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Hej or Nej?

An exploration of Swedish consumer value perceptions of female gaming organizations

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Background: Gaming has emerged from a niche industry to a major global player making billions of dollars in revenue year after year. Many companies and industries alike are taking note of the increasing prominence and investing into the market. However, historically there have been many issues with diversity and inclusion due to the gaming and technology sphere largely being recognized as a male space. A phenomenon has been occurring of women carving out their own gaming spaces into cyberbalkanized communities to avoid gendered discrimination and harassment.

Purpose: Research has been conducted on the topic of gender in esports and gaming by many academics but there is still room for further studies as many areas have not been explored. Limited studies have been conducted on female gaming organizations. Therefore, this study seeks to determine if women have a perception of value in relation to these organizations.

Method: The method selected was a qualitative method to further explore this issue. Eleven semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore the perceptions of Swedish gamers on the topic of female gaming organizations. Thematic analysis was guided.

Conclusion: The results show that while some of the previous criticisms are deemed applicable to this phenomenon, there continues to be a need for female organizations as they provide great resources to female gamers. Many are holding out hope that they will become unnecessary in the future but agree that they still hold value.

Keywords: gaming, gender, toxic masculinity, female organizations, consumer value perceptions

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gg.

Natalie

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the reader to the subjects of gaming, gender within the gaming community, and the marketing concepts of value. These will be the most essential topics to understand throughout this paper. Additionally, the research problem and questions will be presented. Finally, some delimitations of this research will be identified.

1.1 Background and Problem Formulation

There are more than 3 billion gamers worldwide with over US$175 billion in revenue estimated for the year 2021 (Newzoo, 2021a; Wijman, 2021). In addition to this, over 200 million video game super fans each spend at least US$500 every year attending live events, paying for streaming content or engaging in other commercial behaviors every year in support of their favorite game, teams, and streamers (Xue et al., 2019), making gaming a major global industry. With everything from family friendly to graphic, violent games, there is something for every age, culture, and taste to engage fans in gaming practices across the globe. Although it once could have been identified as a niche subculture, gaming has certainly established itself as a key player in the mainstream popular culture and entertainment scenes (Shaw, 2010). The importance and relevance of the gaming industry has been growing exponentially year after year. Being that it is such a diverse industry, it can be hard for academics and practitioners to agree on one single definition of gaming and esports. Some definitions can exclude major segments of the gaming population and some definitions are too broad to explain the complex phenomena that the industry is facing. Additionally, it can be hard to make the distinction between the terminology of gaming and esports. Different ways the definitions of these terms have been expressed will be discussed later within this study.

An issue that has plagued the gaming industry throughout its rise in popularity is toxic behaviors, particularly those which are gender-based (Ruvalcaba et al., 2018). The historic stereotype that all gamers are nerdy, young men is being disproven and more women are now self-identifying as gamers (Burch & Wiseman, 2014). Despite the existence of large numbers of female gamers, gaming culture has not necessarily been a welcoming environment for many women, leading to their marginalization within the community (Darvin et al., 2020; Pham, 2007; Shaw, 2010). These negative behaviors can cause players to perform worse, reduce their enjoyment, and even trigger them to lose interest in gaming as a whole (Adinolf & Türkay, 2018). These negative environments have caused female gamers to create their own arenas for playing, competing, and cultivating social connections in a move that can be called cyberbalkanization (Fenton et al., 2021). This term explains the phenomena of online groups being divided and formed which are specific to special interests of the members (Chan & Fu, 2017; Williams, 2007). For example, there may be a larger online group of people who enjoy watching movies, but members of this group splinter into groups of people who enjoy romantic comedies, horror movies, or people who enjoy brand franchises such as Star Wars. So, in the instance of female gamers, they are forming their own separated communities of female (often including transgender and non-binary) gamers.

Creating a more inclusive and relaxing environment for women in gaming simply makes business sense. Ignoring females as consumers of video games is alienating half of the potential gaming market. Companies and brands like Microsoft and Riot Games are making moves to increase their moves towards inclusivity for diversity in gaming (Yokoi, 2021), but there is still room for improvement. Making strides to create a more inclusive industry will lead to more participation and enjoyment for everyone (Burch & Wiseman, 2014). However, there has been criticisms of this move to separate women into their own spaces in gaming, citing the impact that visibility has on stereotypes (Paaßen et al., 2017). This argument states that when less women are visible in the gaming sphere, the stereotype is not going to change because the community as a whole cannot witness these changes outwardly.

