, as the average age of a student would be in the 18 to 29 age range. Where, as explained previously, they are more technologically cultured having grown up with these advancements and that technology is vital to being able to interact with this specific community.

4.2 Objective Two: Review of communication media available to YouTubers, and the impact they may have on content.

This section of the chapter analyses the data from the questions that relate to reviewing the revenue models available to YouTubers. Questions in this section related to the influence of different media when a participant purchases a new game, and what factors can detract from YouTuber content.

Question 6: Influence

The next question considered the influence that different media had on respondents when purchasing new video games. Different medias included Advertising, YouTube Content, YouTube Reviews, Product Placement, Online Reviews, Magazine Reviews, Social Networking, Word of Mouth (Online), Word of Mouth (Offline), and also a comment section was provided for further elaboration. Participants rated the types of media on a scale of always, usually, sometimes, rarely and never.

Figure 4.4: Results from Question 6: YouTube content and Word of mouth presented them as the most influential when purchasing a new game.

	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Total
Advertising	1.29% 11	9.72% 83	41.57% 355	36.42% 311	11.01% 94	854
YouTube Content	13.42% 117	50.92% 444	30.16% 263	3.90% 34	1.61% 14	872
YouTube Reviews	8.73% 75	28.75% 247	31.20% 268	21.54% 185	9.78% 84	859
Product Placement	0.35% 3	1.06% 9	12.06% 102	47.40% 401	39.13% 331	846
Online Reviews	6.07% 52	25.93% 222	33.41% 286	23.13% 198	11.45% 98	856
Magazine Reviews	0.82% 7	3.89% 33	11.07% 94	25.56% 217	58.66% 498	849
Social Networking	1.87% 16	13.10% 112	24.56% 210	30.41% 260	30.06% 257	855
Word of Mouth (Online)	8.99% 78	43.09% 374	28.57% 248	12.90% 112	6.45% 56	868
Word of Mouth (Offline)	11.29% 97	40.51% 348	27.71% 238	13.39% 115	7.10% 61	859

Participants most influenced by YouTube content: this was expected due to the community been researched, also this information agrees with the findings explained in the literature review for this dissertation. Members of this community trust the YouTubers they interact with and the relationship they have with them. This validates the findings in relation to personal branding and the formation of consumer-brand relationships.

Both types of Word of Mouth also proved popular as a media of influence on respondents. This is unsurprising as it is the oldest and most trusted form of marketing to potential customers, and has been amplified by the invention of the internet. This therefore agrees with the findings presented in the literature review (Weiss, 2014). However, there does seem to be some data from this question that conflicts with the findings collected in the literature review. One being that, in this specific community, more respondents said social networking is rarely or never considered as an influence on deciding whether or not to purchase a new video game.

Another disagreement that this data has with the findings of the literature review is that even though there has been a large increase in product placement over the last century, this community feels that it does not influence them (Steinberg, 2008). This could be due

to two reasons, first, because the community in question is heavily involved in the internet and social media where they are exposed to prolific amounts of product placement, they have become desensitised to it and in turn have the ability to sub-consciously filter the information that they are receiving. Another factor that could contribute to this, on the opposite side, is that members do not consciously realise that they are being exposed to product placement. It may not be that the product placement is deliberate at all, but it only takes an image or a word for consumer to have the seed sown into their memory.

Question 8: Detracting from YouTuber Content

Respondents were also asked their opinions on what they felt could detract the most from YouTuber videos. Participants were asked to rate product placement, advertising, sponsorship, poor quality, brand integration, and bias on a scale including and between 'Strongly Agree' and 'Strongly Disagree'.

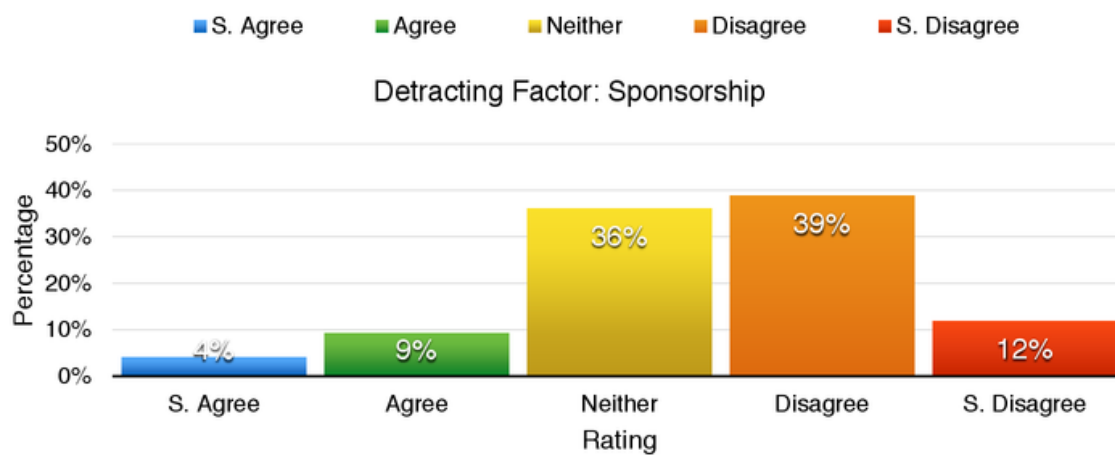
For four out of the six factors "Neither Agree nor Disagree" was the most chosen option by participants, this included 'Product Placement' 36.21% (315), 'Advertising' 34.68% (301), 'Brand Integration' 43.22% (373) and 'Bias' 34.10% (296). This would indicate that participants feel these factors neither adds to a YouTubers content neither add to it. This is probably because this audience is used to this and as they are regularly exposed to it they either ignore it or don't notice, or don't care as it doesn't hurt the content quality.

