

Beyond Live Gameplay: Exploring the Streaming World

Video game streamers' content strategies and audience engagement on Twitch

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Abstract

Streaming video games on Twitch has become a way of entertainment for the gaming community. It has facilitated new ways for the gamers to create relationships and a community. This thesis explores the diversification of its content depending on the type of streamer and therefore, how the produced content is perceived and interacted with by the audience. Streaming on Twitch has been understood as a social activity for gamers to share their gameplays. This research tries to explain the different ways such gameplays can be created and how the differences between them have made streaming video games on Twitch a broader entertainment media platform. As part of the findings, the research presents three categories of streamers: Competitive Streamers, Entertainer Streamers and Community Streamers. According to the streamers' category there is a different strategy for them to display content on Twitch and show variations of engaging tools and mechanics to create content on the platform.

Preface and Acknowledgments

Supervisor: Joakim Johansen Østby (Autumn 2022 - Autumn 2023)

In 2019 I was sure I wasn't going back to study. I was established. Had a job. *Living the "adult" life*. However, the pandemic hit and everything changed. I went from having an ideal life to not knowing what I wanted to do with my future. I was lost. Surviving. As they the archaically say: the struggle *was* real. However, during the pandemic a couple friends inviting me to play Fortnite—to be honest I was bias at the beginning because at the time Fortnite was targeted as a childish game—. I was easily convinced. I started playing from the isolated corners of my room: unable to go outside. Eventually, my love for video games came back and I started enjoying being immersed in a digital world with my friends.

As they days went by, streaming became an option: why not share it with others? make them have a good time while being in lockdown? The journey of becoming a streamer made me realized the importance of social connections and made me wondered how does someone can keep an audience entertained for so long. What does someone has to be experiencing in their life in order to watch a stream and support other gamers? But more specifically, what keeps the audience engaged with the content of the streamers? Such questions made me want to explore more and guided me into applying for this masters program.

If I am being honest, this journey has being a long ride with lows and highs. Days were I was about to give up and stop writing. Days were I was so excited of the findings I was getting. But specially, it has been an emotional rollercoaster full of early mornings, late nights and a lot of coffee—I didn't drink coffee before coming here—. At the end of the day, this process wouldn't have been possible with the support and motivation from a lot of people:

To my supervisor, Joakim, who pushed me into writing a better thesis and motivated me to dig deep into the meaning of video games. Thanks for enduring all my crazy ideas and understanding my weird and misplaced selection of words. Thanks to make me enjoy the

process of researching but specially exploring the video game culture. Let's bring video games research into the front page of media and communication.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Sunday afternoon the console is turned on and the loading screen appears on the TV screen. Right before the game is selected, the gamer puts *their* headset on and gets comfortable on the sofa. As the game starts loading, the space surrounding the player gets distorted and they immerse themselves right into the display. Game is on!... and all left is an immersive world full of choices and engaging dynamics. As the gamer gets involved into the plot of the game, interactivity with others only depends on the demands of the gameplay. The content creates a relationship only with the player as the gamer is the one absorbing as much as possible the experience of playing a video game. As the gamer enjoys the gameplay and the mechanics of the games they play, sharing their experience involves an aftermath process by sharing opinions or gameplay on social media or blogs.

Even though Massive Multiplayer Online (MMO) games contributed to give back sociability to gaming, the gaming industry has enclosed gamers into individual experiences. However, when Twitch.tv was founded in 2011¹ the gaming industry discovered a new home to encourage social interactions between players. Broadcasting their gameplay live afforded real-time connections between gamers and facilitated a way to share their gaming experiences with others. With streaming video games on Twitch, the gaming industry became a digital place in which new interactions are created allowing gamers to immerse themselves in a social environment in order to expand their enjoyment for playing video games. Gamers found a community to belong to and develop relationships with other players that share their own passions and opinions.²

Streaming has given the gaming community an opportunity to create a new way to not only play together but communicate, interact and socialize with each other. As streaming adopted playing video games, the variety of content produced by the streamers has diversified in order to attract and capture the attention of the audience. It comes into consideration the relevance in what they are streaming, how are they streaming it and to

¹ David Arditi, "Streaming Video games: Never Own a Game Again," chapter, in *Streaming Culture: Subscription Platforms and the Unending Consumption of Culture* (United Kingdom: Emerald Publishing, 2021), p. 136

² Benjamin C.B. Churchill and Wen Xu, "The Modern Nation: A First Study on Twitch.tv Social Structure and Player/Game Relationships," *2016 IEEE International Conferences on Big Data and Cloud Computing (BDCloud), Social Computing and Networking (SocialCom), Sustainable Computing and Communications (SustainCom) (BDCloud-SocialCom-SustainCom)*, 2016, pp: 227

whom they are streaming. The wonder of video game streaming not only relies on what the streamer can display to the audience for entertainment but also takes into consideration the engagement the viewers have towards their content: the spectators become the reason the streamers develop diverse engaging content in order to keep them watching for hours every day.

This thesis introduces three categories of streamers: Competitive Streamers, Entertainer Streamers and Community Streamers (described later on in Chapter 3. *Methodology*); that make use of the affordances of Twitch to create different content for their viewers. These categories are formed by three streamers that represent the diverse forms of producing content on Twitch. Firstly, Competitive Streamers are represented by Bugha, MrSavage and Nemesis. The Entertainer Streamers' category is constituted by TheGrefg, Pokimane and AriGameplays. Lastly, Community Streamers' categories is composed by iPandarina, ThePeachCobbler and Jesusseron.

This research explores the diversification of the video game streamers' content depending on the type of streamer and therefore, the production of their content. It is also important to consider how such interactions are perceived by the audience in order to contribute to the understanding of how the video game streams can be different depending on the engagement of the viewers towards the broadcast. As streaming video games on Twitch is understood as a social activity for gamers to share their gameplays, the variation of them grant the gaming culture a digital environment to expand their connectivity with gamers.

1.1 Justification and Research Question

The main goal of this thesis is to explore the diversification of the video game streaming content and audience engagement on Twitch due the different type of streamers across the platform. The variation of their practices expands the streaming world research and open up the discussion about how the media content is produced and presented to a massive audience and therefore, how the spectators interact and engage with it. Hence, the definition of streaming video games could be argued as something more than transmitting live gameplays to an audience.

As seen before, streaming has been understood as a social activity for gamers to share their gameplays and experiences. It explores the sociability of media consumption and brings back the social aspect of the gaming culture. However, this research's aim is to expand the knowledge of streaming defined by the streamers' intention and content production, and to explain how the diversification of content on Twitch recognize the gaming culture as broader entertainment industry. Thus, the research question of this thesis is:

Why has the video game streamers' content and audience engagement diversified on Twitch?

The word diversified is central here, as my aim is to explore how the content and audience engagement on the platform is displayed depending on the type of streamer. To achieve this, it is important to understand that video game streaming involves social aspects that define the creation of different content on Twitch. Streaming has provided the gaming industry an interacting and engaging method to increase the impact of the content and encourage gamers to participate and connect with other people. Additionally, in order to answer the research question, it is relevant to understand how the content has been diversified. Therefore, the objective of the analysis is to show the differences on how the streamers display their content on Twitch.

1.2 Thesis Structure

The composition of this thesis consists of five chapters, including the current chapter. The structure of the research attempts to familiarize the reader with the concepts and theoretical concepts in order to answer the research question. In doing so, the thesis is divided as follows: Introduction, Literature Review and Theory, Methodology, Analysis and Discussion, and Conclusion.

Chapter 1, *Introduction*, presents the topic of this research and establishes a context for the reader to approach the following chapters. It introduces the objective of this thesis and the research question. Such elements contribute to understand the approach of the researcher to the video game streaming culture.

Chapter 2, *Literature Review and Theory*, introduces the theoretical framework utilized to examine the factors that produce diversification of the video game streamer's

content. The chapter introduce previous literature and theories about content creation, streamers' identity, the development of parasocial relationships between streamers and viewers, and the audience's participation on live broadcasts.

Chapter 3, *Methodology*, addresses textual analysis as the methodology approach utilized for this thesis. The purpose of this chapter is to present the process of the researcher as a qualitative research in order to provide knowledge of the diversification of the content and audience engagement presented by the streamers and how the audience's receptions contribute to the creation of a multi-entertainment medium. This chapters presents the analysis structure and format used to gather the data from the streamers. Concerning the cases, Chapter 3, *Methodology*, makes an introduction of the streamers selected and the categories established for the the analysis of this thesis. Additionally, this chapter presents a description of The Circuit of Culture as a main tool to address the discussion of the streamers' diversification of content and audience engagement on Twitch.

Chapter 4, *Analysis and Discussion*, purpose is to approach the findings of the textual analysis of the streamers to portray a picture of how streaming video games on Twitch has been diversified and therefore, the engagement has expanded the interactive strategies video game streamers use to connect with their audience. The analysis presents the three categories Competitive Streamer, Entertainer Streamer and Community Streamer. The categories are analyzed following the conceptualization of media by The Circuit of Culture and the structural concepts the research implement to recollect the data from the streams: Streamer Identity, Content Creation and Audience Engagement and Interaction. Additionally, in this section the researcher explains important concepts with the purpose of facilitating a better understanding of the video game streaming culture to the readers.

Chapter 5, *Conclusion*, offers a summary of the main points obtained on the previous chapter and connects the concepts used during the totally of the research in order to answer the research question. This section also suggests and discusses possibilities of this project to build on in future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review and Theory

The purpose of this chapter is to present a literature review and theoretical framework which contributes to build up the proposed research investigation. The first three sections provide the reader with background information about the researched topic. The *Section 2.1* of this chapter outlines the video game culture and provides a general description of the video games culture and its development within nowadays technology. Followed by it, the *Section 2.2* connects the video games with the streaming world and defines the elements surrounding its affordances. The *Section 2.3* provides a definition of the platform Twitch and explores the benefits and usage of the platform for the video game streaming culture.

Furthermore, the following sections provide an overview of previous approaches on the field of video game streaming. On this regard, the chapter is divided in three main sections. *Section 2.4* looks at the implication of content creation theory and explores its impact in the streaming world. Additionally, *Section 2.5* explains the roles of the streamers in the social environment of streaming and their impact with the audience, as the parasocial relationship is developed across the video game streaming process. This section also provides information about researches about streamers' categories that helped define and select the categories used for this research. Finally, *Section 2.6* looks at the theories regarding audience participation and engagement, and explores the community involvement within the world of video gaming and streaming.

2.1 Video Game Culture

In order to understand video game culture as part of the video game streaming culture it is important to assess at first the meaning of culture. Culture can be approached as a process that relies on a debate between diverse struggles and conflicts. The Cambridge Dictionary defines culture as an assembly of customs and beliefs owned by a group of people at a certain period of time. Moreover, as part of the social studies definition approach, culture represents the *way of life* of a particular group that share common behaviors and habits but also it justifies “their attitudes toward each other, and their moral and religious beliefs”.³ For

³ “Culture,” Cambridge Dictionary, accessed April 17, 2023, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/culture>

Richard A. Peterson, culture is not only constructed by norms, values and beliefs but also implicates a constant development of symbolic expressions which provide a wider upholding of the foundation of a cultural practice between individuals.⁴ Additionally, Stuart Hall explains that the interactions between people conforms an approach to culture as a combination between ideas and social practices and how they are reflected as ‘common’ experiences. For him culture requires “the giving and taking of meanings, and the slow development of ‘common’ meanings”⁵ in order to portrait a diverse but simplify categorization of ideas between individuals. Moreover, Hall integrates the concept of ‘*a way of life*’ as a fundamental aspect to study of a culture and to address it as the understanding of the interactions within a certain context and “ships between elements in whole of life”⁶. Furthermore, nurtured by the three ways of conceptualization culture by Raymond Williams, Adrienne Shaw reinstates the idea that culture is ‘*a way of life*’ which includes the approach to the definition from Peterson and Hall where values, beliefs, expressions, experiences and norms shape culture as a social practice.⁷ However, Frans Mäyrä states further that culture is a learning process in which people grasp and absorb their surroundings ideas in order to become part of something new: “Culture is not something we are born with, but rather something that we learn and adopt from our environment as we grow up.”⁸

Based on the concept of culture previously stated, video games can be approached from the eyes of culture as process in which people gather and share their own experiences. The early days of video game was defined by the lifestyle of arcade games. David Ardit mentions the culture of video game started as a commodity but also as a way to integrate people in the same social space as arcades “required players to line-up to pump quarters in the machines.”⁹ When gamers were introduced to a new ‘*way of life*’ it facilitated the development of a culture created by the environment gamers were exposed to: socialization

⁴ Richard A. Peterson, “Revitalizing the Culture Concept,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 5, no. 1 (1979): p. 137, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.so.05.080179.001033>

⁵ Stuart Hall, “Cultural Studies: Two Paradigms,” *Media, Culture and Society* 2, no. 1 (1980): p. 59, <https://doi.org/10.1177/016344378000200106>

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 60

⁷ Shaw, Adrienne. “What Is Video game Culture? Cultural Studies and Game Studies.” *Games and Culture* 5, no. 4 (2010): p. 405. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1555412009360414>

⁸ Frans Mäyrä, “Culture,” chapter, in *The Routledge Companion to Video Game Studies* by Mark J.P. Wolf and Bernard Perron, (New York, N.Y: Routledge, 2023), p. 293

⁹ Ardit, “Streaming Video games,” p. 104

and constant interaction of beliefs and values. The video game culture emerged from the idea that players engaged with each other on a social space and shared their experiences; in other words: playing together. However, Mia Consalvo mentions that video game culture goes beyond knowing how to play and involves understanding the world video games created and be nurtured by the information surrounding them; video “[i]t’s being knowledgeable of about game releases and secrets, and passing that information to others.”¹⁰ For Mäyrä, it is a combination of comprehending video game culture as an art but also as a construction between aspects around the “cultural norms and players’ practices”.¹¹ Social practices in video games evolved with technology and developed a online virtual space to explore new aspects of the culture. T. L. Taylor on Shaw’s article specified that online gaming enriched the culture by providing a place in which the practices can take place and the players can shared their identities and create a community.¹²

On the other hand, video games can be understood as a dual form of interaction in which a player can share the gameplay with others or can decide the share the experience by themselves. However, MMOs were introduced, the playability of video games invited gamers to play by themselves while sharing the experience with others¹³; as said before: playing together. The virtuality of games invited academics to explore the culture as an immersive and interactive process in which players involve themselves with audiences and an diversification of textual images. Furthermore, Mäyrä builds up on the concept of culture in video games as an process for transformation and belonging for players in which the social practices and interactions direct “our attention to the artistic and cultural values, and to the creative expression that games are able to embody and inspire.”¹⁴ Henry Jenkins introduces the concept of convergence to describe the video game culture as a practice that is created by the participation of the individuals with the media and the creation of their synergy with it.¹⁵

W. Keith Winkler attributes the video game culture with aspects related on the stereotyped representation of the gamer by describing them as “marked by modes of dress,

¹⁰ Mia Consalvo, “Creating the Market: Easter Eggs and Secret Agents,” chapter, in *Cheating: Gaining Advantage in Video games* (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 2009), p. 18

¹¹ Mäyrä, “Culture,” p. 293

¹² T. L. Taylor in Shaw, “What Is Video game Culture?,” p. 406

¹³ Shaw, “What Is Video game Culture?,” p. 413-414

¹⁴ Mäyrä, “Culture,” p. 298

¹⁵ Henry Jenkins, 2006 in Shaw, “What Is Video game Culture?,” p. 412

specific linguistic jargon, and a sense of solidarity”.¹⁶ Gamers share individualities that provide the culture with identification: having referenced clothing, a range of new lexicon understood only by those who game —example: afk (away from keyboard), irl (in real life) —. Those aspects provide a *way of life* that connects the individuals within the same cultural aspects, however, Shaw discusses the definition of video game cultures as a detachment of stereotypical characterization of gamers but rather a description of the categories those prototypical denotations raised.¹⁷ Those categories approach the culture in video games as a combination of three aspects: (a) players as a factor to define the video game culture, (b) the way the games are played, and (c) what are the games they are playing. Moreover, those categories allow us to “see that popular discourses actually offer a much more diverse view of what gaming is than they are generally given credit for.”¹⁸

Understanding the video game culture implies producing a systematic process focus on the production of symbols involved in the gaming communities. For Mäyrä, the cultural aspect of being a gamer relies on the global culture which is in constant creation of symbolic meanings and “‘cultural differences’ rather than traditional commodities”.¹⁹ On this matter, Shaw mentions that the video game culture is directly connected with what she calls the popular culture and implicates a constant and rapid transformation of ideologies found on society but also determines political aspects “as a form of entertainment”.²⁰ She defines the gaming culture as a highly social process in which “it should not take for granted the ways in which certain types of games, modes of play, and types of players are used to validate this field of study.”²¹ Those elements are taken into consideration to shape the interactivity and immersion previously mentioned and are precisely an effect of the culture of video games. Johan Huizinga describes playing as an invitation for individuals to group together and share their identity. He implies a sense of secrecy which disguises the player in order to confront

¹⁶ W. Keith Winkler, “The Business and Culture of Gaming,” chapter, in *Gaming as Culture: Essays on Reality, Identity, and Experience in Fantasy Games* by J. Patrick Williams et al., (Jefferson, N.C: McFarland, 2006), p. 147

¹⁷ Shaw, “What Is Video game Culture?,” p. 404

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Mäyrä, “Culture,” p. 294

²⁰ Shaw, “What Is Video game Culture?,” p. 415

²¹ Ibid., p. 416

their individualities and differentiate themselves from the real world.²² However, Huizinga also mentions that this social practices are experiences that “promote sense of togetherness among players that leads to creation of various ‘play-communities’”.²³ As previously mentioned, those communities define the core of the video game culture as a place for developing new interactions, learning new skills, but also as a cultural artifact that shapes how players interact with each other. Hence, video game culture can be defined as a producer of social interactions between gamers. Stanley Pierre-Louis, President & Chief Executive Officer of Entertainment Software Association (ESA), mentions that playing video games, as part of its culture, celebrates players by facilitating a diverse place which fosters diverse experiences “that bring together people of all backgrounds.”²⁴ It provides the gaming industry with a tool to forge new connections within their individuals and, hence, modulates the experiences of immersion of each user. Gamers have created a culture that defines their identity and invites them to develop a *way of life*.

2.2 Video Game Streaming

The core of this thesis deals with the analysis of streaming video games as a tool to create diverse content based on the engagement produced by the different type of streamers. Thus, it is important to clarify how streaming is going to be put into practice across this research. For Mark R. Johnson and Jamie Woodcock, streaming “entails the live broadcast of video content to viewers over the Internet.”²⁵ Zorah Hilvert-Bruce, James T. Neill, Max Sjöblom and Juno Hamari, allude live streaming with social feature in which the streamer and the viewers have a “real-time interaction”²⁶ between each other. The attribute of in ‘real time communication’ aids the audiences to keep engaging with the stream. A sustained engagement works on a live stream as a set of interactions and visual elements that facilitates users with a sense of social presence —belonging— and a progression on the development of trust between individuals.

²² Johan Huizinga, “Nature and Significance of Play as a Cultural Phenomenon,” chapter, in *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980), p. 13

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 12

²⁴ “2022 Essential Facts About the Video game Industry” (USA: Entertainment Software Association, 2022), p. 1

²⁵ Jamie Woodcock and Mark R. Johnson, “The Affective Labor and Performance of Live Streaming on Twitch.Tv,” *Television & New Media* 20, no. 8 (2019): p. 813, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1527476419851077>

²⁶ Zorah Hilvert-Bruce et al., “Social Motivations of Live-Streaming Viewer Engagement on Twitch,” *Computers in Human Behavior* 84 (2018): p. 58–67, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2018.02.013>

The importance of the individuals brings attention to the creation of a community across streaming. For Max Sjöblom, Maria Törhönen, Juno Hamari & Joseph Macey, streaming relies on the viewers due to the connectivity between participants and the facilitation of an immersive experience²⁷. Live streaming captives the attention of new users of media and produces a digital interactivity. The experience of the audience through live streaming is enhanced and produces a more direct interaction with the content. The content created offers sociability, fidelity and interactivity for the users. Furthermore, Jie Lv, Cong Cao, Qianwen Xu, Linyao Ni, Xiuyan Shao and Yangyan Shi attribute streaming with technical functionality and define it as a “social media tool”²⁸ which facilitates the recording and sharing of content. Streaming can be defined as a two way path in which a creator produces content for an audience, and the spectators interact simultaneously with the content received.²⁹ It explores the connection between streamer and viewers across a real-time interactivity in order to provide engagement and entertainment.

As a media phenomenon, streaming has rapidly grown world-wide as a popular medium for entertainment.³⁰ Johnson and Woodcock mention that streaming has given everybody the possibility to become an entertainer and it has been placed as a “time consuming career that depends upon regularity and reliability... whilst also evoking freedom and self-actualization.”³¹ With this increasing of popularity, the spectatorship has also growth, and with it, the demand for this type of entertainment. Such opportunity paves the way for the gaming culture to approach the streaming world and compete with other broadcasting mediums.³² Evan R. Watts, Kevin Koban and Nicholas D. Bowman mention that streaming for gaming represents a controlled environment in which players can fell

²⁷ Max Sjöblom et al., “The Ingredients of Twitch Streaming: Affordances of Game Streams,” *Computers in Human Behavior* 92 (2019): p. 24, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2018.10.012>

²⁸ Lv et al., “How Live Streaming Interactions and Their Visual Stimuli Affect Users’ Sustained Engagement Behaviour—a Comparative Experiment Using Live and Virtual Live Streaming,” *Sustainability* 14, no. 14 (July 20, 2022): p. 1, <https://doi.org/10.3390/su14148907>

²⁹ Max Sjöblom and Juho Hamari, “Why Do People Watch Others Play Video games? An Empirical Study on the Motivations of Twitch Users,” *Computers in Human Behavior* 75 (2017): p. 986, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2016.10.019>

³⁰ Hilvert-Bruce et al., “Social Motivations of Live-Streaming,” p, 58

³¹ Mark R. Johnson and Jamie Woodcock, “‘It’s like the Gold Rush’: The Lives and Careers of Professional Video game Streamers on Twitch.Tv,” *Information, Communication & Society* 22, no. 3 (2017): p. 337, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118x.2017.1386229>

³² Woodcock & Johnson, “The Affective Labor and Performance of Live Streaming on Twitch.Tv,” p. 814

welcome and manage their experience “as social as they wish it to be.”³³ By combining the game industry with the streaming world, video game streaming becomes an interactive space for gamers to share and enjoy games with others. For Johnson and Woodcock, streaming has become an intimate space for players and, due to its nature, gamers have the possibility to create a community and nurture their sense of belonging. They attribute this effect to ‘live’ essence of streaming but also to the in real-time interactions that are facilitated during a stream.³⁴ On the other hand, Arditi ascribes the transformation of video game culture to the development of streaming as a new technology. The attention demanded by the streaming’s technologies opens a new set of “opportunities to reimagine gaming culture.” Additionally, Sky LaRell Anderson mentions that streaming for the video game industry has opened up an opportunity to “connect online and participate in the culture from nearly anywhere in the world.”³⁵ Through streaming, video game culture has also adopted a new method for making a living. Even though the idea of ‘playing for living’ has its nature within the realm of eSports and professional video game players, streaming video games has become “a career path”³⁶ for many content creators as they find the possibility to play for others appealing to make a living from it.