To better understand the effectiveness of these insulated communities in their effort at creating safe environments which foster healthy gaming practices, researchers should focus on the marketing concept of value. There are many theories which address the perception of value from both the business revenue perspective and the consumer perspective. In this research, the view of the consumer perspective of value was adopted and the theories of the elements of value, customer value creation, and the perceived value framework were utilized to reach a better understanding of this phenomenon. Within the consumer perspective, the definition of consumer value is generally agreed upon as the value in which consumers receive in relation to what is risked or sacrificed by said consumer (Smith & Colgate, 2007). Using this marketing lens to investigate female organizations brings a new view to the research on gender within gaming.

There should be great importance placed on consumer perception of value as "higher levels of perceived value lead to higher levels in satisfaction of customers, greater levels of customer loyalty and retention and to a greater success of organizations" (Snoj et al., 2004, p. 156). Therefore, the value perceptions of the consumer are highly relevant and a critical area for marketers to pay attention to. It has even been regarded as the most fundamental concept in all marketing activities (Woodruff, 1997). Many agree that consumer value perception changes over time and that value is a "dynamic variable, experienced before purchase, at the moment of purchase, at the time of use, and after use" (Sánchez et al., 2006, p. 394), so updated research is constantly needed for new information on the current trends and attitudes of consumers.

It has been said that “the early history of electronic media is less the evolution of technical efficiencies in communication than a series of arenas for negotiating issues crucial to the conduct of social life; among them, who is inside and outside, who may speak, who may not, and who has authority and may be believed” (Marvin, 1988, p. 4). This gives a succinct reasoning for the study of culture in gaming, as societal phenomena can be studied on a smaller scale which is more accessible to the researcher. This societal phenomenon in question during the scope of this research is the marginalization of women in historically male spaces, which can be seen in wider societal circumstances such as gameplay and technology or even adventure sports like rock climbing and skateboarding (Groen, 2016; Rogstad, 2021). In the case of gender in gaming, studies such as this one can help give perspective on the study of gender as a whole, while choosing an area that is focused enough to research. And while there have been many academic studies on toxicity in gaming, there have not been any which look to determine the motivating factors for females to seek out all-female communities and explore the value that female gamers see within these organizations.

The phenomena of cyberbalkanization of females in gaming has been criticized by some for possibly reinforcing gendered stereotypes and insulating the communities from the overall community as a whole (Paaßen et al., 2017; Shaw, 2010), but this has yet to be investigated further. Groen (2016) took a look online at conversations regarding female tournaments, also noting specific criticisms of these tournaments and similarly to Paaßen et al. (2017), concluding that these competitions may in fact dramatize the gender issues in gaming. However, Groen (2016) recognized that many online discussions studied were not between women participating in these tournaments, but rather the community as a whole. So, when specific topics are argued “such as privilege, support, and gender roles and norms… it is not generally in a very progressive or supportive way” (Groen, 2016, p. 903). So, an exploration of the value perception amongst the female gaming population itself is necessary.

1.2 Research Purpose and Questions

This study seeks to contributes new research to the field of esports and gaming through an in-depth look into the perception of cyberbalkanization within female esports communities among Swedish female gamers. Despite large numbers of female gamers, there is a recognized lack of women in esports and gaming at high levels of play, and thusly, there should be further studies which seek to explore the factors which contribute to this, such as harassment behaviors (Rogstad, 2021). In comparison to the plethora of research on other topics surrounding gender in gaming, there has not been a lot of attention paid to these insulated communities. Due to the existence of criticism, there is no verdict on the worth of these organizations. While previous studies have sought to identify the existence of these groups forming and some have explored the concept of female gaming tournaments, none have explored the value that the consumers themselves perceive. Therefore, this research seeks to continue the conversation around this topic and open up a new stream of dialogue.

Ruvalcaba et al. (2018) indicated that future research should focus on the affect sexual harassment has on the motivations and demotivation of women in gaming in relation to their male counterparts. This suggestion comes from the reflection that there is poor female representation in competitive gaming (Ruvalcaba et al., 2018). Exploring the reasons behind the actions that women take in the gaming community is an important step towards inclusion because it helps identify ways to keep women invested in the gaming community. It has been identified that women can lose their motivation towards gaming due to harassment (Ruvalcaba et al., 2018), but no research has been done on the subject of motivations towards all-female organizations. Additionally, limited research has been done on the casual gamer and their perceptions and motivations toward gaming despite being the majority of gamers (Hedlund, 2021), so there is room for more research on the casual gamers and therefore this study will be primarily focused on the perceptions of the casual female gamer. Below is the research question that research will be focused on answering throughout this study.