Figure 4.5: Results from Q8: Poor quality was the most strongly agreed upon factor by participants to detract the most from YouTubers content.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Product Placement	9.44% 82	23.71% 206	36.25% 315	24.40% 212	6.21% 54	869
Advertising	7.61% 66	18.92% 164	34.72% 301	30.22% 262	8.54% 74	867
Sponsorship	3.99% 34	9.26% 79	36.11% 308	38.80% 331	11.84% 101	853
Poor Quality	58.05% 505	32.64% 284	6.21% 54	2.18% 19	0.92% 8	870
Brand Integration	8.35% 72	19.72% 170	43.27% 373	22.39% 193	6.26% 54	862
Bias	19.95% 173	28.14% 244	34.14% 296	14.19% 123	3.58% 31	867

For the factor 'Sponsorship' the 'disagree' option exceeded neither agree nor disagree by 2.69% (23). This very slim margin between the options would suggest that the majority of the community feel that sponsorship doesn't detract from a YouTuber's videos, but some feel that in certain circumstances that it can add to it. Mostly because sponsorship can allow a YouTuber to produce content that without said sponsorship it may not be worth their time to create, whether due to monetary reasons or entertainment value.

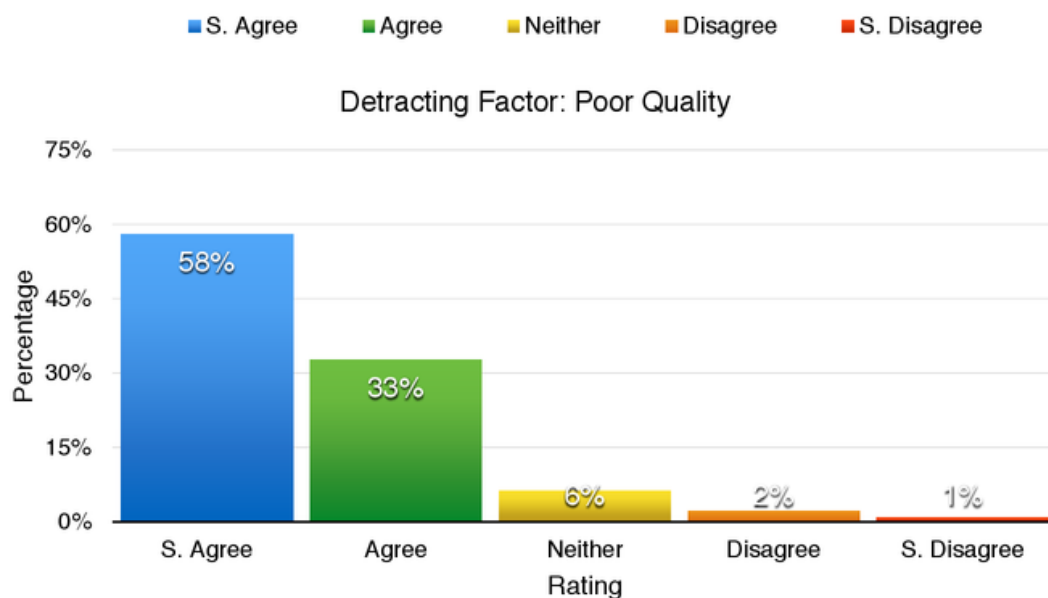
Figure 4.6: Results of Q8 relevant to Sponsorship: Majority of participants feel sponsorship does not detract from YouTuber content and can add to it in certain



situations.

Demonstrated in figure 4.7 by far the most agreed upon category was poor quality, 58.05% (505) of respondents strongly agreed that they felt poor quality would definitely detract from a YouTubers content and would deter them from watching. This is very understandable as YouTube is a video sharing platform and the main form of communication is visual. Also this would be very important for a gaming community as high quality visuals is another aspect in gaming. YouTubers can upload videos at 4k resolution and at 60 frames per second (fps), which most modern games run at, it has become more important as audiences would see exactly how the game would look if they were playing it themselves.

Figure 4.7: Results of Q8 relevant to poor quality: Poor quality was the most



strongly agreed upon factor that could detract from YouTuber content.

4.3 Objective Three: Explore the appeal of YouTubers to the gaming community.

This section analyses the questions relating to objective three of this dissertation. The questions in this section relate to the average time participants spent playing games and watching YouTube, as well as a comparison between them. It also considers what motivations participants have for playing games; and why gaming YouTubers appeal to participants.

Question 4: Average Time

From figure 4.8 it can be seen that the majority of participants spend on average between 1 to 2 and 2 and 4 hours (29.04%, 255 and 37.81%, 332) gaming at a single time. The likely reason behind this is that the types of games that this community play require a certain amount of time and effort before any real progression can be achieved. This result was expected as the community being surveyed is one of a gaming background and therefore more likely to spend more time playing games than an average person.

Figure 4.8: First half of results from Q4: The majority of the community spend on average between 1 and 4 hours gaming at a time.

The majority of the community spend on average between 1 to 2 and 2 to 4 hours (37.47%, 329 and 32.91%, 289) watching gaming videos on YouTube. The only difference being that there were more respondents in the 1 to 2 hours category for YouTube and more in the 2 to 4 hours category for gaming. This data means that member of this community are not just watching a single video on YouTube at one time, but multiple consecutive videos.