As said before, streaming provides social interactions between individuals. For video games, it anchors the viewer with the streamers but also with other spectators. Video game streaming welcomes gamers to create emotional, safe and trustworthy connections with other players due to the interactions experiences during a broadcast which “enhanced [the] users’ perception of human warmth.”³⁷ Moreover, this sense of personalization and interpersonal relationship it is affordable due to the nature of video game streaming as a live broadcast. It facilitates a direct and responsive channel of communication between the streamer and the viewers and invites they to create different types of interactions.³⁸ Evan R. Watts, Kevin Koban and Nicholas D. Bowman add that those exchanges lead the streamer to an “increased

³³ Evan R. Watts, Kevin Koban, and Nicholas D. Bowman, “Digital Gaming Audiences: Awareness, without Closeness,” *Entertainment Computing* 36 (2021): p. 10, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.entcom.2020.100384>

³⁴ Johnson & Woodcock, “It’s like the Gold Rush’,” p. 338

³⁵ Sky LaRell Anderson, “Watching people is not a game: Interactive online corporeality, Twitch.tv and video game streams,” *Game Studies* 17, no. 1 (2017): p. 2-3

³⁶ Woodcock & Johnson, “The Affective Labor and Performance of Live Streaming on Twitch.Tv,” p. 814

³⁷ Lv et al., “How Live Streaming Interactions,” p. 12

³⁸ Sjöblom & Hamari, “Why Do People Watch Others Play Video games?,” p. 985, 991

closeness with the audience and even extensive self-disclosure.”³⁹ Video game streaming shapes gaming experiences by combining the affordances of being live and the social interactions developed on the stream. Anderson credits the audience’s need to be in the presence of a streamer by sharing a space in which their virtual corporeality coexist.⁴⁰ On the other hand, Lv et al. promote that video game streaming influence the viewers’ emotional connectivity with the streamer by their interactions produced during a broadcast with “prompt experiences of warmth [and] satisfies their sense of belonging.”⁴¹

Video game streaming provides the video game culture the possibility to expand its reach and approach audiences thought virtual spaces. By taking advantage of the community’s development and the need for gamers to belong⁴², streaming becomes a place to share and communicate with other gamers but also it helps to enrich the entertainment experience of playing a video game. Sjöblom and Hamari mention that while video game streaming has been becoming an attractive medium for entertainment, it has also brought back the gaming culture with social attributes⁴³ by producing an immersive and interactive experiences for gamers. For Johnson and Woodcock, streaming has also become “the legitimisation of gaming as a spectator activity”⁴⁴ by sharing a place to communities of gamers gather and learn form each other to play diverse video game. Nowadays, media users have developed a tendency to watch other people play video games on stream on platform such as Facebook, YouTube but specially on Twitch.⁴⁵ Twitch as a streaming platform portraits the definition of streaming previously described as a capturing “socially enjoyable experience and a space to interact with peers having the same interest in an easily joinable community.”⁴⁶ Video game streaming has found their home on such platform and on the next section a better understanding of what is Twitch and its affordances will be explained.

³⁹ Watts et al., “Digital Gaming Audiences,” p. 2

⁴⁰ Anderson, “Watching people is not a game,” p. 11

⁴¹ Lv et al., “How Live Streaming Interactions,” p. 6

⁴² Churchill and Xu, “The Modem Nation:”, p. 227

⁴³ Sjöblom & Hamari, “Why Do People Watch Others Play Video games?,” p. 986

⁴⁴ Johnson & Woodcock, “‘It’s like the Gold Rush’,” p. 340

⁴⁵ Sjöblom & Hamari, “Why Do People Watch Others Play Video games?,” p. 985

⁴⁶ Tim Wulf, Frank M. Schneider, and Stefan Beckert, “Watching Players: An Exploration of Media Enjoyment on Twitch,” *Games and Culture* 15, no. 3 (2018): p. 341, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1555412018788161>

2.3 Twitch

As mentioned before, Twitch can be describe as a social media platform for live streaming. Even though it is not an ‘only-gaming’ streaming platform⁴⁷, it provides the gaming culture a virtual space to display other gamers gameplays and allows the audience to spectate and share their gaming experiences. Twitch has become a place that brings together around 7 million people a month and offer a social freedom to interact and chat with others.⁴⁸ Arditi defines it as a “hybrid cultural form”⁴⁹ that merges the new technologies of streaming with the video game industry affording the community to develop a cultural approach to their values and behaviors. Twitch invites the spectator to not just watch other play, but encourage them to participate, communicate and be part of the content. Johnston and Woodcock mention that it has become an extremely social platform in which communication thought interactions and shared experiences between the streamer and the viewers become key for content creation and, hence, their distribution.⁵⁰

Gandolfi highlighted the fact that the majority of the content on Twitch relies on the functionality of ‘in real-time’ —Twitch allows a monthly storage of the content broadcasted, if the streamer chooses to do so on their profile page— which invites the audience to emerge as a participant in the constant interactions between the creator and them.⁵¹ In other words, Twitch captures the essence of interactivity in gaming and transforms the connectivity between game culture and entertainment: “it is the home of the largest gaming community in history.”⁵² It harbors hundred of millions of viewers becoming “the most popular social video streaming platform in Europe and in the US”⁵³ which connects gamers with the new dimensionalities of video game culture in the virtual era. Twitch is a service that encourage

⁴⁷ Kristine Ask, Hendrik Storstein Spilker, and Martin Hansen, “The Politics of User-Platform Relationships: Co-Scripting Live-Streaming on Twitch.Tv,” *First Monday*, (2019): p. 2, <https://doi.org/10.5210/fm.v24i7.9648>

⁴⁸ “Twitch Ads: Audience,” Twitch.tv, accessed April 17, 2023, <https://www.twitchadvertising.tv/audience/>

⁴⁹ Arditi, “Streaming Video games,” p. 137

⁵⁰ Woodcock & Johnson, “The Affective Labor and Performance of Live Streaming on Twitch.Tv,” p. 816

⁵¹ Enrico Gandolfi, “To Watch or to Play, It Is in the Game: The Game Culture on Twitch.Tv among Performers, Plays and Audiences,” *Journal of Gaming & Virtual Worlds* 8, no. 1 (2016): p. 68, https://doi.org/10.1386/jgvw.8.1.63_1

⁵² Churchill & Xu, “The Modem Nation,” p. 223

⁵³ Sjöblom et al., “The Ingredients of Twitch Streaming,” p. 21

interactivity between gamers and invites them to participate in the gaming culture dialogue. As a service platform, it provides tools and mechanics that allow the streamer —between amateur and professional content creators— to display their gameplay and connect with others through narrative of the stream and the actions partaken in-game but also by communicate their thoughts, suggestions and ideas across the live chat window. Johnson and Woodcock attribute this social process as distinction of Twitch from the other platforms and acknowledge them as more than just a broadcasting website.⁵⁴

Video game streaming on Twitch portrays a streamer showcasing their gaming experiences and actions, and nurturing interactions between the audience. The platform facilitates the creation of a profile that develops the identity for each gamer. Twitch fosters a connectivity between the streamer and the audience by portraying themselves through a webcam —it is important to acknowledge that not all streamers make use of this feature—. By displaying their faces, streamers are able to show their emotions and expressions and, hence, creates a connection with the viewers.⁵⁵ Additionally, Twitch offers the chat window as the feature in which the interactions are produced. Streamer and viewers communicate within each other across this space rather with message, emotes or both. According to Sjöblom, Törhönen, Hamari and Macey, Twitch also provides social features by allowing the audience to become a follower and share the stream with others.⁵⁶ Furthermore, Twitch extends the engagement to those on the partner program and grants them the possible to obtain subscriptions, those followers that “agreed to give monthly financial support to the streamer”⁵⁷; but allows them to receive donations from any Twitch member. These financial support features can be seen on stream by pop-up notifications —alerts— with animated or static pictures. However, streamers have the possibility to improve their alerts by using third-party websites that allow a customization of their content. Moreover, Twitch hosts a profile page for every account in which they display informative features that provide other members with information about the streamer but also about the stream: title of the stream, social media links, name of the game being played —Twitch has named this feature as ‘category’— and, in some cases, the team they belong to.

⁵⁴ Woodcock & Johnson, “The Affective Labor and Performance of Live Streaming on Twitch.Tv,” p. 816

⁵⁵ Johnson & Woodcock, “‘It’s like the Gold Rush’,” p. 337

⁵⁶ Sjöblom et al., “The Ingredients of Twitch Streaming,” p. 21

⁵⁷ Johnson & Woodcock, “‘It’s like the Gold Rush’,” p. 337

The main feature of Twitch interface is the possibility to watch the game play with the video recording of the face of the streamers. The webcam provides the audience with in real-time reactions while their microphone enriches the audiovisual experience for the viewers. “This picture-in-a-picture of the streamer playing the game illustrates how Twitch affords new ways to mediate affective performance, allowing the audience to connect with facial expressions, voice, and immediate surroundings.”⁵⁸ Sjöblom, Törhönen, Hamari and Macey add that the usage of a webcam and a microphone augment the experience for the spectator as it make visible the “behaviours and knowledge of the streamer” which facilitate a social space to produce a constant communication system in which the streamer and the viewers participate, create and adapt the content streamed.⁵⁹ The chat window hosts the interactions and becomes a participant in how the content could be delivered. The actions exchanged between the streamer and the viewers can influence the deliverance of the content rather by commenting on stream or by altering the development of the broadcast. Depending of the streamers, these actions can be ignored or taken into consideration for further interactions in order to differentiate their stream from others.⁶⁰ Additionally, the profile page or ‘about me’ section provides the audience a more in-detail information about who is the person on the screen. According to Sjöblom, Törhönen, Hamari and Macey, this section gives the streamer an opportunity to be “approachable and easier to identify with [which] can enhance the personal brand they convey through their video stream and build upon it.”⁶¹ It is common to see on the profile page the social media links. They invite the audience to immerse themselves into the life of the streamer and providing them a deeper involvement in the community “by affording social connectivity, social interactivity, and further content discovery.”⁶² Additionally, Twitch counts with monetization attributes that welcomes the partner and affiliate program members to earn a share from advertisement, donations and subscriptions, but also by displaying a digital space for the sponsors on their *About Me* page

⁵⁸ Woodcock & Johnson, “The Affective Labor and Performance of Live Streaming on Twitch.Tv,” p. 816

⁵⁹ Sjöblom et al., “The Ingredients of Twitch Streaming,” p. 23

⁶⁰ Gandolfi, “To Watch or to Play,” p. 68

⁶¹ Sjöblom et al., “The Ingredients of Twitch Streaming,” p. 25

⁶² Ibid., p. 23

or on stream. These systems enables the video game culture to change the narrative of gaming careers and it has merged the concept of gaming and working.⁶³

One of the main affordances of Twitch is the facilitation it provides to communicate between the streamer and the audience. The engagement produced during streams supports a relationship based on interactivity and connectivity. On their website, Twitch announces that the platform invites each individual's creativity to thrive and explores new universes. They invite the users to portray their identity and passions, and declare that they can help you create the community you have always wanted.⁶⁴ It is also on the freedom of automated features that Twitch allows their members to explore the different aspects of streaming, specially when it comes to interact with the audience.⁶⁵ Anderson suggests a human interactive representation across Twitch in which the website offers the audience a '*human touch*' by the interactions shared between the streamer and the viewers.⁶⁶ Twitch afford the spectator to create a presence within the streams and such awareness keeps the immersive experience away from other live streaming platforms.

Vaibhav Diwanji, Abigail Reed, Arienne Ferchaud, Jonmichael Seibert, Victoria Weinbrecht and Nicholas Sellers describe this interaction as a '*digital copresence*' that allows the users to connect with others through a digital environment. They attribute the connectivity of Twitch to the "feeling of being together"⁶⁷ sharing the same virtual space. Hence, Twitch brings together individuals and affords them to create a link of '*immediacy*' within each other. The creation and consumption of content across the platform provide a sense of connectivity that draws a perceived '*intimacy*' between the streamer and the viewer.⁶⁸ Twitch can be attributed the functionality to create human connections and facilitate the communications between gamers of the same community. Johnson and Woodcock establish that Twitch is *life*⁶⁹ because it brings together a new approach to converse about video games. It allows a content creator to impact others and create a inviting space to share gaming experiences. This

⁶³ Ibid., p. 21

⁶⁴ "About," Twitch.tv, accessed April 17, 2023, <https://www.twitch.tv/p/en/about/>

⁶⁵ Sjöblom et al., "The Ingredients of Twitch Streaming," p. 20

⁶⁶ Anderson, "Watching people is not a game," p. 11

⁶⁷ Vaibhav Diwanji et al., "Don't Just Watch, Join in: Exploring Information Behavior and Copresence on Twitch," *Computers in Human Behavior* 105 (2020): p. 2, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2019.106221>

⁶⁸ Johnson & Woodcock, "'It's like the Gold Rush'," p. 342

⁶⁹ Ibid.

statement aligns with what Twitch has written on their website: “This is the home for creators streaming video games, music, sports, and everything else they love with magnetic authenticity—drawing in millions of fans who are eager to play a part in where their shared passion is heading next.”⁷⁰ For Twitch, live streaming is about uniting individuals and providing them with a space to experience affinity for other gamers. Regarding this matter, Churchill and Xu corroborate the proclamation by associating the platform with the affording of *fostering communities* for all type of gamers. They argue that Twitch “is the first massive social site in history where gamers from every gaming community gather to interact.”⁷¹ From connecting individuals and displaying a social environment for them to interacting to harbor a human interactivity and digital copresence. As Gandolfi mentions, “Twitch.tv appears as a significant and coherent articulation of the current game culture... the portal attracts engaged audiences with a strong connection to digital entertainment staging a new setting in which one may experience the medium.”⁷² Therefore, Twitch generates a sense of immediacy and intimacy, facilitates the creation of a gaming community, and portrays an exciting space for the video game culture to nurture intimate interactions and fortify the connection between streamers, games and gamers.

2.4 Content Creation

Video game culture has opened up a social space for content creators to develop new ways to connect with their audience due to the interactivity and immersion produced during streams. Twitch facilitates the streamers with interactive and participatory stage for them to express themselves, produces video game conversations and discourse and work together with others to create content.⁷³ Moreover, it invites the users and the community to participate, interact and collaborate with the content presented by the streamers. For Sjöblom and Hamari, video game streaming frames the the production of content into the hands of the creators but also of the audience shifting the development of it into towards user-generated content (UGC).⁷⁴

⁷⁰ “Company,” Twitch.tv, accessed April 19, 2023, <https://www.twitch.tv/p/en/company/>

⁷¹ Churchill & Xu, “The Modem Nation,” p. 223

⁷² Gandolfi, “To Watch or to Play,” p. 77

⁷³ Maria Törhönen et al., “Fame and Fortune, or Just Fun? A Study on Why People Create Content on Video Platforms,” *Internet Research* 30, no. 1 (2019): p. 165, <https://doi.org/10.1108/intr-06-2018-0270>

⁷⁴ Sjöblom & Hamari, “Why Do People Watch Others Play Video games?,” p. 993

Twitch hosts a great amount of content created within the platform and mainly, by its members; but it is in the interactions between the streamers and the community where the composition and development of content is generated.

User-generated content can be defined as organic content produced by anybody across the internet. John Krumm, Nigel Davies and Chandra Narayanaswami address the information provided as voluntarily with the functionality to entertain or generate further knowledge of a specific topic.⁷⁵ Additionally, the content resides publicly within the realms of virtually and the Internet and reflects the dynamics produced by individuals outside professional practices.⁷⁶ UGC involves the content creators to exhibit their creativity and converge a set of new digital tools with traditional media. The Adobe Communication Team adds to the definition of UGC a connection with branding and addresses the content creators as “customers and brand advocates”⁷⁷ that produce content without being part of a company or a specific brand. Furthermore, Teresa K Naab and Annika Sehl draw together the definition of user-generated content as:

“UGC is characterized by a degree of personal contribution. The users contribute the content themselves;... UGC must be published, it must be accessible to the public or a group... UGC is created ‘outside the realm of a profession and professional routines’... proximity to their audience by including the participation of its members in the editorial processes and in the production of publications or broadcasts.”⁷⁸

Recent researches on content creation on video game streaming on Twitch have been focused on the motivations behind the production of the content and how it has ‘decentralized’⁷⁹ the generations of content across the platform and allowing the development of diverse types of content. The distribution of the content across live streaming platforms

⁷⁵ John Krumm, Nigel Davies, and Chandra Narayanaswami, “User-Generated Content,” *IEEE Pervasive Computing* 7, no. 4 (2008): p. 10, <https://doi.org/10.1109/mprv.2008.85>

⁷⁶ Simon Bründl & Thomas Hess, “Why do Users Broadcast? Examining Individual Motives and Social Capital on Social Live Streaming Platforms,” *Pacific Asia Conference on Information Systems* (2016), p. 2

⁷⁷ “User-Generated Content (UGC) — a Guide to Getting Started,” Adobe Experience Cloud Blog, October 28, 2022, <https://business.adobe.com/blog/basics/user-generated-content-ugc-a-guide-to-getting-started>

⁷⁸ Teresa K Naab and Annika Sehl, “Studies of User-Generated Content: A Systematic Review,” *Journalism* 18, no. 10 (2016): p. 1258, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884916673557>

⁷⁹ Törhönen et al., “Fame and Fortune, or Just Fun?,” p. 167

has merged the roles of the users as producers and consumers⁸⁰, also known as ‘produsage’ as in the combination of the concepts of *product* and *usage*.⁸¹ Twitch facilitates its members with the opportunity to participate and consume content across the platform but also encourages them to produce their own. As Twitch’s members become the main source to create content on the website, UGC can be defined as space in which online communities coexist and, particularly of video game streaming, nurtures the contribution of its members to enrich the creation of content by providing the tools necessary to “distribute, customize, and develop”⁸² the content for the video game culture.

The sense of community is what Sjöblom and Hamari capitalized as one of the advantages of the creation of content on live streaming media.⁸³ Gamers’ desire of ‘belonging’ is not only built up by watching other people play but also by taking part of the development of such streams: rather by interacting with the streamer and commenting on the chat window, or by creating their own stream and community. Krumm, Davies and Narayanaswami attribute this outcome as an “intimate side of pervasive user-generated content”⁸⁴ that encourages the gaming industry to unite a group of people that share the same interests. UGC in video game streaming fosters a social environment that brings together individuals and it channels their efforts to communicate and interact within the live streaming platforms. Therefore, Twitch focuses on the creation of social interactions and engagement by providing the streamers with the necessary tools to connect with their audience and enhance the development of their community.⁸⁵ In other words, UGC benefits the creators to create connections and tell stories with the content. However, creating content on live streaming platforms such as Twitch has demanded the streamers to immerse themselves in the constant and regular production of entertainment. Bründl and Hess mention that content creators have to increase the amount of the content they produce in order to keep their audience engaged, but they must also maintain a consistency in the broadcasting of content.⁸⁶ Furthermore, content creators on Twitch now have an obligation to provide the audience an entertaining

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 181

⁸¹ Bruns and Schmidt in Naab & Sehl, “Studies of User-Generated Content,” p. 1264

⁸² Naab & Sehl, “Studies of User-Generated Content,” p. 1257

⁸³ Sjöblom & Hamari, “Why Do People Watch Others Play Video games?,” p. 993

⁸⁴ Krumm et al., “User-Generated Content,” p. 11

⁸⁵ Törhönen et al., “Fame and Fortune, or Just Fun?,” p. 180

⁸⁶ Bründl & Hess, “Why do Users Broadcast?,” p. 12

experience in order to fulfill the expectation of the game. Kas van der Molen mentions that such content is constituted by the game they play, the way it is played, the entertainment factor of how the content creators is narrating the streams, and the interactivity and connectivity of the audience towards the stream.⁸⁷ Twitch website's interface provides the audience with a set of content categories that invite the members to select the type of content they want to watch. On her study about the streamer's motives to generate UGC on live streaming platforms, Mathilde B. Friedländer found out that now of the main reason why content creators broadcast their content is to communicate with others.⁸⁸ Hence, user-generated content affords a dynamic and constant creation of content within the video game streams and hosts a social, personalized and immersive experience for the creators.

UGC promotes the “the emergence of micro-celebrities” by providing the streamers with the opportunity to become “opinion leader[s]” and influence, on the daily basis, their community.⁸⁹ According to Törhönen, Sjöblom, Hassan and Hamari the ‘celebrity culture’ favors those content creators who have become famous across the platforms and provides the video game streaming environment to take an interest of the commercial and media attention.⁹⁰ It encourages the streamers to adjust their content to profit from the reception of the audience and creates an approach for UGC as a revenue functionality for the streamers. The professionalism of streaming has molded the video game culture into a space contain within the aspects of labour and working schedules. Törhönen, Sjöblom, Hassan and Hamari define is as ‘playbour’⁹¹ where those actions of gaming and having fun are mixed with professional aspects: transforming the video game culture into a standardized and regulated occupation as they create new value to the video game industry by providing new content to the gaming culture. Therefore, Twitch provides users with the affiliate program as a basic-started monetization dynamic in which streamers can acquire donations and subscriptions in order to encourage them to keep creating content. Even though this endorsement techniques provide the content creators with an opportunity to benefit from their streams, it also

⁸⁷ Kas van der Molen, “Valorant and the Platformization of Free-To-Play Games.” *Press Start* 8, no. 2 (2022): p. 31

⁸⁸ Mathilde B. Friedländer, “Streamer Motives and User-Generated Content on Social Live-Streaming Services,” *Journal of Information Science Theory and Practice* 5 (2017): p. 71

⁸⁹ van der Molen, “Valorant and the Platformization of Free-To-Play Games,” p. 33

⁹⁰ Törhönen et al., “Fame and Fortune, or Just Fun?,” p. 178

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 167

restrained them to be part of “an exploitative sociotechnical system that extracts value from UGC.”⁹² van der Molen argues that user-generated content construct streamers to keep building a ‘sustainable service’ that allows them to keep building the interactions with their community. The streamers on Twitch become part of the distribution environment of the game companies in which the promotion of their games becomes an important tool to influence audiences. The codependency between the streamers on Twitch and the video games provides an opportunity to the gaming industry to develop new interactions with the consumers, and transform the content, based on UGC, into a profit.⁹³ It is here where the content creators on live streaming platform such as Twitch enrolls content creators to navigate between enjoying a game and entertaining their community, and the subjective suggestion that the infrastructure of the platform obligates the streamers.⁹⁴

At the end, as Adobe Communication Team presents, for brands UGC becomes a fundamental resource to engage with their audience.⁹⁵ Regarding video game streaming on Twitch, the democratization and the fabrications of the ‘prouzers’ invites the content creators to generate a direct communication system with their communities. Max Sjöblom, Maria Törhönen, Juho Hamari and Joseph Macey mention that “we are not only witnessing a convergence of interactive and ‘passive’ media but also an oscillating development curve where aspects of the media experience come and go depending on the platforms on which they are consumed.”⁹⁶ Therefore, video game streaming has also been influenced by the tools provided by Twitch in order to change the aim of the creation of content but also how the content is produced. It has diversified the production of content and it welcomes the audience to participate in the creation of the stream.

⁹² van der Molen, “Valorant and the Platformization of Free-To-Play Games,” p. 24

⁹³ Ibid., p. 22

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 28

⁹⁵ “User-Generated Content (UGC) — a Guide to Getting Started,” Adobe Experience Cloud Blog

⁹⁶ Max Sjöblom et al., “Content Structure Is King: An Empirical Study on Gratifications, Game Genres and Content Type on Twitch,” *Computers in Human Behavior* 73 (2017): p. 168, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2017.03.036>

2.5 Streamer's Identity and Parasocial Relationship

2.5.1 Streamer's Role and Identity

Streamers can be defined as those individuals who share their content on live stream platforms. In the context of video game streaming, the streamer is identified as a gamer who plays and broadcasts video games for others to watch. They present an entertaining environment in which other players join in to interact, develop new abilities or/and socialize with other gamers. Reyhaan King & Teresa de la Hera mention that video game streamers have become a “source of information and entertainment”⁹⁷ for gamers by providing knowledge about games and the latest updates of the on-game mechanics, but also promote a show with fun and humorist gaming content. As mention in section 2.2 *Video game Streaming*, streamers provide a social space for the video game industry and enhance the dimension of interaction within the gaming experiences. The streamers welcome others to interact with them, with their content, and with others viewers by acknowledging their presence and addressing the attention to them from time to time. The social demands⁹⁸, as Evan R. Watts, Kevin Koban and Nicholas D. Bowman defined it, portrays a division of attention from the streamer between the game and the audience. The presence of others while streaming video game obligates the streamer to address them and generate a interpersonal connection through their messages exchange and responses. These interactions expose the streamer as a social character that navigates across the live streaming platforms to connect with the audience while keeping their attention to the gameplay.⁹⁹ Furthermore, the streamer faces an authoritarian social environment in which they control the interactions produced during the stream. Gandolfi mentions that the viewers' actions can altered the content created by the streamers and can harness “and become part of the show.”¹⁰⁰ The broadcaster controls the production of the content but also the interactions they produce. They posses power over their audience's experience and can create an interactive stream rather than just a ‘watch only’ show. Additionally, Watts, Koban and Bowman attributes the streamer as an emotional

⁹⁷ Reyhaan King and Teresa de la Hera, “Fortnite Streamers as Influencers: A Study on Gamers' Perceptions,” *The Computer Games Journal* 9, no. 4 (2020): p. 352, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40869-020-00112-6>

⁹⁸ Watts et al., “Digital Gaming Audiences,” p. 3

⁹⁹ Tim Wulf, Frank M. Schneider, and Juliane Queck, “Exploring Viewers' Experiences of Parasocial Interactions with Video game Streamers on Twitch,” *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking* 24, no. 10 (2021): p. 648, <https://doi.org/10.1089/cyber.2020.0546>

¹⁰⁰ Gandolfi, “To Watch or to Play,” p. 68

character that is able to mold the narrative of the content in order to connect with the spectators.¹⁰¹ The streamers becomes a persona for social identification for those watching.