Do female gaming organizations create value for members?

1.3 Delimitations

There are some limitations that may occur within this research, and they are important to recognize and reflect upon. One of these is the inclusion of only Swedish women in this study. Due to the limited timeframe and access to resources, only Swedish women were interviewed as part of this thesis. Additionally, due to the limited language knowledge of the researcher, all interviews were conducted in the English language, rather than Swedish, which all interviewees agreed they were comfortable speaking in before the interviews began.

Furthermore, the study was limited to female participants, as the research sought to gather data on the perceptions that female gamers hold. Male gamers were excluded from being participants as they have spaces in which they are allowed to make their own opinions known and heard. The intention of the research was to give women further opportunity to express their thoughts on the subject of gender in gaming.

It should also be noted that while this study focuses on consumer value, there are two different ways this terminology can be viewed. One usage of the term consumer value explains the benefits each consumer can give to an organization based on revenue and brand loyalty. Another usage of this term is the value perceptions which consumers have of a brand, product, or service. The latter usage is the one which this study is limited to.

2. Literature Review

The purpose of this chapter is to provide the theoretical background to the topics of gaming, esports, gendered gaming practices, and the marketing theory of value. Additionally, a theoretical framework created by the researcher is suggested at the end of the chapter. This framework will be used as the guide for the resulting data collection and analysis.