Another consideration that has to be made is that this gaming related community is watching gaming YouTube videos for a longer period of time than an average person and therefore could be exposed to a larger quantity of marketing. This means they are being exposed to marketing that would be specifically targeting them for a longer period of time.

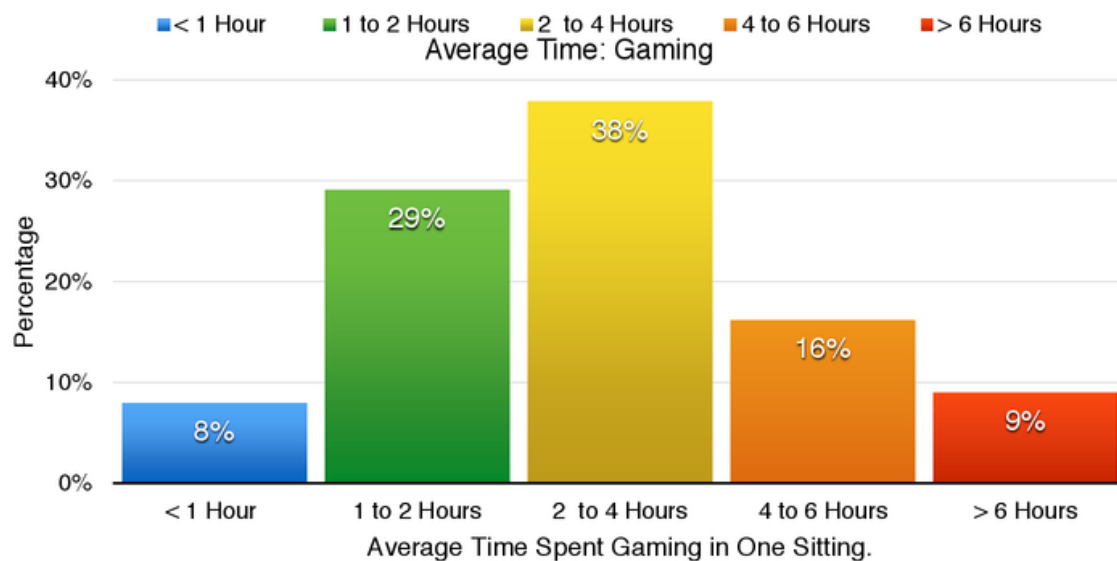
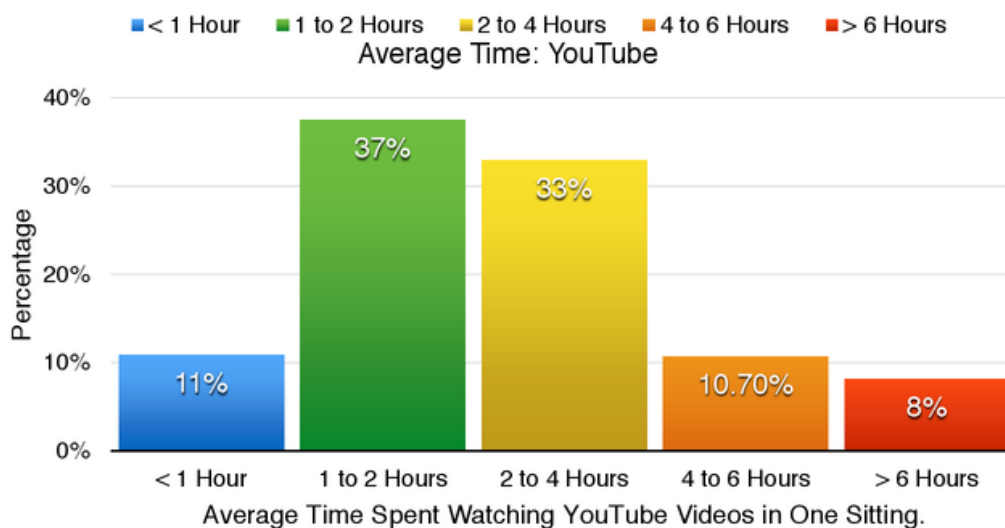


Figure 4.9: Results from second half of Q4: The majority of respondents spend on average between 1 and 4 hours watching YouTube in one sitting.

Average Time Comparison

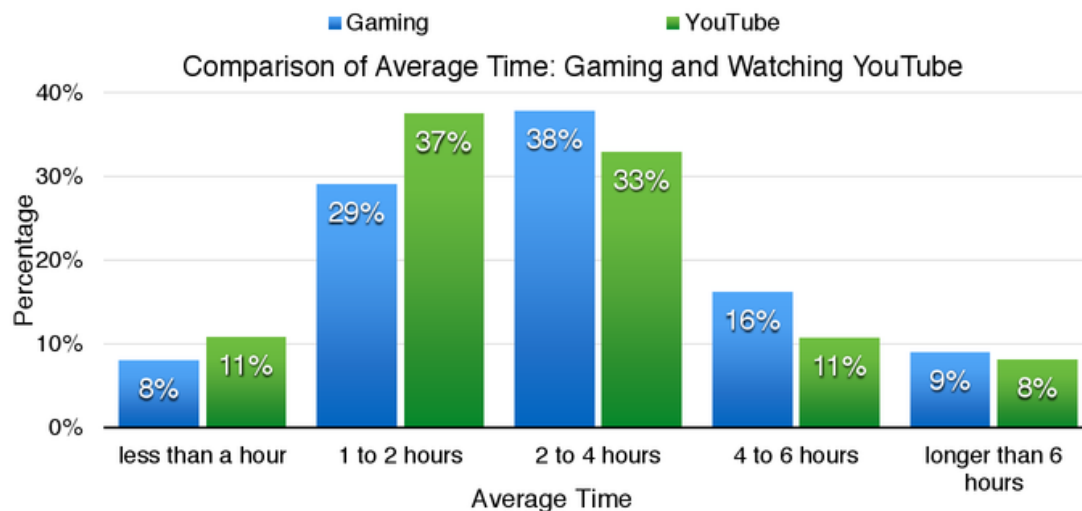
Figure 4.10 shows the comparison between the average time participants spent playing games and watching YouTube in one sitting. It shows that in this community the average time spent playing games and watching YouTube is very similar; this would suggest that the community is very involved in both areas and do not value one above the other. Therefore they are equal in entertainment value and that watching someone play a game is the same as playing the game themselves. However, the experience that participants would have would be different as just watching is not the same as interacting with what is