However, aside from the streamer's intention to keep the audience engaged with their responses, live streaming platforms enable the possibility to use integrated or third-party mechanics to generate automated messages for the audience. For Joon Soo Lim, Min-Ji Choe, Jun Zhang and Ghee-Young Noh these tools encourage the audience to enter the immersive interaction produced during the live stream.¹⁰² Hence, the building up of the attention, the interactive experience and the influence on the community, portrays the streamer as a opinion leader, a *influencer* — seen as a person who influence others into their own ideologies—. van der Molten mentions that one of the main roles of the streamer is to distribute content and promote new games.¹⁰³ King and de la Hera also attribute the streamer as a promoter and opinion leader in the video game industry¹⁰⁴ based on the reputation they create by streaming games and developing a credibility within the video games they stream.

The identity of a streamer on Twitch is not only defined by what the platform demands from them and their social role but also implies the understanding of the combination between the mechanics and interface elements and the perspective of the audience on the person behind the screen. One of the main factors that builds up the identity of the streamer is the profile picture which exhibits a first encounter between the audience and the persona broadcasting. The avatar provides the streamer with a self representation of themselves and fosters the attention to the person and not the game itself. However, the profile picture is not always a face image of the streamer and can portray a “stream/brand logos or abbreviations of the streamer's username.”¹⁰⁵

Regarding the connectivity with the audience through the image or the representation of the streamer, King and de la Hera suggested three factors that contribute to the development of the identity of the streamer. They mention that in order to create a sense of identification across the video game streaming world, the broadcaster most present

¹⁰¹ Watts et al., “Digital Gaming Audiences,” p. 2

¹⁰² Joon Soo Lim et al., “The Role of Wishful Identification, Emotional Engagement, and Parasocial Relationships in Repeated Viewing of Live-Streaming Games: A Social Cognitive Theory Perspective,” *Computers in Human Behavior* 108 (2020): p. 4, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2020.106327>

¹⁰³ van der Molen, “Valorant and the Platformization of Free-To-Play Games,” p. 22

¹⁰⁴ King & de la Hera, “Fortnite Streamers as Influencers,” p. 360

¹⁰⁵ Anderson, “Watching people is not a game,” p. 4

themselves as an individual that symbolizes attractiveness, trustworthiness and expertise. Attractiveness is associated with relatability between the streamer, their content and how they share it with the audience.¹⁰⁶ The profile picture contributes to the enhancement of attractiveness, however, there are streaming labels that attribute the content creator with a deeper connection with the audience. As part of the social labels portrayed during stream, Anderson revises the tagline, the streamer username and the team name as elements that contribute to the development of the streamer's identity, hence his attractiveness with the viewers.¹⁰⁷ On the streaming interface of Twitch, the tagline describes the purpose or the intension of the stream. It orients the spectators with the information about the stream and what's going to happen during the broadcast. The streamer's name or, rather, username brings details about the person streaming and approaches the streamer as a social entity disconnecting them from the game and providing the content creator with a presence of the stream.¹⁰⁸ On the other hand, the team name introduces the audience into the groups or associations the streamer belongs too and works as a verification data for those looking for trustworthy streamers. The trust developed by the streamer is here also taking an importance into creating an identity. King and de la Hera define the trustworthiness of a streamer as factor of popularity and identification with the audience. It is a connection developed between the viewers and the content creator and encourage the spectators to keep coming back to the streamer's channel.¹⁰⁹

However, stream labels such as the amount of followers also provide the audience with an impression of expertise as the more followers the more famous the streamer is, ergo, 'I must watch them'. Furthermore, the trust on the streamer can be strengthened by the video feed and the visual presence of the streamer in the broadcast. The inclusion of the webcam provides the viewers with a direct perspective of what the streamer is doing by showcasing their "movements, facial expressions, body positions, gestures, expression of emotion, gender, race and clothing."¹¹⁰ The embodiment of the streamer on screen provides the gives the audience an opportunity to contextualize the creation of the content by placing the

¹⁰⁶ King and de la Hera, "Fortnite Streamers as Influencers," p. 353

¹⁰⁷ Anderson, "Watching people is not a game," p. 5

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ King and de la Hera, "Fortnite Streamers as Influencers," p. 353-354

¹¹⁰ Anderson, "Watching people is not a game," p. 5

persona outside the game. The space and the visual image of the streamer contextualized the video game streaming experience and immerse the spectators, not only into the video game, but also into the physical place where the streamer is located.

2.5.2 Streamers' Categories

Across the research's field of streamers' categories, streamers have been associated with the how they play the video games, how they produce the content and broadcast, the interpretation of the audience perspective about the streamers, and the functionality Twitch provides for the interactivity and connectivity between the viewers and the broadcaster. For Churchill and Xu, the modality and play-style of streamers helps to categories them in three types of gamers. The first one, Casual Players, are those who play for fun and to entertain the viewers; secondly, Speed Runners are energized streamers motivated by the challenges of the game and the need to finish it faster than anybody; and thirdly, Competitive Gamers are streamers who practice, compete and rank-up on the E-sport games.¹¹¹

Gandolfi approaches streamers based on their perform on stream and the captivity produced towards their audience in order to create a unique immersive experience. His approach brings into questions how the interactions between streamers and audience are displayed and how their content is presented during the broadcast.¹¹² He describes three types of streamers: the professional, the hedonist and the companion. The professional alludes to streamers who plays challenging and competitive games and display their abilities to overcome the game. As one of the main characteristics of this type, the audiences becomes silent for the broadcaster as their intentions is to deliver a effective spectacle.¹¹³ The second category, the hedonist, refers the streamer as an entertainer with personal and show-business abilities in order to keep the audience interested on the stream. Their interactions with the audience are limited and they rely on the social space or moments on stream that the streamer creates in order to address the viewers.¹¹⁴ At last, the companion is based on the social interactions produced during the stream between the streamer and the audience. The objective of the streamer "is to share feelings, memories and emotions related to game culture's

¹¹¹ Churchill & Xu, "The Modem Nation," p. 223

¹¹² Gandolfi, "To Watch or to Play," p. 75

¹¹³ Ibid., p. 77

¹¹⁴ Ibid., p. 77-78

articulations”¹¹⁵ in order to capture the spectators’ attention and create a connection with them.

Researchers King and de la Hera have defined the streamers based on how the audience perceive their content and their identity. They categorized them in three types: Streamer as an Entertainer, which is recognized as a creator of entertainment and engage the audience with fun and relaxing content but also as facilitators for learning experiences of the games they play; Streamers as an Inspiration to Play, which the content created by the broadcaster invites the spectator to play and find new ways to advance in the game. They inspire competition and collaboration between gamers which produces an collective of sharing experience between players; Streamers as Endorser, which portrays streamers as ‘ambassadors of the game’ and, hence, encourage the viewers to follow certain game mechanics, purchase objects in-game or simply explore new games or modalities.¹¹⁶

Anderson describes three categories that explore the functionality of Twitch in order to capture the corporeality and interactivity of the streaming world and the affordances the platform provide the streamer to connect with the audience. The first category, Showcasing players/streamers, focus on the attention given to the streamers as they go live on Twitch. The second one, Showcasing viewers, gives the importance to the audience and how they interact with the content on Twitch. And finally, Showcasing the relationship between players and viewers explains the connectivity between the streamer and the viewers and how those interactions are taking place during a live stream.¹¹⁷

2.5.3 Parasocial Relationship in Video game Streaming

Considering the role of the streamer, the self identification in video game streaming, and the categorization of their type of stream and content; the connection with the audience becomes a pivotal factor to address on this research. Throughout the stream, the content creator produces a social space for the viewers to engage with their content and directly interact with the creation of the content.¹¹⁸ The bond produced encourages the audience to participate in the digital entertainment industry and to experience the medium —live streaming on Twitch

¹¹⁵ Ibid., p. 78

¹¹⁶ King & de la Hera, “Fortnite Streamers as Influencers,” p. 361

¹¹⁷ Anderson, “Watching people is not a game,” p. 4

¹¹⁸ Gandolfi, “To Watch or to Play,” p. 77

— as social environment in which players can develop relationships. A personal connection between the streamer and the viewers influence the production of live stream content and integrates the gaming industry into the studies of parasocial relationship (PSR) in which the broadcaster facilitates an imaginary and controlled face-to-face connection with their spectators.¹¹⁹ The PSR between the streamer and the audience is one-sided where the content creator acts as the one in control of the exposition of the relationship while each individual viewers associate themselves with the streamer in their own way. Joon Soo Lim, Min-Ji Choe, Jun Zhang and Ghee-Young Noh defines PSR as a “long-term intimate relationship that an audience feels toward a media personality or celebrity based on repeated encounters with the performer through mediated reality.”¹²⁰ The connection is based on the constant interactions the streamer presents to the viewers. They anticipate the content and engage with the interplay the streamer is giving to them which facilitates a belief of reciprocity. However, such feeling experienced by the audience can only be defined as an illusion as the relationship is “inevitably one-sided.”¹²¹ Horton and Wohl determine a social mobility that in generated within the development of the PSR between the streamer and the audience¹²². Those interactions produced on the social environment of video game streaming are strengthen not only by the intimacy the streamer shapes within his content but also by the “mutual awareness” that is produced on the stream. Streamers would take a look at the chat window and respond to the messages commented by the audience. On times, they address those on the chat box directly and acknowledge their presence.¹²³ For Tim Wulf, Frank M. Schneider and Juliane Queck these back-and-forth interactions between the streamer and the audience reinforce the realness of the PSR on Twitch by fostering a direct communication channel and addressing spectators directly by their username.¹²⁴

Even though the streamers do not have a precise knowledge of who are the viewers, they continue to cultivate a social relationship with the viewers in order to integrate them into the stream and make them feel welcomed and accepted. Therefore, it is possible to render a

¹¹⁹ Donald Horton and R. Richard Wohl, “Mass Communication and Para-Social Interaction,” *Psychiatry* 19, no. 3 (1956): p. 215, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00332747.1956.11023049>

¹²⁰ Lim et al., “The Role of Wishful Identification,” p. 3

¹²¹ Horton & Wohl, “Mass Communication and Para-Social Interaction,” p. 217

¹²² Ibid., 222

¹²³ Lim et al., “The Role of Wishful Identification,” p. 3

¹²⁴ Wulf et al., “Exploring Viewers’ Experiences of Parasocial Interactions,” p. 649

parasocial relationship between the streamer and the audience based on the efforts the broadcaster assemble in order to engage the viewers with their content. The gestures, the direct replies and the in-stream interactions invite the viewer to emulate an intimate connection with the streamer and associate them as “a friend, counselor, comforter, and model.”¹²⁵ However, streamers are aware of the audience’s desire to connect with them¹²⁶ and, hence, formulate the interactions based on the character they want to portray and embody to the viewers. Video game streaming as a social and digital environment promotes the development of parasocial interactions by producing an intimate connection between the audience and the streamer. As a facilitator, the streamer interactivity increases the acknowledgement and social presence for the spectators¹²⁷ and brings them ‘closer’ to them.

2.6 Audience’s Engagement

Once the stream is live, the relationship between the streamer and the viewers begins. The spectators are invited to engage with the content while the streamer stimulates their enjoyment. The community’s involvement within the video game streaming world relies on the acceptance of what the content creator produces while broadcasting. Those interactions are fostered on Twitch and they nurture the parasocial relationship developed by the interactions within the stream. Horton and Wohl argue that the role of the audience is affected by the loyalty they develop towards the performer. As they “contribute to the illusion”¹²⁸ of the relationship, the same interactions happen in streaming when the viewers connect and assume an obligation towards the streamer. It is expected from the audience to adopt the experience and get absorbed by the content. Being immersed within the live stream experience suggests a dependence of the viewers in order to keep the content flow active and encourages the streamer to continue broadcasting. However, before addressing how media research approach interactions provided by the viewers in video game streaming and their motives to watch live streams, a definition of what a spectator —audience/viewers— is needed. Gifford Cheung and Jeff Huang define spectator as individuals that participate and

¹²⁵ Horton & Wohl, “Mass Communication and Para-Social Interaction,” p. 217

¹²⁶ Watts et al., “Digital Gaming Audiences,” p. 11

¹²⁷ Wulf et al., “Exploring Viewers’ Experiences of Parasocial Interactions,” p. 649

¹²⁸ Horton & Wohl, “Mass Communication and Para-Social Interaction,” p. 220

“follow in-game experience, but not direct participants in the game.”¹²⁹ A viewer can then be approached as a person who has gotten involved in the reality of the video game streaming infrastructure and interacts with the information or actions in-game exhibited by the streamer. For Watts, Koban and Bowman acknowledge these viewers as “digital gaming audiences” in which gamers, fanatics and bystanders interact and share their experiences. These interactions can be defined as a construct in which social interactions and a sense of belonging are exchanged and nurtured. Within the video live streaming on Twitch, the audience’s *engagement*¹³⁰ encourages them to fulfill their needs by developing a connection with the stream and displaying their loyalty with a “like, share, subscription, donation, chat messages, etc.”¹³¹ Furthermore, video game streaming hosts players who desire to share their gaming experiences with others but also places playing video games as a spectacle that invites the audiences to observe, participate and be entertained.

Viewership on video game streaming is connected with the spectatorship of competitive video games, known as eSports. Researches on the matter have approached video game audiences as motivated fans looking for a social interaction and a gaming community.¹³² Additionally, Sjöblom and Hamari have addressed the importance of eSports as a gaming event where the viewers can acquire more insights of the games they play, escape from their own reality and connect with other gamers, and motivate themselves to get immersed into a competitive environment in which they share an emotional connection with other players.¹³³ As the video game viewers discover their place in the streaming world, the viewership of eSports has motivated them to start watching other gameplays. By being part of the stream and interacting with the content, the viewer accesses its role as a crucial element of the creation of the content on live streams but also promotes the development of an immersive and interactive gaming community.

¹²⁹ Gifford Cheung and Jeff Huang, “Starcraft from the Stands: Understanding the Game Spectator,” *Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*, 2011, p. 2, <https://doi.org/10.1145/1978942.1979053>

¹³⁰ Lv et al., “How Live Streaming Interactions,” p. 4

¹³¹ Fouad El Afi & Smail Ouiddad, “The Rise of Video-Game Live Streaming: Motivations and Forms of Viewer Engagement,” chapter, in *HCI International 2021 - Posters: 23rd HCI International Conference, HCII 2021, Virtual Event, July 24-29, 2021, Proceedings* by Constantine Stephanidis et al. (Cham, Switzerland: Springer, 2021), p. 158

¹³² William A. Hamilton, Oliver Garretson, and Andrius Kerne, “Streaming on Twitch,” *Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*, 2014, p. 9, <https://doi.org/10.1145/2556288.2557048>

¹³³ Sjöblom & Hamari, “Why Do People Watch Others Play Video games?,” p. 986

Researches on viewers' type have categorized spectators by how they interact with the streamer and their content, and by the role they adopt during a stream. Cheung and Huang on their investigation came across nine types of viewers based on their interactions with the stream. Rather than being on the stream to participate, learn and fulfill their eagerness to acquire more knowledge of the games, or they maintain their connection with the content as a bystander of the in-game actions¹³⁴. However, they also attribute the viewers with roles within the stream. The affordances of being on a digital gaming audience facilitates the spectator with the opportunity to create content with the stream. To a certain extent, the audience can be seen as an assistant providing extra information to the streamer in order for them to succeed in the game, or the function as a narrator/show-caster providing a perspective of the content and shaping the experiences of the other spectators.¹³⁵ Moreover, the role of the viewers can also be significant in order to describe their position on a live stream. Hamilton, Garretson and Kerne delineate the participants as followers, moderators and subscribers. The first being a standard viewer who has decided to be notified whenever the content creator is live, a lurker here can be defined as one on stream — follower or not— that doesn't have a constant interaction with the streamer. Secondly, the subscriber and, additionally, donators and *gifters*, earn their role by paying “a monthly fee to Twitch, half of which goes to the streamer.”¹³⁶ In here, VIPs can be added as a special distinction the streamer provides to those viewers that have become regulars or have proved their support through the years. These monetization features portray the audience attention and interest on the stream and acknowledge them as loyal viewers.¹³⁷ All these roles and types contribute to the creation of an immersive and enjoyable gaming experience. The video game streaming world provides the audience with a social space to interact and watch a live gameplay.

The engagement between the audience and the streamer resides within the comforts of the chat window. Fouad El Afi and Smail Ouiddad attribute the Internet Relay Chat (IRC) as a tool viewers utilized to participate on the stream. The community engagement cultivates

¹³⁴ Cheung & Huang, “Starcraft from the Stands,” p. 5-6

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Hamilton et al., “Streaming on Twitch,” p. 2

¹³⁷ El Afi & Ouiddad in Constantine et al., “The Rise of Video-Game Live Streaming,” p. 159

their relationships across the chat messages which facilitate the creation of diverse way to express their opinions and comments of the stream.¹³⁸

Gaming audiences are attracted to streams for several reasons. For Hamilton et al., the motivation relies on the sociability of the broadcast, the reliability and values of the streamer, and the stream's facility to encourage the viewers to interact and share their experiences.¹³⁹ The audience is interested in being able to engage and participate with the streamer but also they appeal to the uniqueness of the content. However, researches on viewers' motivations to watch video game streams focus on the sense of community development. Spectators want to belong to a group of people that share their same games and values. In order to fulfill their needs, viewers seek recognition and acknowledgment, and an opportunity to take part of the streams activities. "This fulfillment takes several forms including emotional rewards such as sociability, the status of membership, and the success of the community. These rewards and their importance to participants is evident in stream communities."¹⁴⁰ Likewise, Bruce et al. recognize the viewer attraction for being noticed relevant for their experience to fulfill their wish of participation, interactivity and engagement.¹⁴¹ It is important to address that the audience has the power to decide how they want to interact with the content and the level of their involvement on the stream. As a follower, viewers can observe and message comments on the chat window, however, as a subscriber or donor, they might earn special rewards or treatments from the streamer across the broadcast. This mutual awareness between the audience and the streamer describes the role of the audience on a video live stream and how their interaction and engagement further the social experiences for gamers.

¹³⁸ Ibid., p. 160

¹³⁹ Hamilton et al., "Streaming on Twitch," p. 2

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 4

¹⁴¹ Hilvert-Bruce et al., "Social Motivations of Live-Streaming," p. 59-60

Chapter 3: Methodology

The content of this chapter explains the research methodology utilized for this project and specifies the structure and techniques followed in order to answer the research question previously stated. The purpose of this thesis is to develop an understanding of the approaches taken to establish the diversification of video game streaming content and define the different type of engagement created throughout the streaming culture on Twitch. Due to the nature of the thesis, a qualitative methodology must be addressed in order to comprehend the connectivity between the content created by the streamers and the perception and engagement from the audiences. C. R. Kothari mentions that in order to understand the “motives of human behavior”¹⁴² it is relevant to address the information from a qualitative perspective. This approach will facilitate the thesis with an understanding of the reason why the content created by streamers on Twitch has diversified and produced a variety of interaction within the audiences in the video game streaming culture. The reason why a qualitative research was chosen is based on the following assumption made by Klaus Bruhn Jensen: “A second assumption of qualitative research is that meaningful actions should be studied, as far as possible, in their naturalistic contexts. In its strong form, this assumption calls for the classical variety of anthropological fieldwork in which a researcher’s lengthy immersion in a whole culture enables him or her to ultimately grasp in full ‘the native’s perspective’ on reality.”¹⁴³

For this research, immersion on the video streaming culture provides a prime perspective of the meaning of video gaming culture and facilitates the tools to answer the research question. Additionally, this methodology was selected due to its diversity of the data recollection and its inclusion of media analysis.¹⁴⁴ As as media recordings and live streams, observation prevails over other forms of analysis to avoid subjectivity but also to facilitate the information examined by providing data that is “currently happening.”¹⁴⁵ By observation, this thesis refers to the definition stated by Lynne E. F. McKchnie which approaches this

¹⁴² C. R. Kothari, *Research Methodology Methods & Techniques* (New Delhi: New Age International (P) Ltd., Publishers, 2004), p. 3

¹⁴³ Klaus Bruhn Jensen, “The Qualitative Research Process,” chapter, in *A Handbook of Media and Communication Research*, ed. Jensen Bruhn Klaus (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 236

¹⁴⁴ Udo Kuckartz, *Qualitative Text Analysis: A Guide to Methods, Practice & Using Software* (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2014), p. 2

¹⁴⁵ Kothari, *Research Methodology Methods & Techniques*, p. 96

method as “collecting impressions of the world using all of one’s senses, especially looking and listening, in a systematic and purposeful way to learn about a phenomenon of interest”¹⁴⁶ and therefore, assess the differences between the content created by the video game streamers and the style of engagement produced on their streams in order to capture the viewers attention. Hence, this investigation will carry out a textual analysis to address this statement. The textual analysis will be conducted to collect the data from the video game streamers and to outline the differences between their streams. Once the data is gathered, the analysis will be employed to specify the categories of video game streamers and define how their content is differentiate from each other. On this part of the research, an approach to the Circuit of Culture model by Stuart Hall will be utilized to delineate the data collected and will help confirm the categories encountered on the analysis and provide a comparison of the diversification of content created on the video game streams on Twitch.

Furthermore, the outline of this chapter includes the justification of the method utilized on the thesis. Followed by this introduction, *Section 3.1* defines the textual analysis methodology in which the structure of the analysis and the collection process will be explained. After, *Subsection 3.1.3* provides a deeper explanation of the structure and format utilized to gather the data of the analysis; and *Subsection 3.1.4* talks about the sources and cases utilized for the analysis and how they were selected. Furthermore, *Subsection 3.1.5* will describe the model of the Circuit of Culture as a comparing tool to examine the data collected previously. Afterwards, *Section 3.3* explores the limitations encountered during the analysis and the they were confronted. At last, *Section 3.4* establishes the research ethics considered for this thesis.

3.1 Textual Analysis

3.1.1 What is Textual Analysis?

According to Sharon Lockyer, textual analysis refers a closely approach to the content produced by texts —videos, magazines, architecture, fashion— and how they provide a further meaning of their discourse.¹⁴⁷ Those texts are generated by diverse mediums and

¹⁴⁶ Lynne E. F. McKchnie, “Observational Research,” chapter, in *The Sage Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods* by Lisa M. Given (Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications, 2008), p. 573

¹⁴⁷ Sharon Lockyer “Textual Analysis,” chapter, in *The Sage Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods* by Lisa M. Given (Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications, 2008), p. 865

provide a broader interpretation of the objects to study. Claire Ballinger defines the interpretation of texts as a method to understand social phenomenas and their representations across the medium they are generated from.¹⁴⁸ On the other hand, Jensen mentioned that texts are the center of the qualitative media analysis and contribute to the understanding of different representation of the cultural and social environments created on media. They circle around the “processes of intertextuality and of meaningful social interaction”¹⁴⁹ and they can be found as literal texts but also as “nonverbal text, such as movies or paintings, to sports events or broadcasts.”¹⁵⁰ Additionally, Fernández-Vara approached game texts as meanings to understand the context in which those elements inhabit and how they interact with the audiences.¹⁵¹ Therefore, for the purpose of this research, texts are going to be study taking into consideration the recordings of the video game streams and the live streams. This analysis will provide information about the affordances that Twitch contributes to the diversification of the content on the video game streams —an in-depth description of the factors will be defined later on this chapter—.