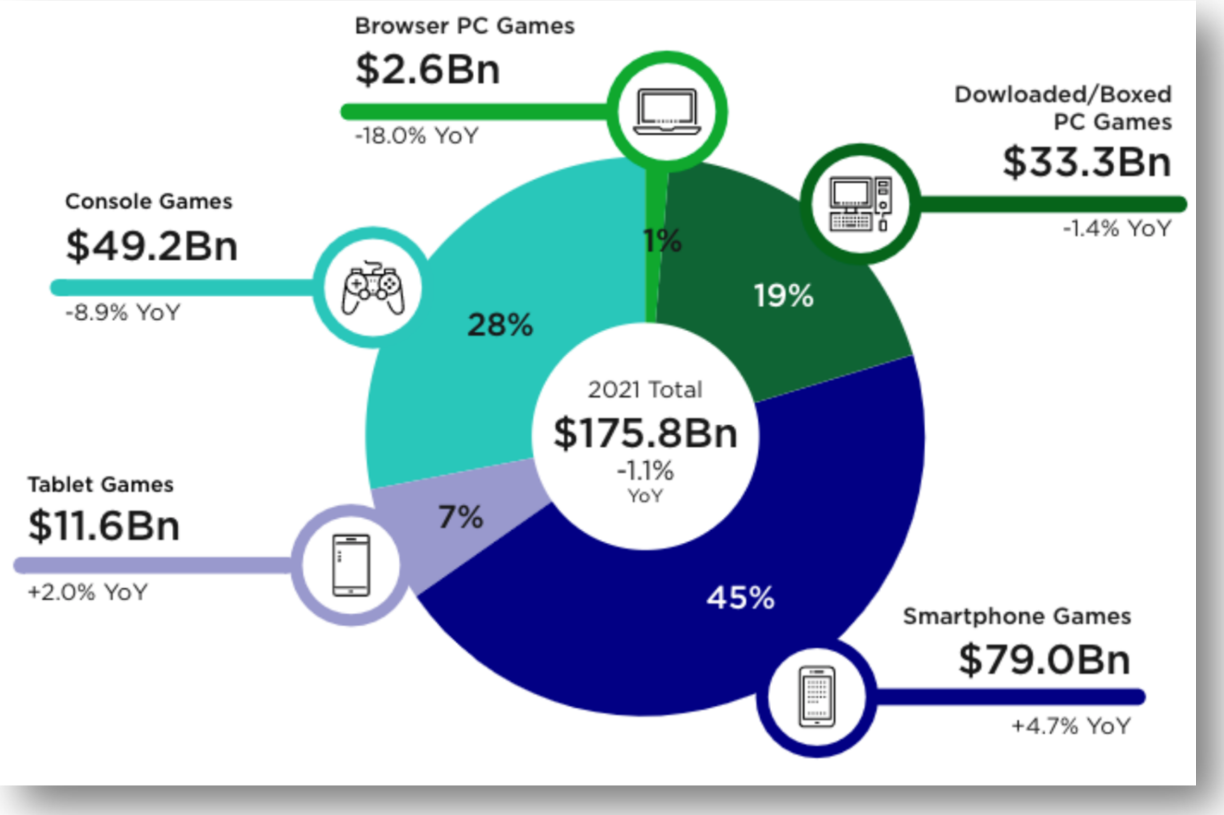
2.1 The Gaming Landscape

Before beginning a discussion on gaming, a distinction must be made between gaming and esports as they are two separate but related terms which are often used in place of each other. Esports is a term which has caused many debates amongst researchers and industry practitioners alike on the true meaning and classification. Some definitions discuss the competitive play for winnings, like this one: “high-level professional videogaming where players compete for cash prizes” (Adinolf & Türkay, 2018, p. 367), or mention that the games are played in public for viewers, such as this one: “the competitive play of video games in public settings (e.g., in online settings or streaming gameplay for spectators)” (Ruvalcaba et al., 2018, p. 296). However, both of these definitions can isolate players who are not at a professional level of play. But a more widely accepted, all-encompassing definition of esports is “a form of sports where the primary aspects of the sport are facilitated by electronic systems” (Hamari & Sjöblom, 2017, p. 211). Esports places its emphasis on the competitive aspects of playing video games, whereas gaming can be considered any and all activities which involve playing video games, including for playing for recreational purposes (Reitman et al., 2020). Making this distinction is important, as the research will be focusing on the gaming community as a whole to ensure not to isolate players from the study. However, esports players and streamers were allowed to participate in this study as well, since they are gamers at heart, but may have different motivations to gaming. Motivations and gamer typologies are discussed later in this section.

2.1.1 A Brief History of Gaming

The development of gaming has been noted as having two distinctive eras: the arcade era and the internet era (Brown et al., 2018). Gaming first emerged in a time when technology was bulky and too expensive for the average consumer to justify owning one for home usage (Scholz, 2019). Due to this, gamers flocked to arcades, with quarters in tow, to play their favorite games with friends to socialize, compete, and have fun, marking the inherently social characteristics of gaming (Langille et al., 2020; McCauley et al., 2020). With the rise of technological advancement and the upgrading of broadband capabilities, computers became cheaper and more widely available to the average consumer, leading to the growth of video game and streaming culture into the twenty-first century (Brown et al., 2018; Edwards, 2018). The Mario Bros series of games has been one of the most popular through the years, even becoming one of the highest grossing media franchises (which includes all forms of media, not just video games) in history earning an estimated $30 billion by the year 2018 (Adler, 2019). This franchise includes Super Mario, Mario Kart, Mario Sports, and numerous other games. Some of the other most popular games have been Minecraft, Grand Theft Auto (GTA), League of Legends (LoL), and PlayerUnkown's Battlegrounds (PUBG) (Newzoo, 2021b; Ranker Games, 2021). According to fan rankings, the most popular genres of games as of June 2021 are first-person shooter (FPS), battle royales, multiplayer online battle arenas (MOBA), fighting games, role playing games (RPG), and collectible card games (Ranker Games, 2021). In Figure 1 below, the global market is segmented into the various mediums that gamers use to play games currently, such as PC, console, and mobile games, which are the three largest segments. Smartphone games contribute nearly half of the total revenue to the gaming industry, with console games contributing 28%, downloaded/boxed PC games contributing 19% (Newzoo, 2021a).

Figure 1 – 2021 Segmentation of Game Mediuns by Revenue and Type (Newzoo, 2021a, p. 20)



Another major factor in the explosion of esports consumption was the creation of Twitch.tv, an online streaming service being used by both major tournaments and amateur streamers, which has been referred to as the "ESPN of live gaming" (Brown et al., 2018). Twitch helped move esports from a niche business industry to an investment opportunity for gaming companies like Activision Blizzard and Ubisoft, who began creating games specifically for the purpose of hosting competitions through the streaming service (Popper, 2013). Through the Twitch service, anyone who has access to a computer, a game, and decent bandwidth can create a channel and broadcast their own content, which could include a webcam of the player, a chat section for viewers to interact with both the player and other viewers, and the ability for audiences to subscribe or give donations (Johnson & Woodcock, 2019). This has led to the creation of professional streamers who make money through broadcasting their gameplay on the service.