happening on screen. This difference in experience is why YouTubers appeal to this community as they can still experience a game but in a different way.

Figure 4.10: Comparison of results from Q4: Respondents value entertainment from gaming and watching YouTube similarly.

Question 5: Motivations



Question five asked participants to state what their motivations were for playing video games. There were three pre-determined statements available to participants; entertainment, stress relief, and socialising. Also, a fourth un-determined or 'other' option was available, that participants could choose to state other motivations that they have for playing video games. Participants were allowed to select more than one statement. The most popular statement selected was entertainment, which was chosen by 96.47% (846) of respondents, that was then followed by stress relief at 62.60% (549), and 39.00% (342) of respondents selected socialising as one of the motivations they had for playing video games. As for the 'other' option that was available, only 4.79% (42) participants chose this. Some of the recurring statements submitted by participants were 'competition', 'education', 'distraction', 'procrastination', having YouTube channels themselves, feeling a sense of accomplishment, therapeutic in relation to mental health, and lastly, by far the most popular submitted statement by participants, 'escapism'.

Figure 4.11: Results from Q5: Large percentage of the community plays video games as a source of entertainment.

From this question it is understood that the main motivation for participants to play video games is the entertainment that they receive. This is understandable as that the intended purpose of a video game is to provide a form of entertainment. Stress relief being the second largest motivation is not surprising either as the interaction a user has with a video



game differs from the relationship they have, with say, television or film, as a participant can directly affect the outcome of the game. Video games essentially allow users to exercise their frustrations and give them the skills to manage real world stress through being exposed to stressful in-game situations.

Socialising as a motivation, coming third most popular was also expected by the researcher as nearly all games created in the past have been focused on a single player experience and then had the option for multiplayer through split screen. It has only been more recently, in the last ten years, due to advancements in internet speed and connectivity that games have had a more even focus on both single player and multiplayer experiences. Some game developers have even gone as far as to release games that solely focus on multiplayer or always have some form of online connection. This means traditionally games have had more focused on the game itself providing the entertainment to the user and not the social interaction they have while playing.

Even though the other option was only selected by a handful of users, it provided useful information and the submitted answer 'escapism' was a frequent occurrence. This would lead the researcher to believe that one of the motivations of this community, to play video games, is that they like to disassociate themselves with the real world and lose themselves in the worlds that have been created for them. This could also be distinctive of some kind of separation between their virtual habits and their physical lives. The researcher also believes that an 'escapism' option may have taken a more predominant place among the other statements if it was provided to respondents when the survey had been created.

Question 10: The Appeal of Gaming YouTubers

The last question in the survey asked what is appealing to respondents about YouTubers and their videos, specifically ones from the gaming community. Similar to the previous question this was also an open-ended question, allowing for more qualitative data to be collected. This style of question was used so that participants could clearly express their particular feelings on the subject.

Some examples that summarise the recurring themes in answers that were submitted are as follows:

Respondent A:

"Entertainment mainly. Sometimes I also watch games to see if it is something I'm interested in getting myself. I also like watching games I am unable to play myself, such as horror games. LOVE watching them, but I have anxiety issues so it's impossible to play them myself."

Respondent B:

"I can experience games passively. I don't have to actively play them myself so save effort. Any comedy added by the YouTuber also adds additional entertainment on top of the base game."

Respondent C:

"It assists me in making up my mind over which game to purchase, and it acts as a source of entertainment and stress relief. I come for the comedy and gameplay, and stay for the great quality."

Reviewing the answers, the recurring themes that presented themselves included entertainment (48.96%, 378), comedy (18.26%, 141 answers) and fun (17.10%, 132 answers), the inability to afford or lack of the time to play games (23.83%, 184 answers), and also for the personality of the specific YouTuber (9.72%, 75 answers).

Out of these themes entertainment stood out to be, by far, the biggest reason that this community watched gaming YouTubers. Many participants appropriated it to being equivalent to television and film, but for a much more specific subject and that because there are so many more YouTubers that they could find the right one that appealed best to their opinion of what entertainment is; whether it came from the games that the YouTuber is playing or their personality. Also there seemed to be multiple answers that gave their reason for watching gaming YouTubers to lack of funding to play games as they are 'expensive'.