The aim textual analysis methodology is to provide a deeper understanding of the possible interpretations of the texts and provide a distinct perspective of the selected media. While the main purpose of textual analysis is to understand interpretation and meanings of materials, for Lawrence R. Frey, Carl H. Botan and Gary L. Kreps it also affords the necessary tools to describe the characteristics and functionalities of a “recorder or visual message.”¹⁵² In order to achieve the understanding of the diversification of video game streamer content and audience engagement, a textual analysis will provide a strategy to comprehend the construction of the meanings on each stream and furthermore, examine the difference between the content produced. Regarding video game textual analysis, Fernández-Vara mentioned that the methodology contributes to divert the attention on the game itself and focuses the analysis on the values behind the text by answering questions concerning

¹⁴⁸ Claire Ballinger “Text,” chapter, in *The Sage Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods* by Lisa M. Given (Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications, 2008), p. 863

¹⁴⁹ Jensen, “The Qualitative Research Process,” p. 244

¹⁵⁰ Fernández-Vara, “The Whys and Wherefores of Game Analysis,” p. 6

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 13

¹⁵² Lawrence R. Frey et al., “Textual Analysis,” chapter, in *Investigating communication: An introduction to research methods*, by Frey, Lawrence R., Botan, Carl H., and Kreps, Gary, 2nd ed., (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1999), p. 225

how the elements function and interact between each other.¹⁵³ Moreover, by interpreting the meaning behind the texts, in media studies the methodology provides an understand of a distractive subject and opens up the development of new theories that can be applied to approach media and study it as a diverse medium. However, in media studies, textual analysis it also helps to “describe the content, structure, and functions of the messages contained in texts.”¹⁵⁴ Video game structures required to be interpreted as a whole by the aspects that construct them as texts, by their “different symbol systems—words, pictures, sounds, symbols, color, and so on—simultaneously as well as alone and in combination.”¹⁵⁵ Hence, by focusing on the meanings and how the interact between each other, texts as video game streams contribute to perceive the different type of content created across the video game streaming culture on Twitch and shaped a representation of the affordances of the platform. Understanding the meanings and interactions video games have with gamers and audiences provides the game analysis with an opportunity to expand the concepts and vocabulary in the field and facilitates a foundation for comprehending video games and their affordances.¹⁵⁶

3.1.2 Textual Analysis’ Application

“If we want to understand the world we live in, then we have to understand how people are making sense of that world.”¹⁵⁷

Alan McKee's interpretation of media texts to understand the reality humanity lives in and interacts with resonates with the motive of using textual analysis to approach the video game streaming on Twitch as a diversified medium. Video game streaming content *could* be generalized as new entertainment apparatus but the content and the engagement varies and relies upon the interaction and connectivity with the audience. Additionally, Clara Fernández-Vara mentions that textual analysis provides the researcher with a tool to explore new and “more sophisticated ways” to address the gaming industry by approaching the texts as part of

¹⁵³ Fernández-Vara, “The Whys and Wherefores of Game Analysis,” p. 11

¹⁵⁴ Frey et al., “Textual Analysis,” p. 225

¹⁵⁵ Catherine Beavis, “Games as Text, Games as Action,” *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy* 57, no. 6 (2014): p. 435, <https://doi.org/10.1002/jaal.275>

¹⁵⁶ Fernández-Vara, “The Whys and Wherefores of Game Analysis,” p. 13

¹⁵⁷ Alan McKee, “A Beginner’s Guide to Textual Analysis,” *Metro Magazine*, 2001., p. 8

a cultural discourse.¹⁵⁸ For this project, understanding those elements and the community involvement contribute to develop a perception on the differences between the content created and the variety of interactions between a streamer and the viewers. Moreover, this research usage of textual analysis method relies on the understanding of how the content of streaming diversifies and encourages the creation of different type of engagement and entertainment by understanding the elements or characteristics done on a video game stream.

It is relevant to mention that in order to understand the meaning and the interpretation of video game streams on Twitch and avoid bias collection of information, the researcher acted on the principals of professionalism and recorded the information as an external spectator. The process involved observation the video game streams, document the events and interactions, and analyzed the data gather. As McKee suggested, the analysis evades claims about generalizations or ‘accurate’ representations¹⁵⁹ and provides an approach to understand the meaning and possibilities of the video game streaming diversification of content and audience engagement on Twitch.

3.1.3 Gathering of Data / Analysis Structure and Format

Video games function as an interactive medium coexist on a communicative environment in which the player and the game itself share a constant experience: “It is a medium that, by necessity, establishes a dialogue between the game and the players, and among players.”¹⁶⁰ Those interactions are interpreted differently depending of the elements that shape them. In video game streaming, such elements are diversified by the type of stream and its content and how it is perceive and engaged by the audience. Due to the nature of this research, it is relevant to address the variety of video game streams on Twitch by following the same analysis structure and format. Lockyer mentions that the diversity of text shouldn’t be overlooked because it provides a in-depth approach to their interpretations.¹⁶¹ These interpretations can be acknowledged by analyzing and comparing different video game streams on Twitch and, afterwards, contrast the findings of each one of them.

¹⁵⁸ Clara Fernández-Vara, “The Whys and Wherefores of Game Analysis,” chapter, in *Introduction to Game Analysis* (New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2019), p. 11

¹⁵⁹ McKee, “A Beginner’s Guide to Textual Analysis,” p. 5

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 8

¹⁶¹ Lockyer “Textual Analysis,” p. 866

Therefore, this thesis follows a strategic selection of video game streams in order to gather the data needed. The selection of the streams was based on the three category previously mentioned in Chapter 1. *Introduction* and consisted on choosing three video game streamers per category for a total of nine streamers for the analysis. For each streamer, a total of three streams were selected in which 45 minutes were analyzed on each one of them. The time analyzed was divided into two sections: 1) The first section consisted of the first 15 minutes of each stream, and 2) the second section consisted of 30 minutes of the gameplay/stream around the middle time of the total duration of the stream. It is important to mention that the selection of the streams was taken into consideration the last three video game streams posted on the platform by streamers and it was excluded streams that were not related to the category of video game. Furthermore, for each streamer an additional two live streams were analyzed in order to capture functionalities only visible during a live broadcast. For these streams, the researcher approached the live streams at a random moment once the notification showed up on his phone and 30 minutes of the stream were analyzed without interruption. In order to collect the data, Jensen mentioned that each qualitative research must provide an accessible “portion of reality” to assess elements taken into consideration for the analysis of the study.¹⁶² Hence, the amount of video game streams was delimited to five per streamer due to the repetition of concepts and insights and took place between the months of November 2022 and February 2023.

However, the streams analyzed provided vast information about the diverse content created on Twitch and how the engagement is produced on each one of the categories. In order to apply the textual analysis to Twitch, the researcher create Excel files to recollect the information —*Appendix 2*—. Since the visual elements displayed on the platform interface contribute to the diversification of content, the researcher employed a Streamers Analysis Structure document —*Appendix 1*— to address the analysis of the research. This document examined each of the streamers by the same parameters: streamer identity, content creation, and audience engagement and interaction. In the upcoming subsections, each of parameters used for the streams’ analysis will be explained in detail.

While watching the streams, the data was being captured on the document as the broadcast progressed. However, in the case of the live streams, the researcher registered the

¹⁶² Jensen, “The Qualitative Research Process,” p. 238

information as thoroughly as possible as the data was being produced in real time. Once the information was registered, an additional Excel document was created in order to summarize the findings and display a more direct comparison between streamers and categories.

Furthermore, during the analysis of the streams, screenshots were taken in order to capture visual aspects, and the live streams were recorded for further analysis in case it was needed.

3.1.3.1 Streamer's Identity

The Streamer's Identity concept refers to the image created by the individual and portrayed on the content. It appeals to the representation of the video game streamer of *themselves* on the screen. This element provides information about the appearance and factors that help build up the identity of the streamer on Twitch and how those elements contribute to the engagement with the audience. The gathering of data is divided into two sections. The first one examines the connection between the appearance of the streamer throughout the platform and on screen and affordances the interface of Twitch provides for the streamer in order to contribute to the construction of their identity. On this section the following aspects are going to be analyzed: profile picture, stream labels such as title of the stream, About description, tags —category of the stream and live tags—, and About page. These information offers and understanding of who the streamer is as an individual and provides an approach to his identity on the platform. The second section addresses the space inhabit by the streamer. On here, it is taken into consideration so much as the virtual space and the physical space, and, additionally, the technically aspects of setup. The virtual space refers to the screen layout and how it is composed taking into consideration the scenes and overlays, the alerts and widgets and the sponsors on screen. On the other hand, the physical space analyzed the place the streamers is creating the content and observes elements of the room that provides further information about the streamer's identity. Lastly, the setup evaluates the video aspects and the audio features encountered across the streams.

3.1.3.2 Content Creation

To understand the interactions between the streamer and the audience, the Content Creation section analyzes the stream broadcast interaction. It provides information about the type of content created in order to entertain and engage with the audience. On this section, four elements are examined: video game, stream's interactivity, attention distribution, and

advertisement display. The video game category explores the type of game on each stream and how it is being played by the streamer. Following, the stream's interactivity explores the actions happening during the stream. It also contributes to understand the activities the streamer makes during the streams. The third element, attention distribution, appeals to the interactions made by the streamer with the audience. Its focus relies on how the streamer is connecting with its viewers and how those interactions are perceived and created. On this section, the concept of acknowledgment is analyzed in order to further captures the direct connections between the streamer and the audience. In here, actions such as thanking the supporters or reading their name tags contributed to understand how the streamer interacts with the viewers during the streams. Finally, advertisement display provides information about possible promotions of brands and how those ads are placed on the stream. It is important to mention that the interactions between the advertisements, the streamer and the audience were analyzed on this section.

3.1.3.3 Audience Engagement and Interaction

The Audience Engagement and Interaction section analyses the actions taken by the viewers on the streams and how they provide a understanding of the diversification of content created on video game streams. This section answers the question of what their role on the stream and how it is given to them. In here the chat is examined as an active character of the stream and their responses to the content provides data that helps answer the research question of this thesis. Furthermore, this concept covers functionalities provided by Twitch and it is divided in three subsections: Chat box, Channel Points and Hype Train. The Chat box examines the audience's interactions within the stream by analyzing their messages and questions and exploring their comments and usage of stickers/emotes and commands.

Additionally, the functionality of a bot is studied in this subsection and how the interaction with it contributes to the creation of content on each of the streams. Channel Points and Hype Train appeal to a specific affordance of Twitch. The Channel Points work as an attention's captive and provides the viewers with the possibility to earn a fictional currency—that they can use for further interactivity—by staying watching the stream. Aspects such as its existence and how the audience interact with it are relevant for the research. On the other hand, Hype Train can be defined as a continuous monetary contribution to the streamer through bits, donations and subscriptions. During the stream, this

function activates a set goal to reach within a frame of time. The event ‘hypes’ the viewers and invites them to participate and support the streamer further. For this subsection, the amount of donations, subscriptions and gifts are taken into consideration to comprehend a further interactivity between the audience and the video game streamer.

3.1.4 Sources and Cases

Textual analysis provides an in-depth analysis of texts and it doesn’t require an extensive collection of data in order to get sufficient information. Due to the nature of this study, the video game streams will be selected through the platform Twitch and will facilitate a set of cases used for the analysis. Furthermore, the sources will contribute to understand in-depth real life situations¹⁶³ of the video game streams on Twitch and it will enrich the empirical approach for the gathering of the data. This process will help comprehend the dynamics on the streams and provide further information about the streamers of each of categories.

In this regard, the categories’ selection for this study: Competitive Streamers, Entertainer Streamers and Community Streamers, was inspired by the previous researchers’ approaches and how the descriptions provide an image of how a streamer portrays themselves on Twitch. However, each of the studies considered different concepts to analyze and based their definitions according to the intentions of their research. Due to this matter, the researcher chose to develop his own definitions for the streamers’ categories. This categories associate the streamer with how they create content on Twitch and exemplify a current representation of the diverse type of streamers on the platform.

Furthermore, the selection of the streamers was based on previous knowledge and sighting of them by the researcher. While this method facilitates some bias on the information collected, the intention of the research is not to provide a generalization of the type of streamers and their content, but instead it aims to give an understanding of the possible development of diverse content throughout the differences between streamers on Twitch. Additionally, the selection of cases was not fixated to a geographic location in order to provide a broader perception of the content created across the globe and it was defined based on their attributes and contributions to the video game streaming culture on Twitch previously observed by the researcher.

¹⁶³ Joachim K. Blatter, “Case Study,” chapter, in *The Sage Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods* by Lisa M. Given (Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications, 2008), p. 68

Hence, the streamers were chosen based on their characteristics aligned to descriptions previously mentioned for each of the categories. The category Competitive Streamer focuses on the game itself and the knowledge they can provide to the audience. Their content is centered on the skills, challenges and success on the games they play during the streams. Additionally, their engagement with the audience is reduced to a minimum due to the rapid, constant or intensive activity happening on the gameplay. However, the interaction development between the audience and the streamer relies on the idealisation of the video game streamer. The following *Table 1.* details the information of the cases selected for the Competitive Streamer category based on the name tags on Twitch: Bugha, MrSavage and lol_nemesis.

Competitive Streamers				
Name tag	Nationality	Age	Followers on Twitch	Main game
Bugha	<i>USA</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>5.3M</i>	<i>Fortnite</i>
MrSavage	<i>Norway</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>3.1M</i>	<i>Fortnite</i>
lol_nemesis	<i>Slovenia</i>	<i>23</i>	<i>679K</i>	<i>League of Legends</i>

Table 1. Background information of the Competitive Streamers selected

On the category of the Entertainer Streamer the stream itself becomes a workplace and revenue for the individual. In this cases the acknowledgement of the platform affordances is balanced in order to create the content and monetized from it, and, furthermore, provide a better entertainment for the viewers. The emphasis for these streamers relies on captivating the audience throughout the whole stream and assimilating the engagement affordance of Twitch as an interactive tool to profit from those watching. *Table 2.* displays the information of the streamers selected for the category of Entertainer Streamer based on their name tag on Twitch: AriGameplays, TheGrefg and Pokimane.

Entertainer Streamers				
Name tag	Nationality	Age	Followers on Twitch	Main game
AriGameplays	<i>Mexico</i>	25	6.8M	<i>Minecraft, The Sims 4, Fortnite</i>
TheGrefg	<i>Spain</i>	25	11.7M	<i>Fortnite, Rust, Just Chatting</i>
Pokimane	<i>Morocco/ Canada</i>	26	9.4M	<i>Valorant</i>

Table 2. Background information of the Entertainer Streamers selected

Lastly, the Community Streamer category's focus relies on the interaction between the streamer and the audience. They raise questions regarding the importance of building a community and creating a social space for the viewers. Their interactions are divided between connecting with their spectators and the games they play during their streams. The sense of community comes first due to the fact that their streams are highly influenced by the audience actions. The *Table 3.* shows the streamers selected for the Community Streamer category based on their name tag on Twitch: Jesusseron, ThePeachCobbler and ipandarina.

Community Streamers				
Name tag	Nationality	Age	Followers on Twitch	Main game
Jesusseron	<i>Spain</i>	27	66.3K	<i>Minecraft, ARK: Survival Evolved, Fortnite</i>
ThePeachCobbler	<i>USA</i>	27	123K	<i>Fortnite</i>
ipandarina	<i>Spain</i>	25	107K	<i>Just Chatting, Pokémon, God of War</i>

Table 3. Background information of the Community Streamers selected

3.1.5 The Circuit of Culture

The Circuit of Culture was introduced by Du Gay et al. in 1997 and it is defined as a model that makes sense of media strategies, identifies the places where meanings get developed, and

how their communities engage with those practices.¹⁶⁴ Moreover, the model enables this research to recognize the social dynamics of culture and identity in order to differentiate the categories from one another and to specify the diversification of content and audience engagement on the video game streaming content on Twitch. The Circuit of Culture gives the research the means to conceive an integrated perspective of the knowledge of video game streaming on Twitch and facilitates the comparison between the categories of streamers introduced on the previous section.

Furthermore, Gandolfi made use of the model by adapting the five ‘nodes’ of the Circuit of Culture: 1) Regulation, limitations and policies; 2) Representation, connectivity throughout the content created; 3) Identity, influence of the streams upon the individuals involved; 4) Consumption, transactions afford by the platform and its perception; and 5) Production, the final product diversified by the engagement’s strategies.¹⁶⁵ Moreover, he analyzed Twitch’s functionality and interactivity between the streamers and the audience, and examined “how the digital entertainment’s ‘circuit’ deals with the one of Twitch.tv in terms of identity (which types of gamers are present on the platform?), consumption (which discursive practices are enabled on Twitch. tv during the gaming experience?) and production (how do twitchers perform their streaming?).”¹⁶⁶

Regarding this project, the five processes will contribute to develop the analysis of the streamers’ category, their content and the relationship between them and the audience. They will work as a framework to compare each of the attributes previously mention in sections 3.1.3.1, 3.1.3.2 and 3.1.3.3; and created a clearer image of the diversification within the content and audience engagement produced on Twitch. The first stage, *Regulation* will help to determine the streamer limitations on Twitch and how they use those tools in order to create content. Those rules are set beforehand by the platform and apply equally to the streamers selected on this research; but how they use them and how the viewers perceive them varies between each category. At this point, it is relevant to mention that it is not just about the policies but it is also about the strategies and condition the interactions are establish

¹⁶⁴ Mateusz Felczak, “Local eSports media analyzed through the circuit of culture framework: Onet-RAS case study,” *GamiFIN* (2020), p. 178

¹⁶⁵ Enrico Gandolfi, “To Watch or to Play, It Is in the Game: The Game Culture on Twitch.Tv among Performers, Plays and Audiences,” *Journal of Gaming & Virtual Worlds* 8, no. 1 (2016): p. 65, https://doi.org/10.1386/jgvw.8.1.63_1,

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 66

within the affordances of Twitch. The goal of this stage is to understand how does the streamer use the widgets and platform's affordances to create content and engagement.

Secondly, *Representation* frames the meaning of the stream into the viewers and anticipates the role of the video game streamer as a social entity. On this stage, the social affordances of the screen are analyzed by taking into consideration the parasocial relationship elements created during the streams. Are the viewers watching because they feel related, do they need motivation for a better performances on the games or are they just looking for entertainment? Are the streamers streaming to create a community, do they want to demonstrate their abilities or do they desire to share their gaming experience? The goal for his process is to analyze the development of social aspects and understand the connections between the streamer and the audience.

The stage of *Identity* captures the affordances of the engagement produced by the streamers on Twitch. The concept of community is established here and questions such as how is it built and what is the impact of such element into the agents —streamer and audience— are raised. On the other hand, the concept of belonging defines the impact of the engagement of and with the content. In here, the process analyses the strategies for community engagement and which affordances does the content produce on the community after interacting with the stream.

Consumption refers to the interaction between the video game streamer and the audience. On this stage, the levels of interaction are going to be considered to evaluate the impact of such interactions. How is the content consumed? Enrico's approach of "from passive consumption to active participation"¹⁶⁷ portrays a standard visualization of how viewers interact with the stream and the content. It is important to take into consideration the levels of interactions thought monetization: how is the monetization for each streamers? does it help to create a direct connection between them? Being said that, follower-ship, subscription and donations, chat participation and supporting tools are factors to consider for this stage in order to analyzed the engagement and the impact of the audience's support.

Lastly, the *Production* stage sums up all the previews processes of the video game streaming as media entertainment product. In this stage, the importance of the performance of the streamers becomes a variable to analyze in order to differentiated them. Moreover, the

¹⁶⁷ Gandolfi, "To Watch or to Play," p. 66

stream itself becomes a product that each streamer approaches and ‘sells’ in different ways. These strategies will portrayed the streamers categories. All together, the Circuit of Culture will provide a comparison between the categories in order to answer the research question and therefore, it will illustrated the diversification of the content and audience engagement of each of them. The combination of textual analysis with the Circuit of Culture model facilitates a deeper understanding of how video game streams are presented to the audiences and how their interactions are produced and consumed.

3.3 Limitations

As mentioned before, the categories selected for this research were based on the knowledge of the researcher and influenced by the definition of the categories established for the analysis. This process of selection could have potentially ignored other steamers that fit the categories better than the streamers selected. However, at all time the researcher kept his experience and knowledge at a professional level in order to avoid bias on the collection of the data. Additionally, the research required from the streamers to stream at least five times during the time of the project. The gathering of the data took more time than expected due to the irregularity on the streaming schedules of each of the streamers and prolonged the analysis of the data. Hence, the research should not be taken as precise representation of what the streamers do all the time. Furthermore, the streamers were chosen from different parts of the world in order to approach the creation of the content in a broader way and exemplify the perception of content creation and engagement across the globe. Based on those parameters, the analysis was extended and harder to get due to the different time zones in which each of the streamers were located.

Regarding the content of the streams, on some cases the material was muted due to Twitch copyright’s policies for a prolonged time. On this specific situations, the researcher opted for removing those streams from the analysis and choose another broadcast to analyzed. Moreover, this thesis intents to explores the diversification of content and audience engagement on video game streams on Twitch. On this matter, the researcher did not take into consideration streams that were not part of the category of a video game’s title or the section Just Chatting in order to answer the research question established for this research.

It is important to mention that the categories are not absolute and creation of content on Twitch may present more diversification of the video game stream. Additionally, those categories work as a guideline for the researcher to indicate the distinctions between the content created on Twitch by video game streamers. The three categories presented are analyzed based on the interaction between the streamer and the viewers and the impact of the content and the engagement produced and they are not exclusive from each other. They provide a definition of the type of content and interactions a streamers produced during a streams but the streamers could share several categories, migrate from one to another, evolve into a new one, or explore into a different one.

3.4 Research Ethics

Through this research a deep observational investigation will be conducted. It is important to address that through the process of collecting the data, stereotypical characteristics of specific content may come up in order to define the categories of the video game streamers but also what kind of viewers interact with and how the engagement interaction is produced. Such data will be use to pinpoint attributes and it will be protecting the streamers' and viewers' privacy. Therefore, this research do not intend to assess any particular streamer into a specific label nor discriminate or judge their traits and it will ensured that every human belief and rights are respected. In order to secure the anonymity of the viewers, the researcher has decided to preserve their identity hidden by covering their names on the document. At all times, the researcher means to protect their identity and integrity and prevent third parties to retrieve or trace their information.

Furthermore, this research will be executed under the principles of integrity, honesty and respect in order to achieve an honorable job. I, the researcher, hereby declare that this work will be conducted following a respectful approach and abiding by the values of integrity and honesty in order to achieve the goals of the investigation. Additionally, this project will be following the National Committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and the Humanities (NESH) regulations to protect the people involve throughout the gathering of the data on this research.

Chapter 4: Analysis and Discussion

The goal of this chapter is to provide an understanding of how streaming video games on Twitch has been diversified and therefore, the engagement with the content has branched out into producing different interactions between video game streamers and viewers. In order to discuss the diversification of the content, the three categories: Competitive Streamer, Entertainer Streamer and Community Streamer; are framed by the combination of Gandolfi's approach of the Circuit of Culture model with the analysis' parameters previously selected: Streamer Identity, Content Creation and Audience Engagement and Interaction. The adaptation of these elements delineate the data collected and confirmed the diversification of content created on video game streams on Twitch. It is important to mention that the comparison follows the application of the concepts established on the Streamers Analysis Structure (see *Appendix 1*) created by the researcher with the five nodes of the Circuit of Culture previously defined on *Subsection 3.1.5* and its three main areas of investigation: Sense of media strategies, Identification of the development of places with meanings; and Community engagement.