Despite its relative nascency as a business market, organizations are clamoring to invest in the industry for the opportunity to capitalize on the burgeoning marketing prospects of gaming (Funk et al., 2018). Companies sponsor some of the most successful streamers and professional players, giving them the ability to market to a wide audience of, likely international, viewers. Some key reasons major companies such as Coke, Nissan and Red Bull are becoming involved in the gaming sphere are the wide reach to digital and global viewers, the relatively young age demographic of the spectators, the emergent nature of the market, and the self-regulated environment which allows for constant innovation (Casselman, 2015).

The rise in popularity was followed by an exponential increase in academic research. It was identified that from 2002 to the beginning of 2018, the academic articles on the subject of gaming developed from near nonexistence into an area of research in seven different disciplines: business, cognitive science, informatics, law, media studies, sociology, and sports science (Reitman et al., 2020). There have been links made between traditional sports and gaming, as they are similar in many aspects such as being a form of entertainment, stimulating competition, and requiring skill (Reitman et al., 2020). Jenny et al., (2017) conducted research within various areas of esports which included energy expenditure, fine motor skills, physicality, and skill to determine whether esports can in fact be considered sport. Areas that were identified as shortcomings of esports are the lack of physicality, institutionalization, and governing body, which the authors conclude prohibits esports from being fully accepted by society as sport in its current state. Despite these shortcomings, esports is receiving more and more attention and identification as true athleticism, including discussion of inclusion in the Olympic and Paralympic Games (Jenny et al., 2017; Miah & Fenton, 2020). Professional sports teams and leagues, for example the NBA and MLB, even started becoming sponsors around the end of 2016, as esports competitions inescapably started becoming more mainstream (Brown et al., 2018). Having these links between athletics and esports creates an argument for research in gaming being applied more widely to both, creating more evidence for the necessity of studies on these subjects.

2.1.2 Typology of Gamers and Their Motivations

Researchers have also largely focused on the idea of the motivations to play video games. The importance and relevance of gamer typologies to this study, is that different types of gamers have different motivations, so they may have different perceptions of value, depending on what they seek out from gaming. Hamari and Sjöblom (2017) utilized the Motivation Scale for Sports Consumption to investigate motivations towards the frequency of consuming esports online and identified *escapism, novelty, athlete aggression,* and *further understanding of the games* as positive motivating factors. Another study researched the motivational differences between esports and traditional sport fandoms and found that although the engagement for each of these is in a complementary manner to each other, esports fans tend to be far more dedicated and desire higher levels of engagement than traditional sporting fans (Brown et al., 2018).

Bartle (1996) made some early identifications of gamers into the categories of *achievers, explorers, socializers,* and *killers*. Hamari and Tuunanen (2014) similarly identified the gaming motivation categories of *achievement, exploration, sociability, domination,* and *immersio*n. Hedlund (2019) discussed the motivations of *competition, fantasy/escape, socialization, positive affect, coping and wasting time*. Niko Partners (2019) recognized some specific types of gamers and their unique motivations which fall into the following areas: *competitive arena gamer* (competition and completion), fantasy *arena gamer* (competition and community), *arena gamer* (competition and community), *strategist* (challenge and strategy), *skill master* (completion and challenge) and *the casual challenger* (competition and completion). Comparably, Newzoo (2019) labelled the following categories: *the ultimate gamer* (plays, views, and owns), *the all-around enthusiast* (plays, views, and owns), *the cloud gamer* (plays and views), *the conventional player* (plays and owns), *the hardware enthusiast* (owns), *the popcorn gamer* (views a lot), *the backseat viewer (*views a little), and finally, *the time filler* (plays and owns a little). As stated in a future persona report, the group of time filler is mostly made up of women, where nearly one third of all female game enthusiasts can be categorized (Newzoo, 2021a). These are only a few ways that gamers and their motivations have been classified and depicts the many varying motivations and interests of gamers. All gamers cannot be characterized the same way.

More recent research combined the identified clusters of esports players into five unique subsections. These types of players were labeled *competitive, casual, casual-social, casual-fun,* and *casual-competitive* esports players (Hedlund, 2021). These categories were formulated by looking through the work of many of the previously researchers and taking their findings to formulate a new typography. Further explanation and description of these categories can be found in Table 1. Some of the key findings of this research are that female gamers exist in all areas of esports, but in general, appear in larger volume in the two ends of the spectrum (casual and competitive), giving evidence that the topography of gender composition in gaming is changing (Hedlund, 2021). The identified categories are laid out in detail below in Table 1, which was created for this paper as a summary. In the newest edition of the Newzoo Global Games Report (2021a), they published some adapted typologies which were not included in the 2019 version that Hedlund (2021) had access to citing, which deserve to be mentioned.