At the other end of the spectrum other participants said they were too busy working, or subsequently tired from work that they would rather watch someone play a game and still receive the same or even better experience. Another recurring theme of answers was that respondents felt that due to the interactivity of YouTube as a platform and the personality of YouTubers, and therefore the uniqueness of their videos, that over time they built a relationship with the YouTuber. This refers to, and confirms, the consumer-brand relationship section in this dissertation's literature review (Park & Kim, 2014).

All of the answers submitted would collectively suggest that the main appeal of YouTubers to the gaming community is that they value monetarily, interactively or otherwise, the entertainment experience that they can receive from the YouTubers videos.

4.4 Objective Four: Identify challenges in the specific research area, considering ethics and transparency.

Question analysis in this section of the chapter look to satisfy objective three of the dissertation, they relate to the values that participants feel should be most important to YouTubers, and their opinions on whether commercial relationships of YouTubers should be clearly communicated with their audiences.

Question 7: Values

Participants were asked in this question to rate the values that they felt had the most importance in relation to a YouTuber. Responses available ranged from 'Strongly Agree' to 'Strongly Disagree'. There were twelve different values that could be rated, from moral and ethical values like trust and bias, technical values like editing ability and number of subscribers, as well as personal values like good looks and intelligence of the YouTuber.

Figure 4.12: Results from Q7: Ratings by participant of YouTuber Values.

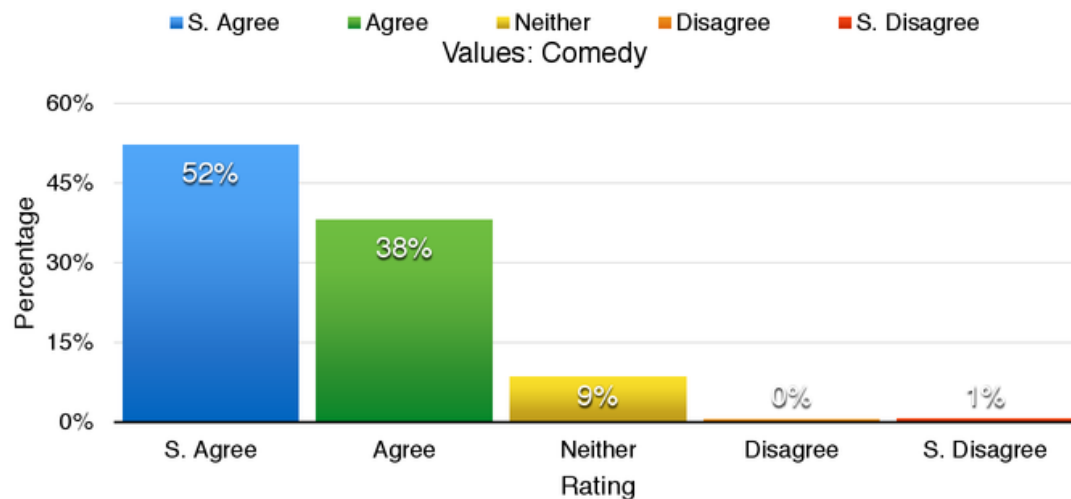
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Trust	32.22% 280	50.40% 438	15.07% 131	1.38% 12	0.92% 8	869
Honesty	41.43% 360	45.22% 393	11.51% 100	0.92% 8	0.92% 8	869
Skill	7.89% 68	16.36% 141	32.02% 276	32.71% 282	11.02% 95	862
Comedy	52.18% 454	38.05% 331	8.62% 75	0.46% 4	0.69% 6	870
Editing	17.06% 146	49.07% 420	27.45% 235	4.67% 40	1.75% 15	856
Subscribers	0.69% 6	2.55% 22	23.26% 201	39.93% 345	33.56% 290	864
Views	1.52% 13	5.59% 48	22.26% 191	40.33% 346	30.30% 260	858
Intelligence	10.14% 88	46.66% 405	31.22% 271	9.22% 80	2.76% 24	868
Good Looks	1.27% 11	4.97% 43	26.44% 229	35.22% 305	32.10% 278	866
Attractive Voice	7.07% 61	38.82% 335	34.41% 297	13.33% 115	6.37% 55	863
Unbiased	13.96% 121	30.10% 261	37.02% 321	14.65% 127	4.27% 37	867
Independence	7.81% 67	26.92% 231	51.28% 440	11.07% 95	2.91% 25	858

Trust, Honesty and Comedy all resulted in the majority of answers being in both the strongly agree and agree categories at a combined 82.62% (718), 86.65% (753), and 90.23% (785) respectively.

The trust and honesty values agree with the findings in the literature review about personal branding and consumer-brand relationships, as any relationship that is formed is built on a strong foundation of honesty and trust between parties. This data shows that this community believes in this and is aware of the trust that they share with the YouTuber (Keller, 2014).

For comedy as a value the strongly agree option was 52.18% (454) of the overall choices by participants. This was by far the greatest value the participants from this community felt that a YouTuber should have. This data would suggest that this is one of the major appeals of YouTubers to the gaming community.

Figure 4.13: Results for Q7 regarding comedy: Participants strongly agree that comedy is a vital value of a YouTuber's content.



The majority of votes for attractive voice 38.82% (335), intelligence 46.66% (405), and editing 49.07% (420) fell into the agree category. They also all leaned towards the neither agree nor disagree options as a secondary option. Participants felt these values were reasonably important but felt if that the YouTuber lacked in this area that it wouldn't affect their content very much.

The unbiased and independence values were subject to similar majorities but instead this time the majorities were in the neither agree nor disagree option, 37.02% (321) and 51.28% (440), with a secondary emphasis on the agree option. This would suggest that this community feels that these values aren't especially important, but act more as a bonus if they are present in the YouTuber's content.