Sense of media strategies hosts the nodes of Regulation and Production and addresses the Content Creation concept by focusing on the interactivity and connectivity of the streamer with the audience and the content created on stream. *The Identification of the development of places with meanings* hosts Representation and Production nodes and tackles the Streamer's Identity concept by prioritizing the development of the streamer's image based on its role and goal on stream, the social labels promoted on the interface, and the interactions produced between the content and the affordances provided by Twitch. Regarding the last element, the *Community engagement* area hosts the nodes of Identity and Consumption and attends the Audience Engagement and Interaction concept by assessing the participation role of the audience, the forms of engagement and interactions the streamers facilitated, and the affordances Twitch provides in terms of functionality and monetization.

In terms of structure, the researched established an outline that provides an analysis of the features previously mentioned throughout the three categories of streamers. Each category explores the similarities and differences between the streamers analyzed and provides an representation of the characteristics of each element. However, firstly a brief

explanation of Twitch content creation's functions are presented for the reader. *Section 4.1* illustrates how the Streamer's Identity is developed across each streamer's category. *Section 4.2* mentions how each category of streamers approaches the Content Creation. Audience Engagement and Interaction is analyzed in *Section 4.3* and defines the relationship between the streamer and the viewers. To conclude this chapter, *Section 4.4* presents a comparison between the categories by exploring their main differences and similarities.

Twitch Content Creation's Functions

Even though most of the content created on Twitch relies on the stream per se, it also presents the content creators with elements that contribute to the development of their identity as a streamer. Twitch allows users to create a profile and establish a description of themselves. However, there are labels that contribute to the communication of their persona to the audience and portrays an image of who they are as content creators. These labels favor the definition of a content style and add value to the expectations the spectators may have about the streamers.¹⁶⁸ For the purpose of this research, the terms emotes, alerts and overlays will be defined as content that has been produced by the streamer in order to appeal to his identity as a content creator on Twitch. Those elements add value to the representation of the self on Twitch and attract the attention of the viewers. Additionally, they contribute to create differences between streamers as they make use of them to display variations of the elements.

The emotes —also known as stickers— are involved mainly on the chat window and the viewers can make use of them to participate and interact with the stream. They are part of the language spoken on Twitch and they are embedded into the flow of conversation generated over the streams. Additionally, every user of Twitch has access to them and they are used as a graphic image of animals, people or/and objects. Streamers can create their own emotes for their community to use during a broadcast and, additionally, Twitch provides a global variety of emotes that contribute to the interactions within the stream. Their usage facilitates a fast response with the actions occurring on stream or portray an emotion the audience perceive or feel regarding the content watched. Furthermore, the streamer can configure them to be part of a subscription's reward: setting some free-for-all emotes for the followers and adding extra emotes for those who have subscribed to its channel.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 162

Alerts, as previously mentioned in *Section 2.3*, are notification that acknowledge the supports of a streamer. They are visual or/and animated representation of a new follower, a new subscriber, donations or gifted subscriptions. It is important to mention that alerts are not part of Twitch integrated interface, but the platform allows the integration with third-party website in order to display the alerts on stream. In this case, the content creator is the solely responsible of creating and configuring the alerts on stream. They mostly represent an element of the identity of the streamer and they are accompanied by a welcoming or a gratitude message. Alerts provide a direct connection between the streams supporting methods and the acknowledge of the audience on stream. However, the streamer is not obligated to configure them, as the only illustrated an automated way for the content creator to thank their supporters.

Overlays are a visual arrangement of the scenes the streamer used during *their* stream. They host the alerts, widgets —extra tools provided from external website that add value to the stream: stream goal, subscriptions count, chat feed, etc.—, video feed —webcam or other visual recording— and gameplay. Their set up contributes to visualize the graphic identification of the content creator and help the audience to identify the moments experienced during the stream. They communicate the viewers what is happening and generate a virtual understanding of the affordances of live streaming. Same as the alerts, the production of the overlays is under consideration the content creator intentions to interact with the audience and they are define by functionality regarding the actions happening on the broadcast. The most common overlays are:

1. *Starting Overlay*, a scene normally at the beginning of the stream which announced the stream has commence. It functions as a waiting moment for the viewers to arrive to the stream and, for the streamer, to prepare the final details.
2. *Just Chatting Overlay*, hosts an interactive moment between the streamer and the community. It contains the camera feed of the streamer and, in most cases, the chat message on screen allowing the viewers to see their comments on screen.
3. *Browser Overlay*, shows the desktop view of the content creator. This scene normally is accompanied by the camera feed of the streamer and it is used to visualize or react to other content on the Internet.

4. *Gameplay Overlay*, it is where the actual action of playing the game is visualized. Its composition is constructed with the game on full screen and the webcam of the streamer.

Furthermore, the description of each overlay previously mentioned is based on a general design and usage of them. However, their use and layout depends on the intention the content creator have and, therefore, they could share different attributes or interwind between each other.

4.1 Streamer's Identity

As mentioned before in *Subsection 3.1.3.1*, Streamer's Identity takes into consideration the social and visual aspects of a stream to explore the development and meaning of the relationship between the streamer and its content but also between the streamer and the audience. Furthermore, this section recognized the video game stream as a place for the streamer to display a role across the medium in order to attract the spectators. Such attributes have been analyzed following the importance of the image the streamers portray across Twitch in order to captivate the attention of the viewers. Additionally, it is relevant to consider how the video game streamers make use of Twitch's affordances —interface mechanics and labels— as a tool to contribute the development of their identity. Ultimately, to assess the difference between the categories regarding their identity, the goal of the streamer is analyzed and established as a factor that helps understand the diversification of video game content on Twitch.

4.1.1 Professional Players and Sponsorship - Competitive Streamers

The Competitive Streamers analyzed on this research portray a role and image as competitive pro-players as the audience recognize them for their abilities on the games they are playing. Churchill and Xu defined their role as Competitive Gamers which play the video games to rank-up and compete during streams.¹⁶⁹ They display their abilities in order to succeed in the game's objectives and show the audience how to be better on the game. Gandolfi associated their gaming representation to deliver a spectacle in which the streamer's role is display as a

¹⁶⁹ Churchill & Xu, "The Modern Nation," p. 223

professional eSports player.¹⁷⁰ For them, the professionalism of their actions in-game reflects the image they show to the audience. As new viewers arrive to the stream, the streamer's abilities function as a hook to capture the attention of the spectators. Therefore, Competitive Streamers' role in the video game streaming culture relies on competitive aspects they display during their streams. However, the information gathered about MrSavage and Nemesis suggested that their intentions attend to keep a balance between how the audience associate them as professional eSports players and the display of their image on Twitch as video game streamers. Additionally, Competitive Streamers, as King and de la Hera mentioned, become sources of information for the audience that aspires to learn about the game.¹⁷¹ Their role transforms their abilities into knowledge for the viewers, and contributes to stream a fun, entertaining and engaging content.

Streamers's image can also be define by how they portray themselves on the *About Me* section. Competitive Streamer have an opportunity to build up on their image as professional player or add information about 'who they are'. According to Sjöblom et al., the *About Me* section reflects elements the audience can relate with the streamers.¹⁷² In the case of Competitive Streamers, this section functions as an enhancer of the brand they represent as streamers but also provides them with a space to show their sponsors. Even though all of the streamers analyzed highlighted the importance of having external links for their social media on *About Me*, the association the streamers have with brands continues the development of their image as professional eSports players on Twitch, and contributes to their identification as a public figure. Their innate nature of the usage of the platform's affordances to prioritized monetization and brand exposure suggest that the role of the Competitive Streamers relies on their reputation as public figures and the value they contribute to the gaming industry in order to attract more viewers (see *Figure 1*).

¹⁷⁰ Gandolfi, "To Watch or to Play," p. 77

¹⁷¹ Reyhaan King and Teresa de la Hera, "Fortnite Streamers as Influencers: A Study on Gamers' Perceptions," *The Computer Games Journal* 9, no. 4 (2020): p. 352, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40869-020-00112-6>

¹⁷² Sjöblom et al., "The Ingredients of Twitch Streaming," p. 25

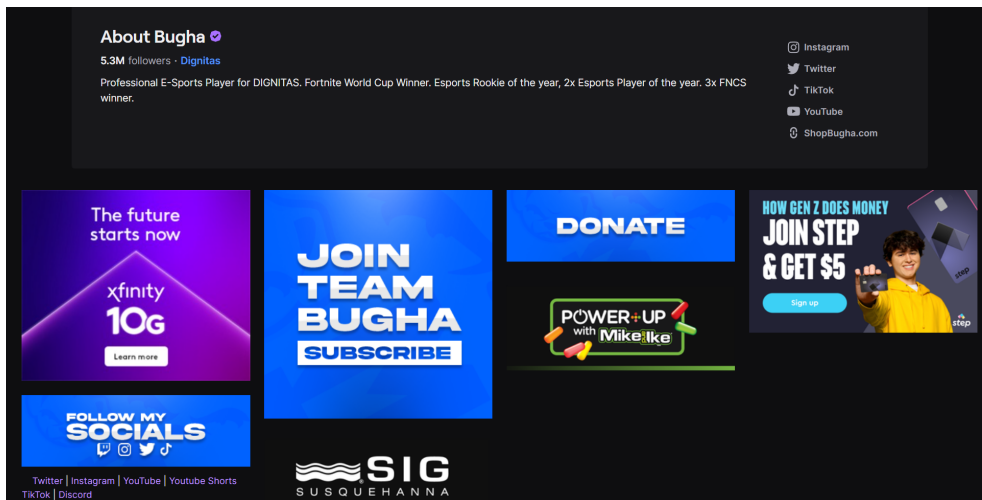


Figure 1. Bugha's About Me page on Twitch

While Twitch allows the streamers to display brands and sponsors on their interface, the Competitive Streamers expand the narrative of the video game streaming culture and link themselves to the concept of gaming as a career.¹⁷³ As they continue displaying their abilities and the brands that support their career, the streamers's image combines the joy of gaming with the representation of labour and earnings. In the case of Bugha and MrSavage, they prioritize the usage of the platform to focus on sponsors and professional partners, the relationship with their eSports' team, and the constant association with competitive aspects of the game. For Nemesis, there is a lower attention to brand exposure and sponsorship; his image approaches the audience with a more valuable place on the stream as he makes an effort to give them a sense of belonging and make them active participants of the content produced live.

At the end, for the Competitive Streamers the presentation of their persona as a professional player is reaffirmed by the implementation of the labels across the platform. They tend to use them to provide information about their team and sponsors. Anderson addresses such elements — tagline, username and team's name— as factors that contribute to the presentation of the identity of each streamer.¹⁷⁴ On the three cases analyzed, the team's tag not only provides the audience with a direct association with an eSports company but also presses onward the development of their image as Competitive Streamers. It can be implied

¹⁷³ Ibid., p. 21

¹⁷⁴ Anderson, "Watching people is not a game," p. 5

that the repetitive allusion to their team and sponsors portrays an identity based on loyalty to those who support their journey as professional players. It is important to point out that in Bugha's stream, his camera feed was removed from the overlay.

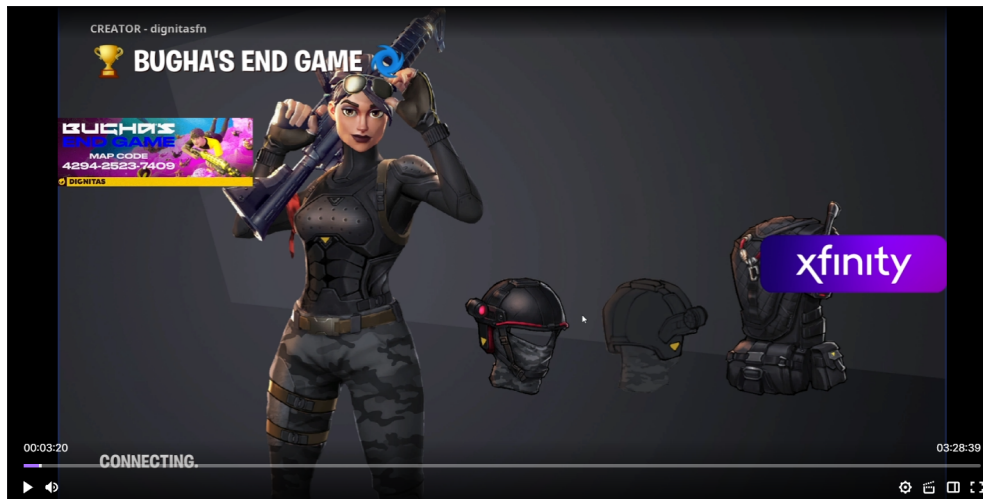


Figure 2. Bugha's stream without a webcam on the overlay

Such actions, according to Johnson and Woodcock,¹⁷⁵ disrupt the connectivity between the streamer and the audience; therefore, interrupts the development of his image as a streamer. By displaying their face, streamers are able to connect with the followers and heighten the bond they have. Forcing the audience to only watch the gameplay during the stream, suggests a preference for showing the game and the mechanics than his personality and image. These action commonly seen during the Competitive Streamers' analysis delimit the perspective of how they create content on Twitch and how it is witnessed by the viewers. Therefore, the attempts to use Twitch's affordances and labels in order to development their identity are minimal and focused on providing a visible space for sponsors.

As analyzed before, the goal for the Competitive Streamers as content creators on Twitch preserves the value of the sponsors and the image they represent as professional players. As pro-players their goal as streamers is focused on the game and to preserve an unattended usage of the affordances of Twitch's mechanics and labels to facilitate the development of their identity as a content creator. Their identity revolves around being a professional eSports player and displaying a high loyalty to the brands and sponsors supporting them. Their attention to sponsors and brand advertisement does not invite the

¹⁷⁵ Johnson & Woodcock, "It's like the Gold Rush'," p. 337

audience to engage directly with his content but, moreover, encourage them to invest in them or in their sponsors. Additionally, the usage of overlays, alerts and widgets in order to enrich their identity are kept to a minimum but have a consistency on design and image. However, on the case of Nemesis, his intentions as a video game streamer are balanced between being a competitive player and a content creator on Twitch. His actions do not suggest the audience to engage with his content but rather they contribute to maintain an identity the audience recognizes: great knowledge of the game displaying his gameplays live for others to watch and learn.

4.1.2 Streamer as the Center of Attention - Entertainer Streamers

The three cases attribute their role and image as streamer to the influence of their persona as public figures. Entertainer Streamers' identity relies on engaging with the audience by connecting with their creative ideas and actions during the live streams. They give a show to the audience in which they can participate and interact with the content presented by the streamer. This category can be associated with the definition of Gandolfi of a hedonist streamer,¹⁷⁶ who uses their knowledge of the business to create engaging interactions with the viewers across the platform. In this case, the streamers become the main character of the content focusing the development of their image on maintaining the audience attention. With this, the interactions of the viewers towards their content are limited by what they allow them do. Therefore, the social space created by the Entertainer Streamers controls the experience and the interactiveness of their stream. As seen on *Subsection 2.5.1 Streamer's Role and Identity*, van den Molten portrays streamers as opinion leaders capable of distributing and promoting new games.¹⁷⁷ The capacity of streamers to capture the audience's attention and creating engaging content attributes them the role of influencers which contributes to establish an image based on popularity and fame.

Entertainer Streamers rely on the perception the spectators get from their content. It is important for TheGrefg to stage his image on every stream and produce engaging material the viewers can interact with. For Pokimane and AriGameplays, being a streamer means to add value to the streaming culture by embracing the role of content creator and presenting

¹⁷⁶ Gandolfi, "To Watch or to Play," p. 77-78

¹⁷⁷ van der Molen, "Valorant and the Platformization of Free-To-Play Games," p. 22

themselves as approachable, social and friendly gamers. Wulf and his colleagues¹⁷⁸ mentioned that these interactions present streamers as social and public characters who understand the dynamics of streaming in order to not only connect with the audience but also make it a profitable business. The balance of these elements represents what the Entertainer Streamers show on the streams analyzed. As they prioritize the importance to displaying on screen the member of the audience who supported them, the streamers also took time to display brands and sponsors on the stream. This suggests an understanding of the audience's role and importance of their interactions in order to keep their image fresh and attractive. King and de la Hera specified that attractiveness is sustained by the relatability of the streamer and how their content draws in the viewers.¹⁷⁹

By creating an identity that connects with the audience the Entertainer Streamers allow themselves to develop their image across Twitch in order to stand out from the other streamers on the platform. The popularity of their persona and the development of a unique personality expands their association with the video game streaming culture and facilitates the connection with the audience. Furthermore, all of the examples designed a virtual image of themselves providing the audience with a fictional and animated character that complements their streams.

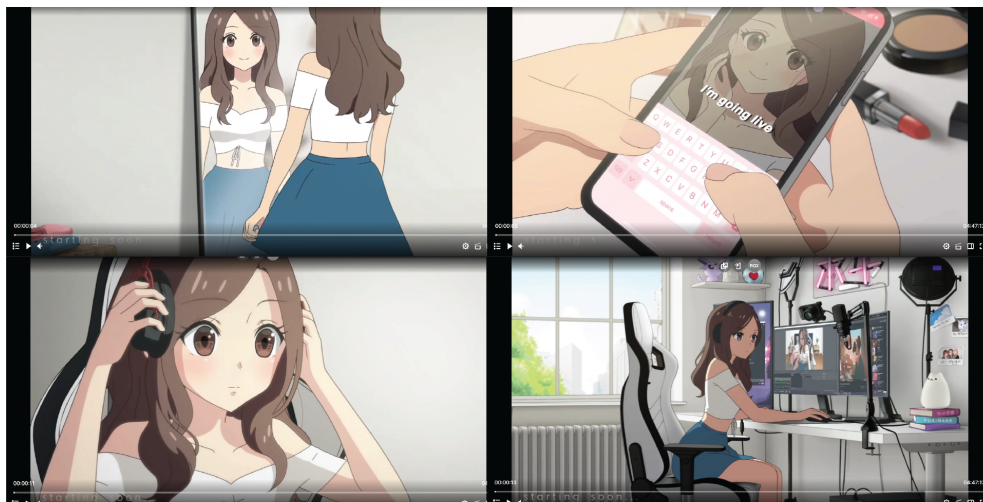


Figure 3. Pokimane's Starting Overlay showing a digital version of herself

As their image is nurtured by the content they create, Entertainer Streamers open up an engaging space for the audience to interact with them, and moreover, they balance the

¹⁷⁸ Wulf et al., "Exploring Viewers' Experiences of Parasocial Interactions," p. 648

¹⁷⁹ King and de la Hera, "Fortnite Streamers as Influencers," p. 353

gameplay and interactions to produce a connection with the audience, specially for those who support them monetarily. They all share a dedication for the content produced during the stream and understand the influence their image has across the platform. Their identity invites the viewers to focus their attention on them and encourage them to engage with their stream. The formation of their trustworthiness, as King and de la Hera distinguished,¹⁸⁰ suggests that the Entertainer Streamers use Twitch as a way to place themselves into the gaming community and, therefore, develop a connection with the audience with their image, actions and content.

The labels and Twitch's affordances utilized by the Entertainer Streamers are focused on providing detailed information about the activities to be done on the streams, and, additionally, invites the audience to get involved with the games they are playing. In the case of the streams' titles, the streamers showed descriptive suggestions of what the stream is going to be about. These labels function as an invitation for the audience to click and join the stream as they unify the usage of Twitch's affordances and the audience's reception and acceptance of the labels utilized by the streamers. Once the audience accepts the interactive mechanics the connection is created. As a result, the streamers start the process of creating engaging content that provides the audience the necessary interactive tools to connect and interact on the stream. Additionally, the Entertainer Streamers prioritized their image as a streamer on their *About Me* section. In all the cases analyzed, the streamers displayed their social media links in order to invite the viewers know more about them. By affording an invitation to the audience to extend their knowledge on how the streamers' image is developed, Sjöblom et al. mentioned that such actions position streaming video games as a social space that allows connectivity and interactivity between the streamer and the audience.¹⁸¹ These actions are part of the Entertainer Streamers strategy to connect with the audience; however, AriGameplays' and Pokimane's identity connectivity with the audience its also constructed by portraying themselves as friendly people who inspire trust and who welcome newcomers to join their channel.

¹⁸⁰ King and de la Hera, "Fortnite Streamers as Influencers," p. 353-354

¹⁸¹ Sjöblom et al., "The Ingredients of Twitch Streaming," p. 23

Entertainer Streamers' goal as streamers is based on focusing their content on their persona and the reputation they have created during the years but also on capturing the attention of the audience with their personality and trustworthiness. They provide an engaging stream in which the viewers can interact with the content. In the case of TheGrefg, even though he tends to overload his streams with brand exposure, his image invites the audience to interact with his content. The Entertainer Streamers also intent to create an inviting and approachable character that displays the ideal representation of a video game streamer on Twitch: they understand their role as streamers and take advantage of the spotlight given to them by the viewers. For AriGameplays, her intentions as a streamer is to connect with the audience by balancing who she is as a person and the persona she creates during her stream. She invites the audience to join her community and provides engaging and interactive content by taking into consideration the affordances of Twitch.

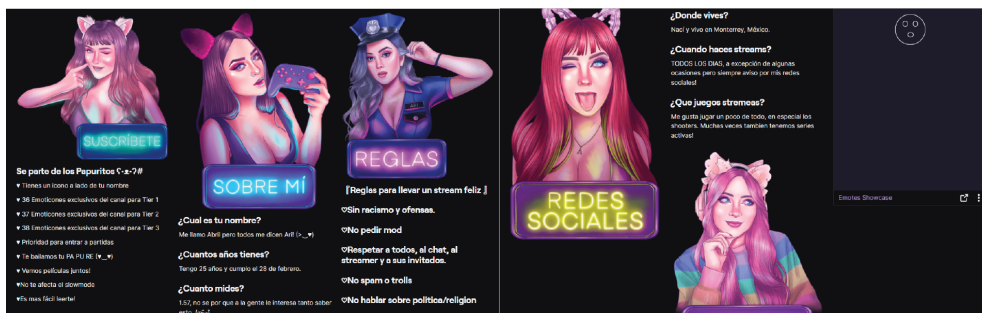


Figure 4. AriGameplays' About Me page on Twitch

4.1.3 Social and Friendly Image - Community Streamers

Community Streamers develop their identity by providing a welcoming space for the audience and focusing their content into connecting with the viewers. They portray a friendly and pleasant environment in which a community can be built. Gandolfi associates this category as 'the companion' which relies on the social actions develop during streams to connect with their audience and create their image as streamers.¹⁸² In order to develop their identity, their objective is to show a friendly space in which the audience feels welcomed to share their opinions, feelings and emotions and connect with others that share the same intentions. Once the social and friendly image is developed, the viewers get involved with the streamer's content and give their attention towards having more interaction with the stream. In the cases studied, the streamers render themselves as one more of their community and

¹⁸² Gandolfi, "To Watch or to Play," p. 78

prioritized the relationship they create with the audience and produce relatable content for the viewers to engage with.

Additionally, their friendly and natural responses toward the audience's messages provide a unique connectivity with how they want to portray themselves on Twitch and helps to build up an identity which the viewers can relate with. For iPandarina the importance of creating interaction with her audience and giving them a space on screen nurtures her streams as a welcoming place for everybody to interact with her content. The Community Streamers present their content as authentic and genuine as they invite the audience to know more about them and encourage the viewers to become part of their community: they recognize, interact and communicate with them, and provide a stream free from distraction dedicated to the interactions between them and their audience. As they value the connection with their viewers and the emotions shared on stream, Watts et al. attributed streamer as 'emotional characters'¹⁸³ that develop their image according to the narrative they want to communicate to their viewers. Therefore, the Community Streamers can be associated with a relatable persona that encourage communication and sociability across Twitch. Their content highlights the production of enjoyable entertainment and invites the spectators to be part of their gaming community. As seen on the analysis, Jesusseron's role relies on facilitating the audience with as much information as possible about his content. He depends on the importance he gives to connecting with his supporters and the interactions they form throughout the streams. His images is associated with having fun and enjoying the time playing video games and it is linked to the joy of playing with your friends.