> ***Bargain buyers**: consumers who enjoy high-quality game experiences, preferable free-to-play or discounted titles. Their indifference to hardware makes them prime prospects for game subscriptions*
>
> ***Community gamer:** consumers whose love of gaming extends beyond just playing to socially engage with the gaming community. To power their game discussions with other players, they watch a lot of video content, read blogs, and listen to podcasts*
>
> ***Lapsed gamer:** consumers who are currently a non-game enthusiast. They have played in the past but are currently not engaging with gaming whatsoever. They can be reactivated; more than a quarter of them intend to play games in the foreseeable future*
>
> (Newzoo, 2021a, p. 13)

Table 1 – An esports player typography (Hedlund, 2021)

Category Title	Categorization by other Researchers	Characteristics from Hedlund (2021)
Casual	- Casual Challengers (Niko Partners, 2019) - The Backseat Viewer (Newzoo, 2019)	- Category with highest percentage of women - Recreational players
Casual-Social	- Socialisers (Bartle, 1996) - Sociability (Hamari and Tuunanen, 2014) - Socialization (Hedlund, 2019) - Arena Gamers (Niko Partners, 2019) - The Cloud Gamer (Newzoo, 2019)	- Desire to make friends and connect - Largely made up of people born after 1990 - Extensively use technology to communicate
Casual-Fun	- Killers (Bartle, 1996) - Domination (Hamari and Tuunanen, 2014) - Positive Affect (Hedlund, 2019) - Strategist (Niko Partners, 2019) - The Hardware Enthusiast (Newzoo, 2019)	- Play for fun, enjoyment, relaxation, and escape from life - Find enjoyment in dominating other gamers - Category with highest average age of 33

Casual-Competitive	- Immersion (Hamari and Tuunanen, 2014) - Coping (Hedlund, 2019)	- Similar to competitive players, but less devoted - Play to win or play for fun depending on situation
Competitive	- Achievers (Bartle, 1996) - Achievement (Hamari and Tuunanen, 2014) - Competition (Hedlund, 2019) - Competitive Area Gamers (Niko Partners, 2019) - The Ultimate Gamer (Newzoo, 2019)	- Compete to have success and win - Motivated to test new games - Organize competitions with friends/peers - Young and diverse - Trend setters

2.2 Gender and Gaming

Video games have been characterized as a part of a polluted techno-culture that is contingent on the "othering of those perceived as outside the culture…and a valorization of masculinity masquerading as a particular form of 'rationality'" (Massanari, 2017, p. 5). As stated by Zolides (2015, p. 45), "women are often framed as outsiders in both geek and sport culture, making them doubly marginalised in the e-sport realm that combines these" and therefore are being marked as "other" in a traditionally masculine space. Women find themselves in a particularly perilous situation, as they have to navigate all the obstacles of simply being a player, while simultaneously handling and coping with the added complications that women face in many societal contexts (Rogstad, 2021; Taylor, 2012).

Toxicity in gaming communities is seen through the negative behaviors of harassing other players, trolling, and other cyber-bullying (Adinolf & Türkay, 2018; Türkay et al., 2020). In a study based on the American market, 37% of female respondents said they were targeted based on their gender, suggesting that at a minimum, 1 out of every 3 women have experienced harassment online (Anti-Defamation League, 2020). In a different study, 52% of women reported having experienced cyber-aggression online (Jagayat & Choma, 2021; Web Foundation, 2020), which suggests that this cyber-aggression transcends just gaming spaces, making this research relevant and applicable for varying industries. It should also be noticed that these are just the instances which have been reported. Other instances with harassment could be going unreported, so the figures could potentially be even higher.