Skill level as a value was deemed to be unimportant by respondents with 32.71% (282) of answers falling into the 'disagree' option, then a close second in the neither agree nor disagree option at 32.02% (276) expressing that skill has little effect on a YouTuber.

This is understood to mean that skill is not deemed to be very important, but has the potential to be beneficial to a YouTuber's content in some situations, but not all.

The majority of answers for the subscribers numbers, views numbers and good looks values were in either the disagree or strongly disagree categories. Combining these categories together they made up for 73.49% (635), 70.63% (606) and 67.32% (583) of responses in these options respectively. For each of these values over half of participants either chose a 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree' option, leading to the assumption that these values are unimportant and unnecessary.

Due to the nature of these responses there is distinctively more emphasis by this community on the content that a YouTuber produces over superficial surface level attributes that a YouTuber possesses.

Question 9: Commercial Relationship

This question asked whether respondents thought that if a YouTuber has a commercial relationship with a product then should that relationship should be clearly communicated with their audience. This was an open-ended question that allowed for a more elaborate answer explaining why they felt the way they did, as this was a very specific question in the survey.

Below are three examples that summarise the majority of responses:

Respondent X:

"Yes, or actively avoid producing content which 'reviews' the product as bias is already there. Regardless the audience should be told of the relationship between the youtuber and the product in question."

Respondent Y:

"Yes, being honest with the audience can help build the trust of their fanbase with the YouTuber and helps audiences to appreciate the work a YouTuber puts into the work they love to do."

Respondent Z:

"Yes, I don't mind it if they have a commercial relationship (frankly they deserve the money for making so much great content) but I feel they should be open and honest about the fact they have been paid to promote something instead of just promoting it with no explanation and potentially lying about their interest in that product."

The overwhelming majority of answers said yes (71.64%, 629) and that YouTubers should clearly express if they have a commercial relationship with a product, all other respondents either answered no or it did not bother them/they did not care (18.57%, 163). 86 participants did not answer question, this was assumed to be due to the question's open-ended nature. However, most respondents also stated that they even though it should be clearly communicated that they did not want the communication to be obtrusive in the video itself as this would have a negative effect on the entertainment factor that a YouTuber's video would provide.

5.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

In this chapter of the dissertation the researcher summarise the findings, relating them back to the research objectives and explaining how each objective has been satisfied. The objectives that were to be satisfied for this dissertation were:

Objective One: Analyse the consumer demographics within the YouTube gaming community.

Objective Two: Review of the communication media available to YouTubers, and the impact they may have on content.

Objective Three: Explore the appeal of YouTubers to the gaming community.

Objective Four: Explore challenges in the specific research area, considering ethics and transparency.

Objective Five: Construct key recommendations for best practice by YouTubers to see themselves as 'professionals' and to understand the strong influences they have as a marketing communication medium.

This research was carried out to gain a better understanding of the consumers that gaming YouTubers appeal to, and then the influence that these YouTubers can potentially have on these consumers. It was also chosen due to the area of study being relatively new and therefore there has been less previous research on the topic, and this research hopes to add to it.

5.1 Conclusions

Objective One: Analyse the consumer demographics within the YouTube Gaming community.

The consumer analysis aspect of the survey establishes several factors about the majority of the community targeted for this research. These factors are that they are mostly male, under the age of 30, and largely made up of individuals that have more free time because of their current occupational status. The majority of individuals making up the community are what was expected by the researcher, as the community is very heavily technologically involved and these are the aspects that would traditionally be associated with these individuals.

This information agrees with the influencer marketing report compiled by Nevaly and NewZoo in February 2016, as their analysis of the average gamer that watched YouTube was that they were male, 28 years old and had a high income. The only piece of information that doesn't concur with the findings in this research is that the average consumer has a high income; however 'Professional Worker - Employee' was the second largest occupation category. This may have occurred due to the method of sharing the survey, and that the targeted online forums may have a more student orientated audience.

It was necessary to understand what demographics were present in this community to judge the maturity, impressionability and independence that is associated with this specific community, allowing better understanding of what aspects could be exploited for marketing purposes and what types of marketing they may be more susceptible to. The correlation of results between the survey findings and literature would suggest this objective was satisfied.

Objective Two: Review of the communication media available to YouTubers, and the impact they may have on content.

To satisfy objective two it was required to understand the communication media that are available to YouTubers, and then explore whether these communication media have different impacts on a YouTuber's respective audience. Questions in this area of the dissertation survey asked participants what sorts of marketing they felt influenced them most when purchasing a game, and whether they felt that there are certain factors that can detract from YouTuber content, this included marketing and personal factors.

Interpreting data from this section it can be concluded that participants felt that when purchasing a game YouTuber content was the mostly likely influence, followed by online and offline word of mouth marketing. Whereas, YouTuber reviews of games were only sometimes considered.

When looking at the data from the detracting factors question, participants stated they neither agreed nor disagreed that any of the marketing factors would detract from YouTuber content, and that in the case of sponsorship it may even add value to the content. Relating these findings back to the literature review section of this dissertation, these authors stated marketing has been growing excessively over the last couple of decades and expanded greatly onto social media platforms such as YouTube.

The combination of findings suggests that there is a wide variety of revenue streams that can be utilised by YouTubers. However, even there is more marketing on YouTube presently, it has been integrated effectively so as to not hinder the efforts of YouTube creators. As a result of this, this objective has been satisfied by the findings in this dissertation.