Connecting with the audiences and creating a social space establish how the Community Streamers present their image on Twitch. However, it is important to bring back the concepts of 'trustworthiness' King and de la Hera defined.¹⁸⁴ As the streamers presented themselves on the each broadcast, a factor of popularity and familiarity introduce a link between the audience and the content creators. The connection created between the streamer and the viewers in order for them to create a community and a sense of belonging establishes the spectators as loyal followers and keeps them on the loop of the content displayed by the streamers. Therefore, the trustworthiness suggests that the Community Streamers rely on the

¹⁸³ Watts et al., "Digital Gaming Audiences," p. 2

¹⁸⁴ King and de la Hera, "Fortnite Streamers as Influencers," p. 353-354

relatability of their image in order to keep the viewers coming to their streams, and, hence, interact with their content. On the other hand, the streamers on this category also can be associated with the the development of intimacy and a parasocial relationship due to how they portray their image during the broadcast and across their content. Xu et al. mentioned the process of creating a personal connection once the streamer answers the questions and messages from the audience.¹⁸⁵ Paying attention to their actions and giving them a place on the stream favors the development of the streamers identity and connectivity. The experiences shared during the Community Streamers’ live broadcasts encourage the audience to get involved with the streamers personality and image as they are welcome to be part of the actions taking on stream.

In terms of the labels used during the Community Streamers’ live broadcasts, they prioritized providing information to the audience about who they are, what they are doing on Twitch, and what is their content going to be about. The importance of their *About Me* page invites the audience to know more about them and welcomes them as part of their community. As Sjöblom et al. mentioned,¹⁸⁶ they utilize this section to connect with their audience and appear as approachable for the newcomers. These streamers make use of this mechanic to enrich their image and their personal brand on Twitch. As they make use of this section, the Community Streamers on this study also use the space to emphasize the importance of their social media channels as well as giving a place to those supporters who have been donating the most on their streams. Recognition for the community becomes a valuable aspect for the streamers to show on their page. However, for iPandarina the main label and Twitch’s affordances she utilizes are associated with her eSports team: KoiSquad.

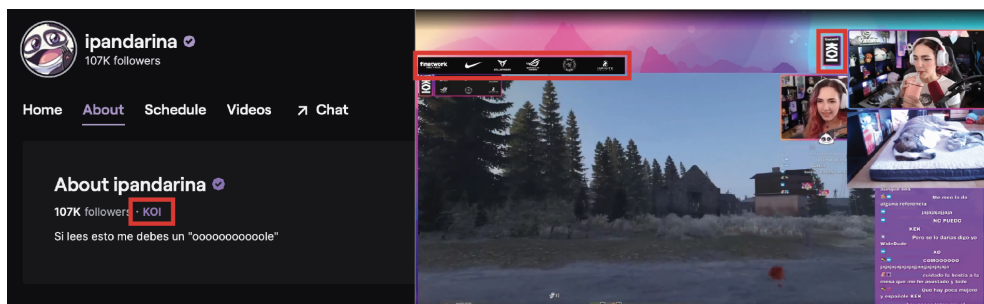


Figure 5. iPandarina’s About Me page on Twitch

¹⁸⁵ Xu et al., “Why Do Viewers Engage in Video game Streaming?,” p. 7

¹⁸⁶ Sjöblom et al., “The Ingredients of Twitch Streaming,” p. 25

On every stream analyzed, she kept an image of them, as well as the team's sponsors. Repetition and constant usage of their images communicate to the audience a sense of recognition for iPandarina: she wants her viewers to know where she belongs and who supports her. Furthermore, her usage of sponsors on screen and on her label do not saturate the audience and allows them to participate on the stream. Additionally the use of descriptive titles on their streams also contribute to build their image as Community Streamers. They serve as a reminder to the audience to participate and comment on the chat box, and get involved with their content. Such actions were seen especially on ThePeachCobbler's and Jesusseron's streams. They create a social invitation in which the audience feels motivated to be part of their stream and interact with their elements. In the case of ThePeachCobbler, she puts attention on the interactions created with her audience and keeps the engagement flowing during the streams. Similarly, Jesusseron maintains a balance between gaming and interacting with the audience and conserves the dialogue with them. However, he was the only one who didn't have any sponsorship during the analysis. Even though Jesusseron was the only one who employed a virtual self on his description, the association with iPandarina and the panda's images and ThePeachCobbler with 'peaches' unifies them into giving an importance to creating a visual image of themselves across the platform in order for the audience to connect with them.

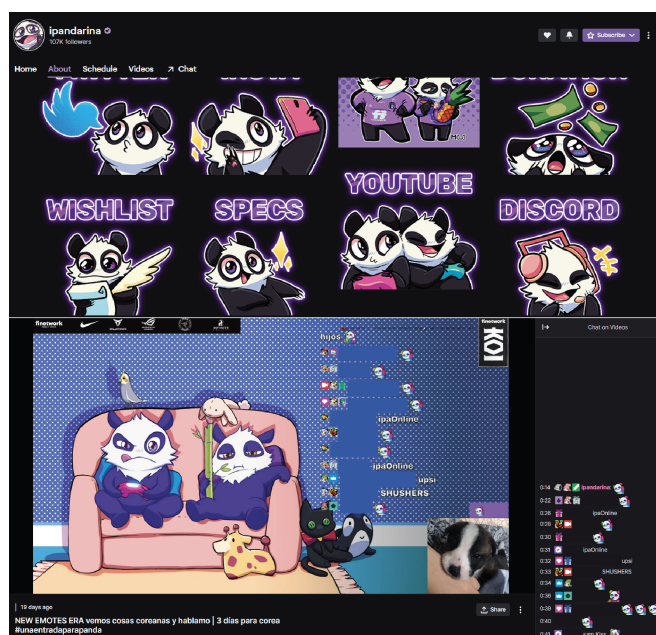


Figure 6. Compilation of pandas in iPandarina's streams interface

The Community Streamers' goal as content creators on Twitch is to provide a space to develop traditions and costumes for their audience: a sense of community and friendship is developed across all of their streams. They all encourage the viewers to socialize and they give the audience a place to identify within a community of gamers but also invite them to share their opinions. Additionally, the streamers create a social space that affords interactions between them and their viewers. Such actions enhance the experience the audience has with their streams and invite them to interact between each other. Their personality invites the audience to enjoy the streams and welcomes them to share their own experiences. As they develop their image and identity towards the community and how they enjoy their content, their streams facilitate a social space for the viewers to learn from others and explore the gaming culture with a community of similar individuals.

4.2 Content Creation

Content Creation's parameter functions as the link between streamer's content on Twitch and the audience in order to analyze their interactions. As seen in *Subsection 3.1.3.2*, this aspect evaluates what type of actions the streamers do in order to keep the audience engaged, specially on how they use the widgets and affordances of Twitch to produce content. In this section the *Regulation* and *Production* concepts of the Circuit of Culture are combined, and the following aspects were contemplated to recollect the data of the streamers researched: interactivity, connectivity, content production and advertisement display and revenue.

The first concept, interactivity, investigates the attention distribution of the streamer towards the game they are playing and the audience. It is important to assess here how the interactions are developed in order to attract the viewers into the stream. Secondly, connectivity highlights the direct or indirect recognition of the streamer towards the audience. The acknowledgment contributes to the creation of content during a stream by providing the audience with the opportunity to participate in the production of the interactions. Furthermore, the content production aspect involves the study of the visual elements the streamers utilized to engage with the audience. This section portrays the effort and intentions of the streamer as a way to compose an authentic stream for the viewers. Ultimately, the

aspect of advertisement display and revenue analyzes the placement of sponsorship and brand's exposure the streamers have on their stream in order to create content.

4.2.1 Let's Focus on the Game - Competitive Streamers

All the Competitive Streamers analyzed shared the same approach to interactivity and connectivity: their attention is driven by the intensity of the gameplay and focus on the tactical decision they make. Sjöblom et al. mentioned that those streams normally do not display a fix structure, but rather “offer an intense viewing experience for spectators ingrained with the specifics of competitive play, akin to many traditional sports.”¹⁸⁷ Their interactivity is focused on delivering entertainment and information to the audience without taking into consideration the interactions produced by the viewers on the chat box. They all understand the affordances and regulations that being a streamer demands from them but still rely on displaying the best of his abilities on the game they are playing. Eventually, their deliverance influence the development of the connectivity with the spectators and minimized the interactions towards them. It was clearer to visualize such actions on Bugha's streams, specially when he turned off his camera and only kept the gameplay on the stream. In this case, Johnson and Woodcock acknowledge the importance of having a webcam during stream to connect with the audience.¹⁸⁸ Such aspect suggests that having a visual representation of the appearance of the streamer motivates the viewers to relate with the emotions and expression the content creator is showing during the stream; hence, a link between them is created. Gandolfi approach to the attention immediacy between the content creators and the viewers¹⁸⁹ implies that the streamers interactivity towards the audience and the responsiveness to their actions and effects on stream influences the connection they can develop towards their content (see *Figure 7*).

The acknowledgment the Competitive Streamers had during the streams can be defined by the discussion between ‘immediacy’ and ‘intimacy’ presented by Johnson and Woodcock.¹⁹⁰ Streamers take advantages of the affordances Twitch provides to them by

¹⁸⁷ Sjöblom et al., “Content Structure Is King,” p. 165

¹⁸⁸ Johnson & Woodcock, ““It's like the Gold Rush’,” p. 337

¹⁸⁹ Gandolfi, “To Watch or to Play,” p. 68

¹⁹⁰ Johnson & Woodcock, ““It's like the Gold Rush’,” p. 342

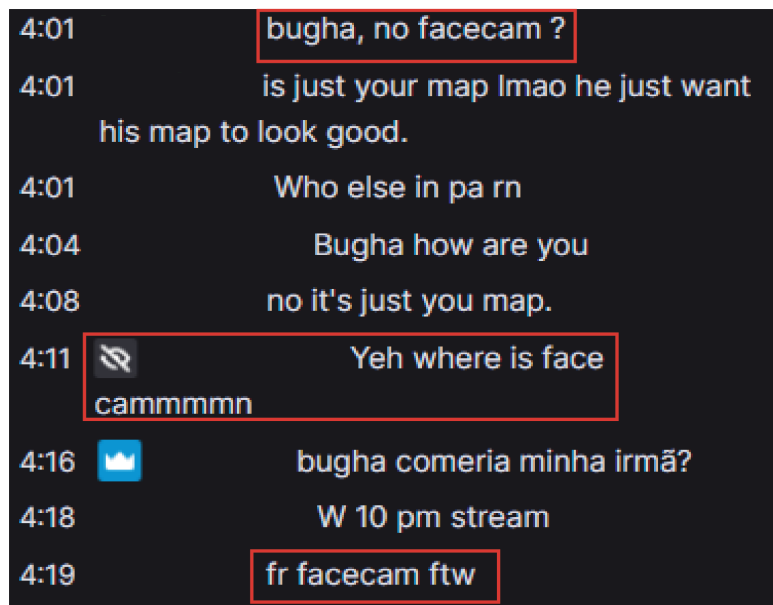


Figure 7. Bugha's audience reacting to his missing webcam on stream

creating a virtual space in which the audience can produce an immediate interaction with media. The facility of Competitive Streamers to provide strategies and information about the game they are playing allows the spectators to connect with their content. The rapid consumption of their content and the capability to host audiences implies an ‘immediacy’ connection between the streamers and their viewers. However, their attention’s distribution disturbs the flow of conversations and connectivity which breaks the possible ‘intimacy’ afford by live streaming video games on Twitch. Therefore, Competitive Streamers’ acknowledgment lacks of an immediate intimacy and relies on generic mentions whenever the gameplay is on pause or the streamer is waiting for the matches to start. Bugha’s and MrSavage’s connectivity with their supporters —specially to those who subscribe or donate — lacks fluency and prioritizes only donations that are bigger than usual. However, in the case of Nemesis, even though his interactivity is focused on the game, he attempts to be more attentive to the subscribers and donors; despite the fact his interactions sometimes are not very communicative and fall into short responses. As King and de la Hera mentioned, their connectivity with their viewers relies on the inspirational effect they give them.¹⁹¹ The streamers actions and gameplay displayed motivate the audience to engage with their content suggesting that the interactivity and connectivity between the Competitive Streamers and the spectators relies on the influential power their actions provoke on the viewers.

¹⁹¹ King & de la Hera, “Fortnite Streamers as Influencers,” p. 361

Content production for the Competitive Streamers have a tendency to keep elements to a minimum and focus their intentions into displaying sponsors and ads. King and de la Hera classified streamers as promoters and opinion leaders in the video game industry.¹⁹² Their reputation and fame across the video game they are playing invites spectators to watch their streams despite the diverse amount of content they produce during a live broadcast. In the case of Bugha and MrSavage their content revolves around being professional players of Fortnite and the credibility of their abilities on the game. However, contrary to them, Nemesis' content is directed to facilitated the audience with multiple interactive spaces and entertaining tools; even though some of those elements prioritized promotion. Regarding the concept of advertisement display and revenue, the three of them provide a high focus on exhibiting their sponsors by give them an special space on their screen. They all showed constant displacement of brands during he streams analyzed and linked the production of their content with providing a visible place for their team, sponsors and financial supporters on screen. Bugha's content reaffirmed the usage of brand's exposure as the medium to create content. His content is affected by how the ads are displayed during the stream but, mainly, the sponsored streams he had during the analysis.

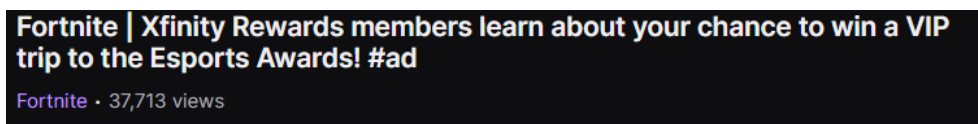


Figure 8. Bugha stream's title for a sponsored stream

The self-representation of Competitive Streamers' content relies on the connection they have with brands and how they communicate that across the platform. There is a tendency to prioritize the image of sponsors on stream and therefore, their content aspires to create a connection with the audience anchored to the credibility they have as pro-players and the showcasing of their abilities on the game.

4.2.2 Dedication for the Content - Entertainer Streamers

The interactivity and connectivity of the Entertainer Streamers analyzed is associated with the attention distribution they balanced between the gameplay and the audience. For them,

¹⁹² Ibid., p. 360

their show focus is to provide an entertaining stream by showing their best skills or solutions. Watts et al. mentioned that the ‘social demands’ streaming video games on Twitch obligate the streamers to acknowledge the viewers as part of their content.¹⁹³ However, for the Entertainer Streamers, the interactivity created across the the platform relies on the development of a character that connects with the audience through their personality and content. It was seen during the analysis that the three streamers of this category started their stream presenting the agenda of the day and focused their interactions on narrating the in-game actions to the viewers. As Entertainer Streamers, they facilitate the information to the spectators and let them engage with it without disrupting the flow of their content production. As they play the game, the interactivity produced towards the audience shows a uniqueness on the way they present the content. Woodcock and Johnson sustained that the streamers are constantly developing a ‘character’ in order to connect further with the spectators.¹⁹⁴ Such attributes suggest that their image’s likability works as a interactive element to connect with the viewers. Even though the three streamers undertone the obligations streaming demands from them, only AriGameplays’ content invited the audience into a social space to enrich their experience in the stream. Her interactivity is driven by her desire to create a welcoming space for the viewers, and her efforts to involve them with the decision on the stream establish a tendency to facilitates a responsive environment.

Regarding connectivity, the Entertainer Streamers’ attention distribution is developed to provide the viewers with a unique experience with their approach to the game they are playing. van den Molen approached the connectivity of the streamers as how they create the content across the platform.¹⁹⁵ In order to connect with the audience, the streamers narrate the actions they are doing and, from time to time, direct their words to the viewers by asking them questions or motivating them to do certain action in the chat box. However, it was observed during the analysis that the creators associate their connectivity with the audience by giving the spectators the possibility to cohabit the same virtual space as them. In the case of the Entertainer Streamers analyzed, the acknowledgment of their supporters lacks of personalization as they tend to address them without any special distinction or extended

¹⁹³ Watts et al., “Digital Gaming Audiences,” p. 3

¹⁹⁴ Woodcock & Johnson, “The Affective Labor and Performance of Live Streaming on Twitch.Tv,” p. 820

¹⁹⁵ Kas van der Molen, “Valorant and the Platformization of Free-To-Play Games.” *Press Start* 8, no. 2 (2022): p. 31

comment. As their attention is focused on the game and the entertainment they are presenting, their connectivity loses recognition and falls into an impersonal acknowledgment: the three streamers addressed their supporters enlisting them in a group and thanking them as a whole and not individually. Even though this reaction can be attributed to the high amount of subscriptions and donations they get during the streams, they redirect their attention to the audience only when there was an important message linked to the supporter or the donations were significant big to make the streamer stop playing and address the donor. As Vaibhav Diwanji et al. concluded, the ‘digital copresence’¹⁹⁶ allows the streamers to create a social environment on their streams and encourage the immersion in their content. These actions reaffirm that the Entertainer Streamers’ connectivity relies on welcoming the viewers to their show and share the same virtual space with them. The content they create provides the necessary tools to connect and interact with the audience giving viewer’s recognition a less valuable function for them to keep the spectators engaged in their stream.

Content creation for Entertainer Streamers is defined by the attractiveness of their actions and the joyful stream the audience gets to experience. The creation of the visual space and the elements afforded within Twitch capture the viewers’ attention and invites to participate and interact with their content. Sjöblom and Hamari mentioned that such social attributes facilitated on the video game streams produce an immersive and interactive experience for gamers.¹⁹⁷ Hence, such statement implies that the content created by Entertainer Streamers affords the connectivity and interactivity between the audience and the streamers. They display a dedication on creating content that is appealing to the viewers and displaying the usage of Twitch’s affordances to keep the audience engaged with their streams. During the analysis, they all show consistency on the different elements of content they display: widgets, alerts and overlays, adding value to the creation of their content and enriching their identity as a streamer. The audience is capable of interacting with such elements in order to fulfill their necessities as spectators. Taking into consideration the importance the Entertainer Streamers’ overlays have for the purpose of providing different interactive actions to them viewers, Hamilton et al. affirmed that such integration elements

¹⁹⁶ Vaibhav Diwanji et al., “Don’t Just Watch, Join in:,” p. 2

¹⁹⁷ Sjöblom & Hamari, “Why Do People Watch Others Play Video games?,” p. 986

give the streamers a controlled dynamic of their content.¹⁹⁸ Following the approach of Hamilton et al., the streamers' content is enriched and affords the audience to share a social experience and engage with the their interactive and immersive stream. For example, in the case of TheGrefg the variety of his overlays —Starting Overlay, Just Chatting Overlay, Browser Overlay and Gameplay Overlay— invite the viewers to interact with the virtual spaces in different ways, and encourage them to expand the creation of content on his stream.

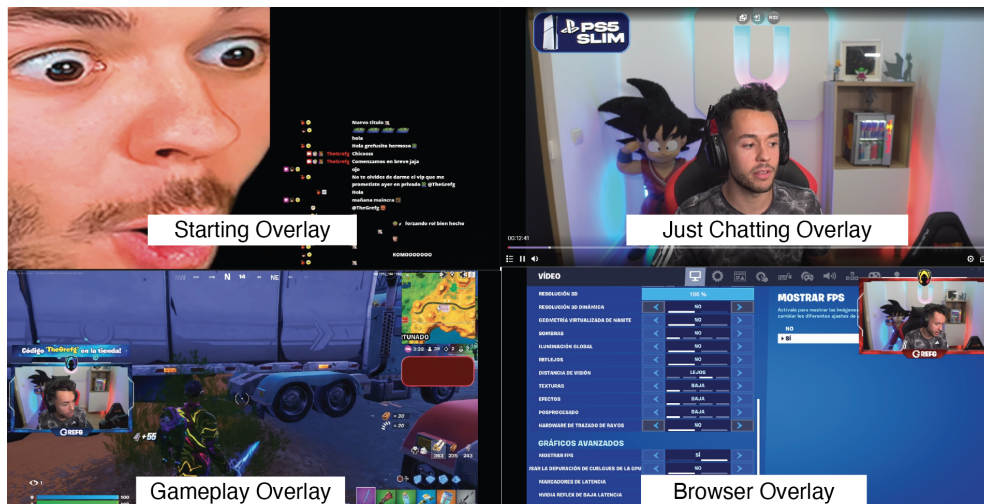


Figure 9. TheGrefg's Overlays used on his streams

As the widgets add value to the streams, the chat box displayed on the screen was the most significant widget the Entertainer Streamers used. It acts a visual representation of the viewers on screen and gives them a space to be seen on their streams: connects the audience with their content and gives them a sense of belonging.

In terms of advertisement display and revenue, the three streamers utilize their content not only to promote themselves but also brands. Due to the popularity of their character, the Entertainer Streamers take part of what Törhönen et al. called ‘celebrity culture’.¹⁹⁹ Such influential power gives the streamers the opportunity to adjust their content to profit from the audience actions on stream. Displaying brands and sponsors on the chat box and inviting the audience to subscribe, follow, and donate bits; implies the interest of the streamers to earn the trust and monetary support from the viewers. It encourages them to create content that attracts the audience’s attention, and, therefore, persuades them to pay for their content. Additionally, all of them displayed ads during their stream which influenced the experience

¹⁹⁸ Hamilton et al., “Streaming on Twitch,” p. 9

¹⁹⁹ Törhönen et al., “Fame and Fortune, or Just Fun?,” p. 178

of those viewers who are not subscribed to their respective Twitch's channels. For TheGrefg and Pokimane the displacement of brands on the chat box contributes to the development of their content, and suggest a prioritization of exposing the brands and sponsorship they have.

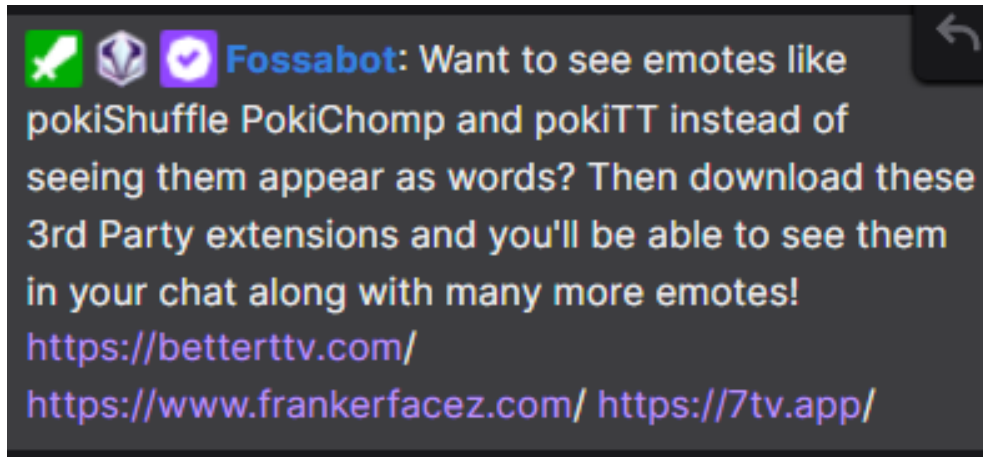


Figure 10. Pokimane's chat bot promoting a third party website

4.2.3 Connecting with the Audience - Community Streamers

It was seen during the analysis that the Community Streamers prioritized the interactions with the audience and tended to favor the conversation generated during the streams. Their content is focused on providing an interactive space for the viewers in which they can share and communicate with other gamers. Watts et al. associated the video game streaming environment with a social and digital space in which a community develops relationships with other gamers and share their own approach to the games streamed.²⁰⁰ The interactivity of the Community Streamers favors the audience's connectivity and welcomes the viewers into an interactive social space to interact with others. Their main goal is to provide an enjoyable experience by playing different games but also to create a responsive environment in which the audiences is motivated to participate with the content and share their opinions. In the case of iPandarina and Jesusseron, they tend to involve the audience in the narrative of the game and provide them with the opportunity to help the production of the content. They prioritized the interactions with the gameplay and the audience inquires, and preserved the dynamic of the stream by involving the viewers in their decision in-game. Anderson mentioned that Twitch facilitates the connection between the streamer and the audience affording a 'human touch' experience as a product of their interactions.²⁰¹ As their content

²⁰⁰ Watts et al., "Digital Gaming Audiences," p. 10

²⁰¹ Anderson, "Watching people is not a game," p. 11

encourages the audience to form a connection within the community, the Community Streamers responsiveness welcomes the viewers to interact with their content and invites them to be attentive to the stream. In all cases it was also noticed that their attention is divided whenever they play a game. While playing the game, they prioritized the in-game mechanics and focused on providing a good experience for the viewer without disregarding the importance to keep the dialogue with the audience and communicate with them whenever possible.