Objective Three: Explore the appeal of YouTubers to the gaming community.

Objective Three of this dissertation looked to understand the appeal that YouTubers have to the gaming community. Survey questions in this area asked participants about how long they spent gaming and how long they spent watching YouTuber content, the motivations behind them playing games and then specifically asking them why they watch gaming

Youtubers. The amount of time different individuals spent playing games and watching YouTube gaming content was very similar, with only slightly more participants gearing their time more towards gaming. For motivations of playing games, entertainment was found to be the most predominant factor to participants, and then when asking the reason for participants as to why they watched gaming Youtubers entertainment again was the primary reason.

This combination of the similar time spent doing each activity and nearly exact same reasons for doing them, would suggest that both activities are valued as near equals, but offer a different experience for the participant. They are both forms of entertainment. Though this data does not necessary correlate with findings in the literature review by Keller (2014) it also doesn't disagree with them, there were mentions of the relationship that was formed between the participant and the YouTuber, but the main emphasis was on the entertainment value it provided. The relationship finding from for the literature review may be from more of a focus on the YouTuber side of the platform and not the audience. As the objective was to explore the appeal of Youtubers and the gaming community the researcher would deem this to have been achieved as a multitude of reasons for the appeal have been found.

Objective Four: Explore challenges in the specific research area, considering ethics and transparency.

Findings to satisfy this objective of the dissertation concluded that trust, honesty and unbiasedness were valuable attributes that a YouTuber should have. However, consumers rated comedy above all other values that they thought should be important when being a YouTuber.

Findings in the literature review agreed with the survey data as transparency was a focus of the personal branding and consumer brand relationship sections. It agreed that both Youtubers and audiences felt that building a strong relationship of trust was very important, as well as being honest through Youtubers projecting themselves as who they actually were and not through a persona. This is because audiences felt they actually want to build a relationship with a genuine person and not just with an online presence.

Regulation is also a major challenge in this area of YouTube as it can be a grey area on whether a YouTuber's content is classed as marketing or not. This was communicated through question nine in the survey data collected, a majority of participants said that they felt any commercial relationship that a YouTuber had should be communicated with the audience but done in an unobtrusive way as not to affect the value of the content itself.

It is the belief of the researcher that this objective has only been partially satisfied as some research has been done into the challenges that are experienced when considering ethics, but that this dissertation focuses on the side of the audience and their perspective of these challenges. To understand this area further it would be suggested that primary research in the form of interviews should occur with YouTubers themselves, as they may provide more insightful information regarding the full range of challenges that they encounter.

5.2 Recommendations

For this dissertation to satisfy objective five, shown above, this section will make recommendations for best practice in the future for YouTubers to see themselves as 'professionals' and having strong influences as a marketing communication medium.

Recommendation One:

The primary research for this dissertation was shared to several online forums; these included general communities related to YouTube as well as more specific communities related to certain YouTube channels. It would be recommended that YouTubers do similar research when appealing to their existing community and when trying to attract new members. A YouTuber that better understands their audience can target their consumers more effectively through adjusting their personal brand; as a result the YouTuber will build a stronger consumer-brand relationship.

Targeting a specific audience would also mean that certain organisations may be more likely to work with them when executing a new marketing campaign as they know that

through YouTube their message will be communicate effectively. This would make their personal consumer-brand relationship more valuable to external organisations, especially to smaller YouTube channels that may have a smaller overall audience but communicate messages very effectively due to the relationship they have. It may make sense for an organisation to work with several smaller YouTubers that communicate effectively, and cost less rather than one large YouTuber that would cost considerably more and communicate a less effective message to more people.

Recommendation Two:

YouTubers should be able to understand better the relationship and resulting influence that they may have on their audiences to ensure that they maintain and strengthen it, and do not accidentally exploit the relationship that they have with them. Understanding the influence and relationship would allow a YouTuber to focus on the interaction they have with their audiences and use this to its full potential. This is important as unlike television or film, social media like YouTube allow for a near instantaneous channel of communication between creator and consumer. This would give YouTubers the ability to ensure that their primary reasons for producing content are for non-exploitive and genuine reasons. As is shown in this research, the main reason a YouTuber should create content is for its entertainment value, and therefore that is what their effort should be focused on and not the monetary side of the process. This is a difficult area to make a recommendation on as the YouTubers are unlikely to continue producing content if they are not compensated appropriately whether this is monetary or otherwise, but they would require some form of income to continue as they are. Understanding the relationship and influence would allow a YouTuber to use the correct balance required in maintaining their situation.

Recommendation Three:

YouTubers should make their audiences aware of any type of commercial relationships that they have, without it being obtrusive and jeopardising the essence of the content.

Taking into account the impact that certain commercial relationships will have on the consumer brand relationship is very important as through the findings in the literature, this is the main focus of a YouTuber and their channel. Understanding the best way to expand, maintain and strengthen this relationship is essential to ensuring prolonged, sustainable success. This impact should be taken into consideration when agreeing to any new commercial relationship, including brand deals, sponsorship and product placement, etc. This applies to commercial relationships that may be beneficial to the consumer brand relationship too, it may be a better decision by the YouTuber to enter a contract that has less monetary value to them, but a higher amount of value that it could potentially add to the content that they produce. As shown in the primary data for this dissertation audiences believe that sponsorship, in certain circumstances, can in fact contribute to a YouTuber's content giving it a higher entertainment value.