In terms of connectivity, the Community Streamers follow the same pattern: a sense of awareness of the audience and immediate acknowledgment whenever they got subscriptions or donations. They make the viewers feel welcomed and embrace the conversation ongoing in the chat box by reading the messages and interact with them. Sjöblom et al., suggest that such connectivity can be associated with the pace they play the game and the amount of followers they have.²⁰² However, the recognition the streamers give to the audience in their streams strengthen their relationship and encourage the viewers to interact with their content. Addressing the viewers by their name and making conversation with them contributes to increase the connectivity with their community. The Community Streamers provide a place to be acknowledged and, moreover, foster a dynamic stream lead by communication and friendship. In all the cases analyzed, the streamers dedicated their attention to their supporters and invite the other spectators to enjoy the community they have created. As mentioned before, the ‘human touch’ these streamers yield to their supporters suggests a personal connection with the audience and the importance they give to them in order to create more content. For example, iPandarina’s awareness of her community allows her get lost in the video game and, later on, apologize for overlooking the messages of the viewers.

Concerning the content production, the Community Streamers present a narrative that the audience accepts and constantly interacts with. They demonstrated a vast coverage of the affordances Twitch has for content creators in order to develop their content. Their usage of widgets, overlays and alerts invite the audience to participate in the creation of the content

²⁰² Sjöblom et al., “Content Structure Is King,” p. 166

and engage them to get involved with the stream. Such features, as Lim et al.²⁰³ suggested, contribute to capture the attention of the audience and helps them share their emotions while interacting with the stream. All the streamers analyzed value the importance of the role the audience has over their stream and emphasized their content creation into recognizing those who support them monetarily.



Figure 11. Jesusseron thanking a supporter after they subscribed

By using widgets, overlays and alerts that encourage the viewers to engage, the Community Streamers facilitate the development of their community and, as Diwanji et al. stated²⁰⁴, increase the connectivity with a unique and meaningful experience. In the case of iPandarina, the display of a banner with two recognition elements: a ‘*new subscriber*’ mention and ‘*latest donor*’ mention —followed by the amount donated—; fosters the supporters momentarily on screen and gives them additional recognition on her community. Furthermore, their content plays an important role to host a social and immersive experience for the audience. As Friedländer mentioned, they afford a friendly dynamic in which the viewers can communicate with others and help the streamers to maintain the creation of content.²⁰⁵ Community Streamers approach to advertisement display and revenue brings back the importance of acknowledging the supporters on screen, addressing them with a personal message, and encourage the audience to ‘give some love’ to them. The streamers invite the viewers to be part of the celebration’s message in order to reinforce the community’s values.

²⁰³ Lim et al., “The Role of Wishful Identification,” p. 8

²⁰⁴ Diwanji et al., “Don’t Just Watch, Join in,” p. 6

²⁰⁵ Friedländer, “Streamer Motives and User-Generated Content,” p. 71

It is important to notice that from the three streamers analyzed, iPandarina showed an inclination to promote her team and the team's sponsors at all time during her streams. She displayed them in every overlay and, even though she never addressed them or speak of them directly in stream, they function as a constant reminder for the viewers that the exposure of brands for iPandarina plays an important role on her content.

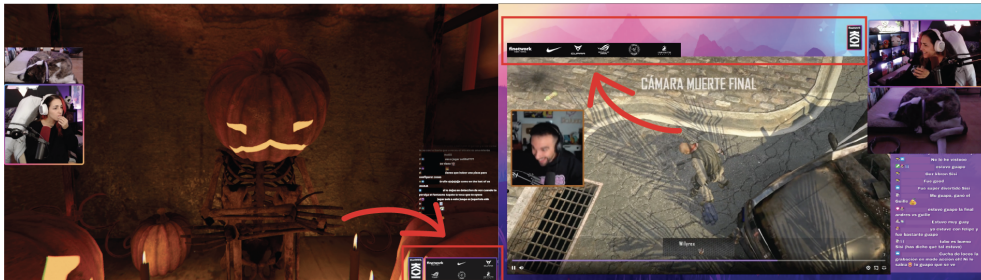


Figure 12. iPandarina's sponsors on her overlays

However, for ThePeachCobbler and Jesusseron the main focus was on self-promotion and constant invitations for the audience to follow their other social media accounts. As they afford the connectivity and interactivity between the streamers and the viewers,²⁰⁶ the social media links and self promotion acts as a revenue features in order to grow their community. They invite the audience to get involved with their content but also contributes to the growth of their supporters across the media.

4.3 Audience Engagement and Interaction

In order to assess the diversification of content on Twitch, the participation of the audience towards the streamer and their content was analyzed. Audience Engagement and Interaction, as seen in *Subsection 3.1.3.3*, observes the role of the viewers and how they get involved with the content produced during the stream. The audience plays a role in the streams as an active character who is constantly engaging and altering the results of the content. The concepts of how the content is consumed and the effects those interactions have in relation with the video game streams are analyzed on this section by the following aspects: role, engagement and interactions and Twitch features and monetization. The first two elements observe the approach of the audiences towards the content the streamer is producing and how they

²⁰⁶ Sjöblom et al., "The Ingredients of Twitch Streaming," p. 23

present diverse mechanics into the stream to further the engagement with the video game stream. The third aspect, Twitch features and monetization, analyses the affordances the platform provides to the content in order to facilitate interactive dynamics to the viewers and studies those features associated with monetization. In this regard, the functions of Channel Points and Hype Train were taken into consideration additionally to the analysis of the amount of donations, subscriptions and gifts the streamer received during the research.

4.3.1 Worshippers and Inspired Pupils - Competitive Streamers

Competitive Streamers' audience interaction and engagement involves spectatorship and a learning process in order to fulfill their eagerness to acquire more knowledge of the games the streamer is playing. The role they portray is associated to what Sjöblom and Hamari emphasized about spectating esports events.²⁰⁷ The viewers connect with the content by acquiring more insight of the strategies they can replicate for their own game experience but also by immersing themselves into the competitive environments of video games. These communities follow the streamers the same way a soccer fan supports their team, and they are encouraged to interact with the content via the achievements the players are having in game or by developing their in-game skills and knowledge. Cheung and Huang defined spectators as individuals who "appreciated aspects of the game such as the spectacle of battles and graphics, user interface features and the game design"²⁰⁸ In this case, Competitive Streamers' audience acts as a fan of the mechanics the streamer is displaying on screen who inspired them to be better players. Their experience relies on the retrieving of as much information as possible to fulfill their curiosity, translate the knowledge acquired into practice, and improve their skills. Nemesis' audience has an interest in creating a community and a social space in which they can engage with an immersive experience. His community understands better the dynamic of the stream by interacting and commenting on the actions he does in-game.

²⁰⁷ Sjöblom & Hamari, "Why Do People Watch Others Play Video games?," p. 986

²⁰⁸ Cheung & Huang, "Starcraft from the Stands," p. 7

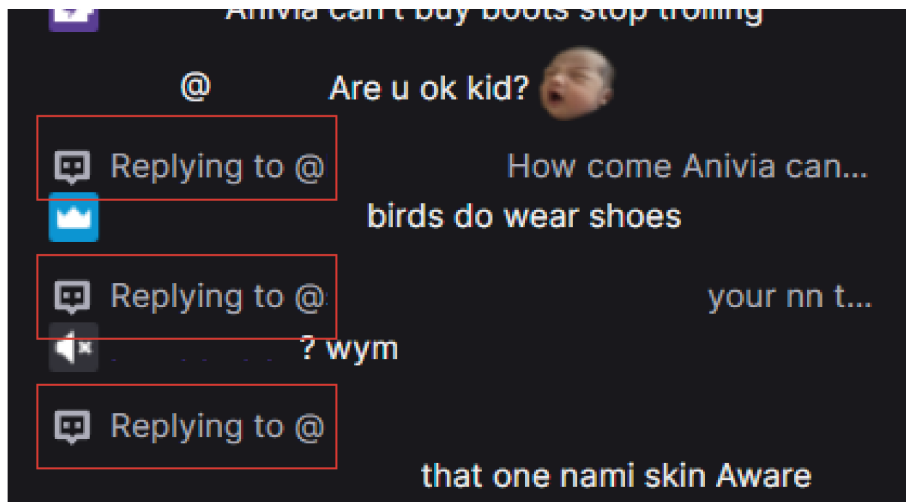


Figure 13. Nemesis' audience discussion the in-game actions

The Competitive Streamers' audience engagement towards the content produced by the streamers is affected by the techniques they display on screen. The viewers interact with the stream by learning about the game and enhancing their abilities. Their participation relies on the devotion they have towards the streamer and how influential they are over their game style. Lim et al. associate this type of audiences with an "intrinsic motivation"²⁰⁹ to be better players and reach a higher level on the game they are playing/watching. These communities' connection with the stream prioritize the development of new knowledge, improvement of skills and adapt strategies and techniques from the pro-players. Their worshipfulness towards the content creator defines the level of loyalty they show on stream but also determines the way they interact with the stream. El Afi and Ouiddad attribute this aspect to the devotion the viewers have towards streamer and the influence they have over them, and the importance they give to watch the gameplays in order to develop better skills.²¹⁰ Competitive Streamers' audience like Bugha's and MrSavage's follow this engagement pattern to the letter, however, Nemesis' viewers show a sense of community embraced within a supportive environment. They care about the interactions developed between them and Nemesis and demonstrate their interest in the actions he is doing: for them it is not just about learning from him but also engaging with the content. As mentioned before, such elements are affected by the aesthetics of the plays, the achievements the player has during the games and the playability of the

²⁰⁹ Lim et al., "The Role of Wishful Identification," p. 2

²¹⁰ El Afi & Ouiddad in Constantine et al., "The Rise of Video-Game Live Streaming," p. 158

streamer to show their abilities on screen. At the end, the combination of these aspects defines the experience of the audience and how they interact with the content.

In order to keep the audience engaged, Competitive Streamers rely on the amount of information they can provide to the viewers during the matches they play. Lim et al. approached the parasocial relationship as a parameter affected by the strength of the interactions and how it influences the audience.²¹¹ In the case of the Competitive Streamers' viewers, their identification with the content does not involve the usage of stickers and fully relies on retrieving information by the usage of commands. Additionally, Xu et al. mentioned that the parasocial relationship formed between streamers and spectators “enhances the reliability, attachment, and loyalty.”²¹² The audience of all the streams in this category have a tendency to spam the chat box asking about their settings in-game and the specifications of their PC set-up. The interactions created by the use of commands facilitates the viewers with the information they need to replicate the streamer's game style²¹³, specially on Bugha's and MrSavage's streams.

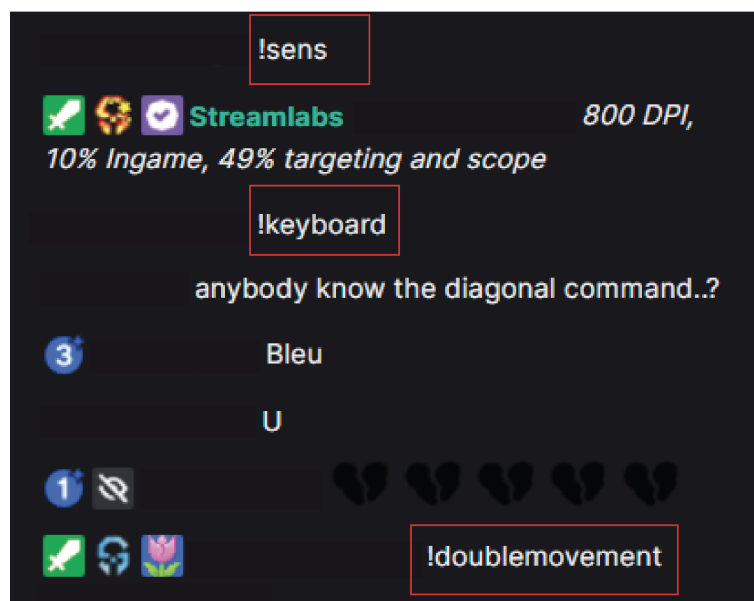


Figure 14. MrSavage's audience making use of his commands on the chat box

²¹¹ Lim et al., “The Role of Wishful Identification,” p. 8

²¹² Xiao-Yu Xu, Wen-Bo Niu, Qing-Dan Jia, Lebogang Nthoiwa, and Li-Wei Ji, “Why Do Viewers Engage in Video game Streaming? The Perspective of Cognitive Emotion Theory and the Moderation Effect of Personal Characteristics,” *Sustainability* 13, 11990 (2021): p. 6. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su132111990>

²¹³ The most common commands were !sens or !pc

It is important to mention that the stickers' usage was seen on all of the streamers' analysis and used as a reaction to the in-game actions. Yet, none of their audiences have a preference to utilize them. Furthermore, the impact of the automated bot on the Competitive Streamers' content reflects the importance the player attributes to provide information to the viewers. In all cases, the bot functions as an immediate respond to the commands commented in the chat box by the audience, but also warned the viewers for spamming the chat box. Additionally, it is relevant to distinguish that Bugha's bot also performed promotional actions by systematically reminding the audience about the sponsors of the streams.

For the Competitive Streamers, Twitch features represent a overlooked invitation for the audience to interact with their content due to the lack of engaging features that facilitate the viewers to establish a connection with their stream. Even though they are present on two of the three cases, Channel Points are not prioritized in order to engage with their audience which suggests the lack of interest into increasing the interactivity with the audience through their content. The rewards invite the viewers to interact digitally with the streamers and create a immersive experience for them. For example, Bugha doesn't have Channel Points configured on his channel, which reduces the interactions that can be generated during the live-streams. This affects the way he creates a connection with his audience by decreasing the '*hype*' they could have towards his content.

Furthermore, monetization features utilized by the Competitive Streamers' audience, such as subscriptions and donations, displayed a low interest from the audience in supporting monetarily the content of the streamers; therefore, the Hype Train was not activated during any of the streams analyzed. For their audience, knowledge has more fulfillment than recognizing on screen. However, in the case of Nemesis, it was noticeable that his audience prefers to support him by being present and communicating with him as they tend to prioritize the parasocial relationship in order to nurture the feeling of belonging. The audience's attention²¹⁴, as El Afi and Ouiddad approached it, is not represented by the loyalty the viewers have toward the streamer. Therefore, the low amount of donations and subscriptions shows that the audience is more interested in watching the stream and

²¹⁴ El Afi & Ouiddad in Constantine et al., "The Rise of Video-Game Live Streaming," p. 159

interacting with the content through the chat box than monetarily support the stream: it does not represent an invitation for them to engage with the content.

4.3.2 Attention's Seekers - Entertainer Streamers

On the Entertainer Streamers' streams, the interactions across the platform between the audience and the content is supported by the development of loyalty and membership status of each viewer. Being part of the streamer's community becomes a goal for the viewers in order to be form a connection with them and establish the formation of their interactions. For the Entertainer Streamer's community, the viewers' loyalty and sense of membership determine the success of the live stream and shape the role of the community. The audience has a preference for playing the role of spectator who is constantly attempting to capture the attention of the streamer. It is also important to address that on the three cases analyzed, the members of the audience tend to show their support by encouraging the streamer on their success, and subscribing and donating; but also by enjoying the show. Cheung's and Huang's definition of 'The Entertained' spectator describes how the community of this category act on the streams analyzed. Their engagement relies on watching and experiencing the content without being under the effects of the stress of the gameplay.²¹⁵ However, in the case of TheGrefg, his viewers assumed an assistant's role which had the tendency to provide extra information about the game, advise the actions the streamer was taking during the stream, and involve themselves with the in-game interactions (see *Figure 15*). The engagement and interactions produced by the three Entertainer Streamers are linked to the attention given by them to the audience's actions. It was noticed on all cases that, whenever the streamer is not playing a game, the viewers tend to interact more with the streamer, ask questions, and spam the chat box with comments. As mentioned before, the status of membership establish the order in which the audience portrays their level of investment on the streamer and its content. Hamilton et al. attribute this concept to desire to belong to a community and form an identity within the social space of streaming²¹⁶.

²¹⁵ Cheung & Huang, "Starcraft from the Stands," p. 6

²¹⁶ Hamilton et al., "Streaming on Twitch," p. 4

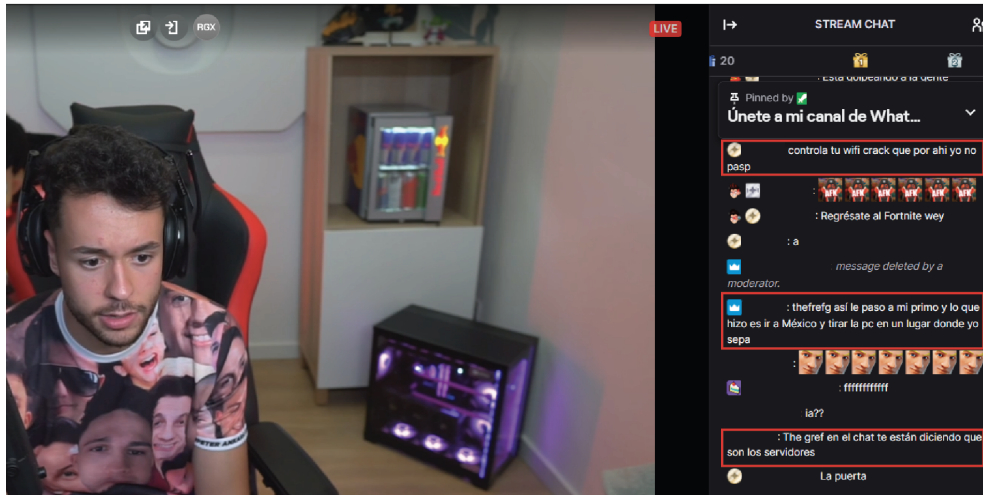


Figure 15. TheGrefg's audience trying to catch his attention

Additionally, the Entertainer Streamers' audience investment goes beyond spending time watching the content but also the dedication they have into providing their knowledge and skills to the streamer, and investing money to support their content. Therefore, the interactions are linked to the involvement they have towards the streams and how the streamer responds to their actions. For these communities engaging with the content means to be recognized and acknowledged by the content creator and the community: the status they acquired during the streams. Their understanding of 'belonging to a community' translates into showing their loyalty and position in the community. The role of the streamer is understood as an entertainer and the viewers engage directly with their actions by displaying their support across the platform. Even though the three communities analyzed understood such interactions, it was only on AriGameplays' streams where the audience developed a strong sense of belonging and facilitated the creation of 'in-stream traditions' —normally connected to the usage of stickers or specific commands—.

The social space created by the Entertainer Streamers encourages the audience to engage with their content first hand and experience the immersion without disruption during the stream²¹⁷. In this regard, the streamers create a bond with the audience by letting them participate in the development of the content. In this category, the use of stickers and commands has a lack of interest from the audience and only provokes a reaction from the viewers whenever the streamer is not on the scene. Even though all the cases follow the same pattern, the importance given to such feature and its functionality contributes to the

²¹⁷ Gandolfi, p. 77

development of the streamers' image on Twitch. Also they do not motivate the audience to make use of them. However, TheGrefg's displacement of commands on his streams' titles encourages the audience to engage with them and persuade them to type them down in the chat box. It is important to mention that, during AriGameplay's streams, there were two automated messages that addressed her actions and looks: both work as a reminder of the identity she has built on Twitch and contribute to create a memento for the audience to grasp on and remember for further streams. Additionally, the automated bot configuration had a similar set-up by acting as a moderator raising awareness of the rules and spam policies of the channel, and as a promoter of their social media and inviting the audience to subscribe and follow. The usage of the bot indicates the prosperity of the stream, the main functionality of the automated bot in this category suggests an interest in motivating the audience into engage monetarily with their content. In the case of Pokimane, the bot was also seen as a sponsor promoter, while AriGameplays diversity of bots also provided the audience with a 'thank you' message whenever someone subscribe to her channel. Lim et al. attribute this digital 'techniques' to give an impression to the viewers that their inquiries are being replied by the streamer.²¹⁸ However, this false response contributes to keep the conversation's flow and facilitate the audience with the attention needed in order to keep them engaged with the content.

Within this context, the parasocial relationship developed across the Entertainer Streamers' streams relies on the opportunities the audience has to take part of the stream's activities. Xu et al. welcomes the possibility of establishing the relationship based on supporting the streamer monetarily and subscribing to their channel²¹⁹. In the video game streaming realm, the audience's subscription influence towards the content rewards them with recognition within the community of the streamer and gives them a higher membership's status than the rest of the viewers. Furthermore, such actions are also reflected on the way the streamers use Twitch's features. The Entertainer Streamers analyzed seemed to rely more on the Predictions rather than Channel Points. All the streamers on this category have the Channel Points configured but their audience doesn't use them, rather because they are very expensive or they do not help capture the streamer's attention. For example, TheGrefg's

²¹⁸ Lim et al., "The Role of Wishful Identification," p. 4

²¹⁹ Xu et al., "Why Do Viewers Engage in Video game Streaming?," p. 7

channel has one reward posted that costs 99,999,999 points only with a ‘haha’ as a description. On the other hand, Predictions helped the audience to interact directly with the content on stream. It was recorded that in Pokimane’s and AriGameplays’ stream, the audience had the opportunity to predict results of the in-game actions and bet their Channel Points.

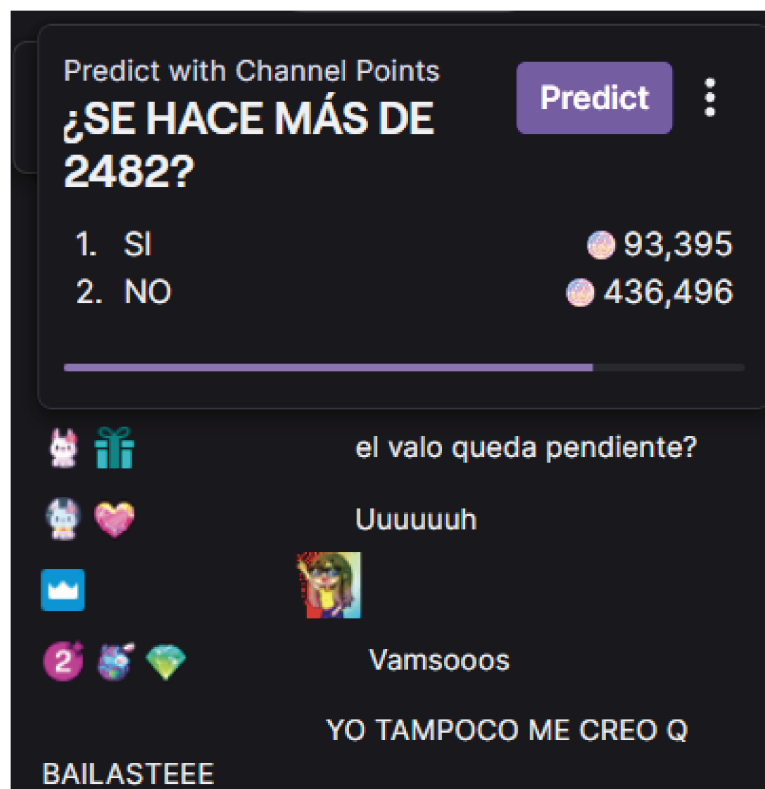


Figure 16. Prediction function on AriGameplays’ stream

However, the viewers never used those earnings to retrieve any rewards from their configurations and only reacted by discussing the results on the chat box. As mentioned before, the viewers engagement is fulfilled when they believe a connection between them and the streamer has been created and their loyalty is displayed on the stream with a subscription, donation or direct mention of their username.²²⁰ On the other hand, the Hype Train was only seen during Pokimane’s live stream analysis but predictions for the other two streamer can be made based on the high monetary support cadency the pre-recorded streams had. A low interaction with the Channel points combined with constant activation of the Hype Train during the Entertainer Streamers’ live broadcasts suggest a distinction from the viewers to

²²⁰ El Afi & Ouiddad in Constantine et al., “The Rise of Video-Game Live Streaming,” p. 158

rely on monetization tools to engage with the stream.²²¹ The interactions and engagement of their audience supports the idea that they value more the acknowledgement and displacement of their loyalty over interacting within the community. The audience of each of the streamers in this category has a tendency to engage with the content in order to catch the streamer's attention and their monetary support relies on the value it provides to them to be noticed by the stream in real time.

4.3.3 Conversations with Friends - Community Streamers

For the audiences of the Community Streamers interactivity and engagement comes from a high sense of connection with the streamer's channel and the friendships they developed during a livestream. The role they represent across the platform relies on a responsive interaction with the streamers and the development of conversation with the other participants. These parameters establish a communal space in which the viewers can participate and react towards the content provided by the streamer. The relationships created within the stream —and towards the streamer— are associated with what Cheung and Huang defined as 'The Crowd' and 'The Commentator'²²². These type of spectators play an active role on the streams and encourage the participation of the viewers in the chat box. In all cases analyzed, their communities exhibited a continuous dialogue between the viewers of the stream and emphasized the importance of creating connections with the other participants (see *Figure 17*). Additionally, the three cases preserved the flow of the conversation going and facilitate the streamer with interactive topics to discuss on screen. Such interactions suggest a friendly and supportive role for the Community Streamer audience who prioritizes the connection between each member and stimulates the participation with the content and the streamer.

²²¹ Ibid., p. 159

²²² Cheung & Huang, "Starcraft from the Stands," p. 6

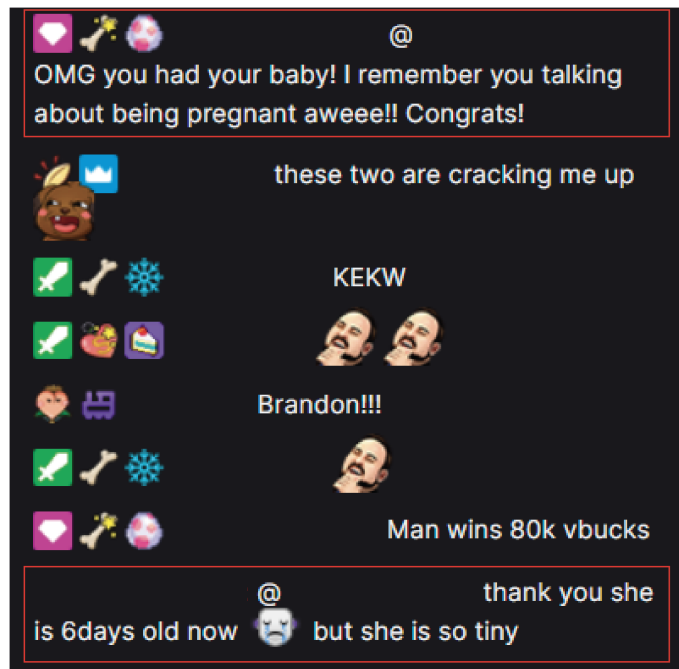


Figure 17. ThePeachCobbler’s audience talking between each other

Regarding the engagement and interactions the audience has on streams towards the streamers and their content, the Community Streamers’ viewers rely on commenting on the actions having on screen but also facilitating the development of a connection with the other participants. These communities have a high sense of togetherness and transform the live streams into a social space in which they can share and converse with other gamers. As Hamilton et al. mentioned, the disposition of playthroughs to promote discussions and topical conversation in livestreams²²³ transforms the audience’s participation into the main way to engage with the content. In the case of iPandarina’s viewers, they understand the dynamic of the stream the most and their immersion relies the development of a social space to communicate with others. On the contrary, ThePeachCobbler’s audience engagement not only depends on the conversation between the audience but is also affected by the distribution of her attention and how she communicates with them. Sociability drives the interactions in the streams and the viewers reach out to the streamer whenever the actions in-game demands it or whenever they are addressed directly. These interactions are experienced by the viewers as “good, lively, humorous, and colorful”²²⁴ and nurture the parasocial relationship develop during the streams. The three cases suggest a high sense of community by establishing a

²²³ Hamilton et al., “Streaming on Twitch,” p. 4

²²⁴ Ibid.

respectful space with a tendency to prioritize the conversation and the relationship with others.

The Community Streamers category facilitates the effect of the parasocial relationship between the broadcaster and the audience. Xu et al. attributed the nature of the relationship to the “closeness and intimacy”²²⁵ produced during the streams. Such actions encourage the viewers to communicate positive emotions and develop an attachment with the content production during the broadcast. On the analysis, this kind of reactions were perceived by the usage of stickers and commands. The three streamers’ audience made use of those elements to show their reactions or emotions towards the actions in-game displayed by the streamer. They function as an additional interaction to convey their feelings and strengthen their relationship with the content. iPandarina’s and ThePeachCobbler’s audience usage of stickers and commands facilitate the development of traditions on stream that encourage the newcomers to accept and follow in order to become part of their community. In the case of iPandarina, her viewers tend to create a ‘*train of stickers*’ at the beginning of each stream and stop when she comes into the screen. On the other hand, on ThePeachCobbler’s streams, it was seen that whenever somebody subscribed, donated bits or gifted subscriptions, the viewers automatically reacted to those message with commands added to their comments on the chat box. In this way, the approach of Xu et al. to intimacy and attention to viewers²²⁶ supports the importance given by these communities to engage with others’ actions and nurtures their parasocial relationship with the streamers. Additionally, on the three cases analyzed, the functionality of the automated bot is configured to promote furthermore the streamer’s image by constantly encouraging the viewers to follow their social media. Moreover, it also works as a moderator of the chat answering the commands commented by the audience and reminding them to follow the stream rules and answering the commands. The automatization of messages and immediate replies to the audience’s interaction indicates an interest from the streamer to keep the viewers engaged whenever they are focused on the gameplay.

²²⁵ Xu et al., “Why Do Viewers Engage in Video game Streaming?,” p. 19

²²⁶ Ibid., p. 7

All of the Community Streamers use Twitch’s functions to provide extra interactive tools for the audience to participate and influence the outcome of the stream. Wulf et al. mentioned that the constant interactions between the streamer and the viewers reinforce the realness the parasocial relationship.²²⁷ The streams analyzed suggested a connection between all the participants that was enhanced by the Channel Points.

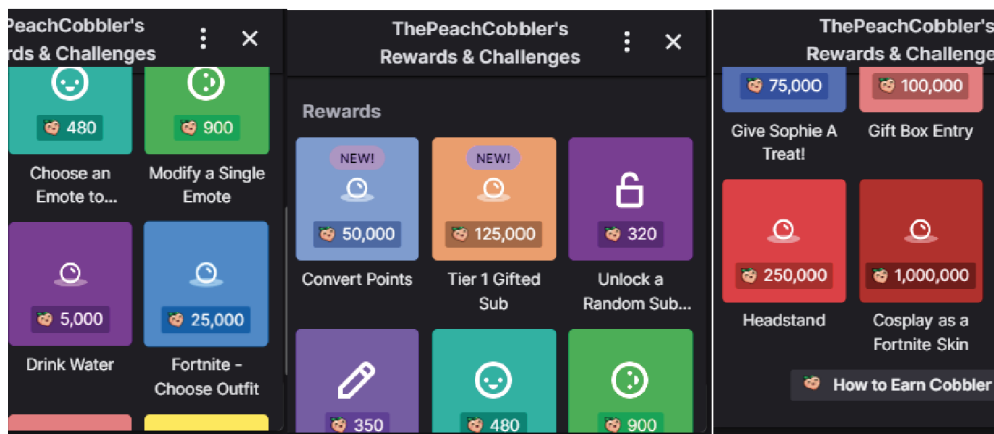


Figure 18. ThePeachCobbler Channel Points' rewards

On the three cases, the attention of the streamer was being pursued by the usage of the rewards on each channel. These communities have the possibility to highlight their comment, have a bot reading their message out loud or influence the actions of the streamer in-game. They add an additional value to the opportunities the viewers have to interact with the stream and facilitate the engagement with the content. For example, during the analysis of Jesusseron’s stream it was noticed that the audience’s interest on the Channel Points included the interruption of his stream by making him drink water and put his glasses on. On the other hand, Hype Train on the Community Streamers’ streams was hard to track due to the low frequency of donations and subscriptions; although, on one of ThePeachCobbler’s pre-recorded streams, the audience commented on the activation of the Hype Train. In another pre-recorded stream analyzed, the Hype Train can be predicted based on the rate of the monetary support since she got 19 subscriptions and 1700 bits on the first part of the analysis, and 34 subscriptions and 1650 bits on the second section. The lack of monetization suggests that economical support is not the main attraction for the audience to interact with or feel part of the stream, the focus rather relies on the interaction with the content and the other

²²⁷ Wulf et al., “Exploring Viewers’ Experiences of Parasocial Interactions,” p. 649

participants. As Lim et al. mentioned, the value of the engagement on the Community Streamers' streams resides in the interactions and continuous conversations between viewers.²²⁸ It fosters the interactivity toward the content and nurtures the possibilities the streamers have in order to create more immersive experiences. The sense of closeness and the high status of the parasocial relationship favors the lack of interest in monetizing the content of the streamer.

4.4 Categories' Comparative

This section works as a summary of the findings discussed on the previous sections and explores the differences and similarities between the categories in order to create a comparative on the diversification of content on Twitch. As established before, video game streaming content and audience engagement is affected by the type of streamer broadcasting live which produces different interactions between the content creator and the audience. The engagement produced on each category contributes to answer the research question of this project and helps to understand the dynamics of video games streaming in order to create diverse content on the platform.

Streamers' Identity explores the importance of the development of their personality across the platform in order to attract the viewers into their content. The relationship produced during the streams between the streamer and its content helps to connect with their audience. The categories defined for this study showed different approaches to the development of their image on Twitch. Competitive Streamers rely on the knowledge of the game and competitive aspects of their skills and strategies, and attract the audience by embracing their role as professional eSports players. Sponsors and brands become part of their personality on the platform and the viewers have familiarized with the role they play on their streams. For Entertainer Streamers, their role explores the power of their influence as public figures. They establish themselves as the center of attention and the main character of the streams. Their image supports Wulf and his colleagues' definition the streamer as social character²²⁹ and relies on the impact their popularity and fame has over the viewers. As they

²²⁸ Lim et al., "The Role of Wishful Identification," p. 4

²²⁹ Wulf et al., "Exploring Viewers' Experiences of Parasocial Interactions," p. 648

present creative ideas and engaging tools on stream, their role procures to catch the audience attention by attractiveness and trustworthiness. On the other hand, Community Streamers prioritized the social affordance of Twitch and display a friendly image to which the spectators can relate. The sociability on their streams builds up their image as approachable individuals and contributes to the association of video game streaming as a social space for gamers to create friendships. Their role welcomes the viewers into their community and their interactions are focused on connecting with them.

Sjöblom et al. mentioned the value the *About Me* section has to contribute to enrich the image of the streamers.²³⁰ In this case, the interface of Twitch aids the streamers to portray their personality and establish elements of recognition for the audience. In here, Competitive Streamers are portrayed as brands and expand the connection they have with sponsors. The information functions as a promotional description of how streaming is defined by their representation as professional players. The main usage of the platform for them is to display information about their team and sponsors. Similarly, Entertainer Streamers display themselves as public figures and invite the audience to connect with their image. As they prioritize the supporters, their interface displays their identity as ‘professional streamers’ tied to the development of creative content and the value their persona has across the platform. There is a great effort into maintaining a fresh and attractive image to keep the audience invested but also a constant distribution of information to capture the attention of the spectators. However, for the Community Streamers the *About Me* section establishes the importance they have towards creating a community and welcoming the viewers into a new social space. They facilitate the development of intimacy and a parasocial relationship with the audience as they focus on creating authentic and genuine content that encourage the viewers to participate on their streams. As their image invites spectators to interact with their content, they also make special distinctions to those members that support their channel. For them Twitch works as another platform to connect with their followers and develop their personal brand.

In other words, Competitive Streamers’ identity is preserved by the value they give to be associated with the professional aspects of the game and the skills they display during the streams. Their image is linked to sponsorship and brand exposure and defines how they are

²³⁰ Sjöblom et al., “The Ingredients of Twitch Streaming,” p. 25

seen by the audience. Entertainer Streamers shared the value of reputation across the platform in order to build up their identity. However, for them their association is connected with the creation of their content and the impact it has on the viewers' experience. Their role in Twitch is defined by the level of approachability and how their character produces interest. Personality and attractiveness²³¹ replaces sponsorship as the main drive to develop their identity. On the contrary, Community Streamers use their personality to create a social environment for viewers to come together and share experiences. They prioritized the creation of traditions among the stream and invite the audience to belong. Their identity is supported by the friendly aspects of their content and the social affordances of their interactions within the stream.

Content creation studies the materials the streamers produce on Twitch in order to facilitate interactive possibilities for the audience to keep themselves engaged with their stream. In terms of interactivity and connectivity, all the streamers studied showed that the distribution of their attention is driven by the intensity of the game; however, the Entertainer Streamers and the Community Streamers displayed a balance between the gameplay and the audience. In the case of Competitive Streamers their actions were focused on showing off their skill and their abilities during the matches, dissociating themselves from the interactions with the audience. Their interactivity and connectivity lack of a personal connection with the audience and is focused on delivering good plays.²³² Additionally, this category displayed a higher tendency to prioritize creating content for their sponsors and brands as their reputation across the gaming and the eSports industry has more impact in getting the audience's attention. Moreover, the Entertainer Streamers and the Community Streamers develop their content for the viewers and tend to narrate the actions they are doing on the game. Both can be associated with providing entertaining tools for the spectators so they can participate in the stream and make use of Twitch's affordances to interact with their viewers. However, Entertainer Streamers' popularity forces them to lose the personalization of their content. As they have more followers than the Community Streamers²³³, their interactions and acknowledgment gets lost between the high amount of supporters and donors. Therefore,

²³¹ King and de la Hera, "Fortnite Streamers as Influencers," p. 353

²³² Sjöblom et al., "Content Structure Is King," p. 165

²³³ As seen in *Table 2.* and *Table 3.* in subsection 3.1.4 *Sources and Cases*

Entertainer Streamers focus their content creation into developing an engaging and entertaining show. On the other hand, Community Streamers interactivity and connectivity favors the conversations created during the live broadcast as they tend to present a vast interactive tools for the audience to engage. Their content production invites the viewers to participate, to feel welcome and to develop a responsive space in which new spectators can get involved and share their opinions. The dialogue between the streamer and the audience becomes the method that aids the content to be produced, and the constant communication and friendship's development nurtures the environment their content's intension.

In terms of advertisement and revenue, they all make use of the Twitch's advertisement tools to produce some revenue. Additionally, the three categories understood the importance of showing on screen those viewers who supported them monetarily. However, following the same thread, Competitive Streamers prioritized exposing the sponsors and brands that support them as they also exhibit them on the screen during the whole time analyzed. In the case of Entertainer Streamers, they approached ads in two ways: advertising brands and promoting themselves. They show an interest in earning the trust and monetary support from the audience and focus their content into inviting the audience to subscribe or donate to their channel. On the other hand, Community Streamers shared an interest in self-promotion and use the revenue features to grow their community. They displayed a personal and friendly relationship with the advertisement functions on Twitch, and focused their content into connecting with their audiences.

The last concept, Audience Engagement and Interactions discusses the role the viewers have on the stream and how they interact with the content presented by the streamers. They play an active role and shape the diversification of content on Twitch. In order to assess the differences between the roles of the spectators on each category, Cheung's and Huang's viewers type was used.²³⁴ The Competitive Streamers audience can be perceived as players who are looking to improve their skills on the game. They seek to learn from the streamer and replicate their strategies and techniques in their own gameplays. Their eagerness to get better is satisfied by watching the pro-player mechanics and abilities. Acquiring knowledge from the games is not a distant concept for Entertainer Streamers and Community

²³⁴ Cheung & Huang, "Starcraft from the Stands," p. 5

Streamers; their audience's role is focused on different aspects. The Entertainer Streamers' viewers are in a constant search for recognition. As they interact with the stream, their goal is to show their loyalty to the streamer and earn a higher status in their community. On the other hand, the audience of the Community Streamers concentrated their participation into creating conversations with others and share their experiences. Their role on the streams relies on connecting with the community and use the stream as a platform to socialize and create friendships. The entertainment they get from the live broadcast is facilitated by the interactions they have with the streamer and the other members of the community.

As how the audience interacts with the content, the Competitive Streamer's viewers engagement implies an interest in getting as much information about their equipment and in-game settings as possible.²³⁵ The level of worshipfulness they have towards the streamer showed a constant use of command to get such information and put aside the usage of stickers or other interactive tools created by the streamer. Their interactions are focused on replicating the competitive aspects and increase their knowledge in the game. As mentioned before, the Entertainer Streamer's community sought recognition by the streamer and focused their interactions towards catching their attention. As they make use of the content created by the streamer, their actions pretend to get involved with the stream and take advantage of the opportunities they have to be noticed: subscribe or donate. In the case of the Community Streamer's audience, sociability dictates how the interactions are generated and how they engage with the content. The engagement in these communities demonstrated the development of a parasocial relationship sustained by the reciprocity the streamers has towards their messages.²³⁶ They take advantage of the streamer's content —stickers and commands— and make use of them to enhance the experience of being part of their community.

Twitch functions do not represent an important element the audience of the streamer's analyzed used to interact during the stream. It can be distinguished that the Community Streamers' viewers tend to interact more with the Channel Points and Predictions, putting aside the Hype Train. Their intentions suggest a lack of interest to support monetarily the streamer and, rather, interact with the content directly through messages. However, in the

²³⁵ Lim et al., "The Role of Wishful Identification," p. 2

²³⁶ Xu et al., "Why Do Viewers Engage in Video game Streaming?," p. 7

case of Entertainer Streamers' audience, monetization became the main strategy to catch the streamer's attention — activating the Hype Train. It also fulfilled their status of loyalty towards the streamer and show their investment on the content.

It is important to notice that the categories share similarities that can place each streamers in a different category. The type of streamers established on this research are not definitive and it is possible that streamers partake on multiple categories. Moreover, once the analysis was concluded, it was noticed that the streamers selected shared a different percentage of belonging in the category they were placed based on the interactivity and connectivity they had with the audience. Such argument contributes to the idea that the categories presented on this study are not exclusive from each other.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

This thesis analyzed nine streamers on Twitch and discussed how their content is produced on the platform. The examination of the information presented has portrayed an idea of how the content on Twitch has been diversified depending on how the streamers present themselves and their content on stream. The involvement of audience engagement contributed to understand how video game streamers on Twitch are perceived by the viewers and therefore, capture their attention. Additionally, as the streamers diversified their content, the production of diverse interactive actions towards the stream nurtures the objective of this thesis and helps answer the research question. Since the categories analyzed presented different methods to approach and interact with the audience, the dynamics of video game streaming expands the strategies on Twitch for content creators to engage with their supporters. In order to understand these approaches, the analysis of three different type of streamers portrayed a visualization of the possibilities video game streaming brings to the gaming culture. It was important for this research to present different aspects of the medium to create an analytical approach to the content produced on Twitch. As stated in the introduction, the research question of this thesis was:

Why has the video game streamers' content and audience engagement diversified on Twitch?

To answers this question, it was important for the researcher to understand how those differences are produced. Diversification of video game streamers' content and audience engagement is produced due to the different type of streamers, as they communicate with their audience using a variation of engaging tools, strategies and dynamics. As the study approached the streamer as the main character to expand the video game content on Twitch, their efforts also affected how the audience engaged with their content. One of the main reasons content on Twitch has been diversified is due to how the streamers portray themselves on the screen in order to capture the audience's attention.

By analyzing the diversification of video game streamers' content and audience engagement with a textual analysis methodology, this thesis has shown how the content on

Twitch varies and enriches the gaming culture by providing a diverse digital and social space for gamers to interact and engage with video games. Part of the expectations of this research involved the understanding of the video game streaming as a diverse medium in which social aspects help the development of different content on Twitch. The three categories analyzed: Community Streamers, Entertainer Streamers and Community Streamers; represented the approach the researcher intended to utilize to answer the research question. The different way the streamers' categories produce content on Twitch illustrates that the video game streaming content on the platform can be presented in multiple ways.

5.1 Further Research

To conclude, even though the thesis presents an opportunity for researchers to understand the diversification of video game streamer's content, the researcher believes there are more aspects to explore about the topic in order to enrich and create a more concise definition of why the content has been diversified. The social dynamics presented on Twitch nurture the gaming culture with a vast area of opportunities to further studies.

The methodology utilized for this research facilitated the recollection of data from nine streamers. The information gathered helped the researcher conclude that the diversification of content and audience engagement on Twitch is directly connected to the streamer's category. However, it was seen that the streamers of each category portrayed themselves differently even though they belong to the same classification. Therefore, in order to get a more concrete definition of the categories of the streamers, a wider selection of streamers per categories should be taken into consideration. Due to the time frame of the thesis, the information presented works as a starting point for researchers to expand the definition of the streamers' categories and therefore, expand the knowledge of how they interact with the audience and create content on Twitch.

Another aspect that would further enrich the research of this thesis would be to explore different categories of streamers. As explained before, the researcher considered three categories to define the diversification of content on Twitch. However, it is possible to open the spectrum of categories of streamers and include others that were not used for this research. The investigation explores the categories the researcher considered as the most dominant of the platform. However, it is important to mention that other categories can be

found on Twitch regarding the video game streams: V-streamers, Caster Streamers or Host Streamers. The exploration of such categories can potentially increased the value of this research by investigating the whole spectrum of streamers on Twitch and contribute further to research about video game streaming.

Lastly, this thesis further invites researches to explore the perspective of the streamer. In order to understand fully the diversification of video game streaming content on Twitch, it is relevant to investigate the self-perception of the streamers as a content creator on the platform. Such actions would involve doing interviews to streamers on Twitch to take into consideration how the streamers see themselves and create their content to keep their viewers hooked to their stream.

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Appendix 1

Streamers Analysis Structure

Streamer's name

Streamer Category

Streamer Identity

Appearance and Interface

- Profile picture
- Stream labels
 - Title
 - About description
 - Tags (Category and stream labels)
- About page

Space

- Screen layout (virtual space)
 - Scenes/Overlays
 - Alerts and Widgets
 - Sponsors
- Physical space (where the streamer is)
- Setup (video and audio)

Content Creation

Stream broadcast

- Video game
 - Which game?
 - How is the game being played?
- Stream's interactivity
- Attention's distribution
 - Acknowledgement
- Ads display

Audience engagement and interaction

Chat box

- Viewers comments
- Stickers
- Commands/Bots

Twitch function

- Channel Points
 - Functionality (Do they have them? Are they being used?)
 - Rewards
 - Predictions
- Hype Train
 - Donations
 - Subscriptions
 - Gifts (subscriptions or money)

Appendix 2

Streamers Analysis Chart

Streamer's name					
	@Streamer's tag				
	Streamer Identity Description				
Attribute					
Profile picture					
About description					
About page					
Stream labels					
	Stream #1	Stream #2	Stream #3	Stream #4	Stream #5
Title					
Category					
Tags*	Tags can only be seen on a live stream				
Room space					
Screen layout					
Overlays					
Alerts & Widgets					
Sponsors					
Setup					
Video					
Audio					
Attribute	Content Creation Description				
Stream type	Video game	Video game	Video game	Video game	Video game
Interactivity					
Attention's distribution					
Acknowledgement					
Ads display*					
Time watched	00:00:00-0:15:00 & 02:29:00-02:59:00	00:00:00-0:15:00 & 01:50:00-02:20:00	00:00:00-0:15:00 & 01:50:00-02:20:00	00:00:00-0:15:00 & 02:00:00-02:30:00	00:00:00-0:15:00 & 01:55:00-02:25:00
					On stream ads can only be seen during a live stream
Attribute	Audience engagement and interaction Description				
Chat box	Interaction/function				
Type*	Type of chat can only be seen during a live stream				
Comments					
Stickers usage					
Commands/Bots					
Twitch functions					
Channel Points*	Channel Points can only be seen on a live stream				
Hype Train*	The Hype Train can only be seen on a live stream. Nevertheless, donations, subs and gifts can be analyzed by the alerts.				
Donations					
Subscriptions					
Gifts					