5.3 Research Implications

The research that has been conducted in this dissertation has had similar results to larger more well-funded studies in this area. The fact that a smaller study has concluded similarly would suggest that the same is true for the smaller sub-communities of the study area and that the overall results from the larger study do not overshadow any distinctively different results from minorities in the research area. As this research has similar findings to previous studies it would demonstrate that these findings are reliable.

Another implication this research has, that would be valuable to marketers, is that YouTube is a greater force than widespread marketing, when targeting a more specific audience like members of the gaming community. As the members of these communities are heavily invested in the area of interest they actively seek out these YouTubers that provide them with content that is in the same area in which they have an interest. This is especially true with a subject like gaming because it is already a highly technological area and consumers would be well versed in its use. As the research that has been conducted satisfies four out of the five objectives created for this research it would suggest that the findings that were discovered in the study had a certain level of validity.

5.4 Limitations and Future Research Considerations

If further research was to be carried out in this area, a larger study should be executed to gain a more complete understanding of the consumers that make up the community. The community is made up of millions of individuals and this research only takes answers from 878 participants, a fraction of the actual number of individuals. This study had several limitations placed on it including restrictions on time and funding, as well as the limitation of using online surveys as it can lead to research questions to not be interpreted in the way the researcher wished. A larger study would also include a higher number of research questions in the survey that was administered, so a more in depth analysis could be executed. Questions may focus more around a more specific area like ethical considerations or the consumer-brand relationship that is formed, as this dissertation has a more general focus of study.

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Appendices

YouTubers Influence

+ Add Page Title

1. What is your gender?

- ☐ Female
☐ Male

2. Age?

- ☐ <18
☐ 18 - 29
☐ 30 - 44
☐ 45 - 59
☐ 60+

Appendix 1: Transcript of Survey Questions

3. Which statement best fits your occupation?

- ☐ Employer in industry, commerce etc (large establishments)
☐ Manager in local and central government, industry, commerce etc (large establishments)
☐ Employer in industry, commerce etc (small establishments)
☐ Manager in industry, commerce etc (small establishments)
☐ Professional worker - self-employed
☐ Professional worker - employees
☐ Intermediate non-manual worker - ancillary workers and artists
☐ Intermediate non-manual worker - foremen and supervisors non-manual
☐ Junior non-manual worker
☐ Personal service worker
☐ Foremen and supervisor - manual
☐ Skilled manual worker
☐ Semi-skilled manual worker
☐ Unskilled manual worker
☐ Self-employed (other than professional)
☐ Unemployed
☐ Student
☐ Other (please specify)

4. On average how long do you spend playing video games and watching YouTube videos in one sitting?

	Playing Videos Games	Watching YouTube Videos
Less than an Hour	☐	☐
1 to 2 Hours	☐	☐
2 to 4 Hours	☐	☐
4 to 6 Hours	☐	☐
Longer than 6 Hours	☐	☐

5. Why do you play videos games?

- ☐ Entertainment
- ☐ Stress Relief
- ☐ Socializing
- ☐ Other (please specify)

6. What influences you in deciding to buy a game?

	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Advertising	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
YouTube Content	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Youtuber Reviews	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Product Placement	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Online Reviews	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Magazine Reviews	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Social Networking	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Word of Mouth (Online)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Word of Mouth (Offline)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Other (please specify)

7. Which YouTuber values are most important?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Trust	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Honesty	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Skill	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Comedy	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Editing	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Subscribers	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Views	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Intelligence	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Good Looks	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Attractive Voice	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Unbiased	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Independence	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

8. What most detracts from a YouTubers content?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Product Placement	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Advertising	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Sponsorship	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Poor Quality	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Brand Integration	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Bias	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Other (please specify)

9. Do you think if a YouTuber has a commercial relationship with a product then should that relationship should be clearly communicated with the audience?

10. Why do you watch gaming YouTubers?

Appendix 2: Online Forums Used to Share Survey

MY SUBREDDITS ▾ FRONT - ALL - RANDOM - MYRANDOM | ASKREDDIT - FUNNY - PICS - TODAYILEARNED - VIDEOS - GIFS - NEWS - GAMING - WORLDNEWS - MO

 **reddit** **FR00DY** overview comments **submitted** gilded upvoted downvoted hidden saved

sorted by: **new** ▾

 **1**   ? **YouTuber Influence Dissertation Survey** (self.gaming)
submitted 1 month ago by fr00dy to /r/gaming
comment share save hide delete nsfw

 **47**   ! **YouTuber Influence Dissertation Survey** [Survey] (self.Yogscast)
submitted 1 month ago by fr00dy to /r/Yogscast
53 comments share save hide delete nsfw flair

 **4**   ! **YouTuber Influence Dissertation Survey** (self.youtubegaming)
submitted 1 month ago by fr00dy to /r/youtubegaming
7 comments share save hide delete nsfw flair

 **1**   ? **YouTuber Influence Dissertation Survey** (self.youtube)
submitted 1 month ago by fr00dy to /r/youtube
comment share save hide delete nsfw

 **7**   ! **YouTuber Influence Dissertation Survey** (self.Hatfilms)
submitted 1 month ago * by fr00dy to /r/Hatfilms
2 comments share save hide delete nsfw flair

 **1**   **[Academic] Influencer Marketing Dissertation Survey (16+, Videos Gamers)** (self.SampleSize)
submitted 1 month ago by fr00dy to /r/SampleSize
comment share save hide delete nsfw flair