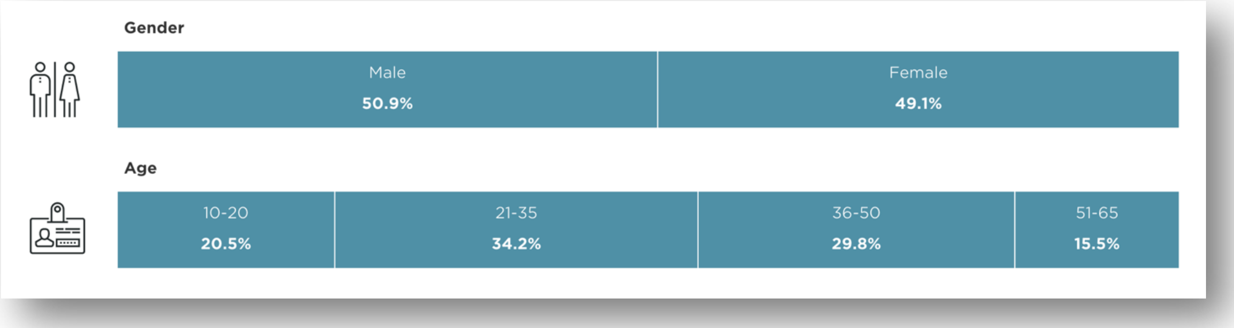
2.2.1 The Male Gamer Stereotype

There has traditionally been a perception that females have no interest in video games and gaming culture (Vermeulen et al., 2011) and that the typical gamer looks like an isolated, lonely, awkward young man.

Historically, this image has been perpetuated throughout television and pop culture, therefore promoting a definition of the gamer identity as a geeky, white male (Kowert et al., 2014; Shaw, 2010). This perpetuated stereotype tends to help form the opinion that women who are playing video games are only gaming to seek male attention or do not have the same skill level as male players (Cote, 2020a). Extensive research has been conducted on the pervasive stereotype of the male gamer. It was discovered that men are more likely than females to self-identify as gamers (Paaßen et al., 2017), and the marketing of most modern games is targeted primarily towards men and their interests (Kirkpatrick, 2015; Lien, 2013). Historically, there have been more men involved in video game development and therefore most games have been created from a male point of view (Burch & Wiseman, 2014; Dyer-Witheford & de Peuter, 2006; Lien, 2013), which leads to the reinforcement and perpetuation of these stereotypes as there is a lack of female playable characters which female gamers can easily relate to (Cote, 2020a). Along with the emphasis placed on overly masculine content being released from gaming companies (Lien, 2013), all this information depicts the industry-wide restricted focus on the target market of stereotypical male gamers (Cote, 2020a). This insinuates that if women were to become more involved in the marketing and development of gaming spheres, from both consumer and employee perspectives, there could be hope for improvement at this level.

Many recent publications on this topic have shown this stereotype to be rooted in false assumptions. Women and girls have played video games since their creation, but they did not make up the majority of players (Lien, 2013). Some more current data shows that about 41% of all gamers in the US are in fact female (Entertainment Software Association, 2020), which is actually down from 46% in 2019 (Cote, 2020b). Other sources state that this number is even higher on a global scale, with 49.1% of all gamers being female in 2020, as seen in Figure 2 below (Newzoo, 2020). But the overall trend in the total of female gamers is certainly rising (Rogstad, 2021). Despite this increase in female gamers, there are still core concerns. Some research has shown that this stereotype and the derogatory perception of women in gaming can even impact their performance and achievement by reducing confidence levels in their own abilities, especially when in comparison to male gamers (Ratan et al., 2015; Rogstad, 2021; Ruvalcaba et al., 2018). This lack of confidence can create a "destructive cycle wherein they perceive themselves as outsiders to gaming culture and are discouraged from competitive play, consequently reinforcing these stereotypes" and discouraging them from progressing as players (Ratan et al., 2015; as cited in Rogstad, 2021, p. 10). So while the number of women in gaming and esports has been increasing in more recent years, proving that women are skilled players, there are still underlying issues which need to be addressed in the industry (Jenson & Castell, 2018) and critical reviews of the situation are needed to gain further comprehension of the continuation of masculine dominance in gaming (Rogstad, 2021).

Figure 2 - 2020 Newzoo demographics data from the 33 major esports markets (Newzoo, 2021b)



2.2.2 Toxicity, Sexism, and Marginalization

Sexism and marginalization can thus appear in many forms throughout esports. This can be seen through the sheer number of male playable characters in relation to female playable characters, and when female characters do exist in games, they tend to be highly sexualized avatars with unrealistic body types and lack personality (Fron et al., 2007). Additionally, there are more subtle showings of sexism, or inferred sexism, which tend to be a more hidden, subconscious form of discrimination. An example of that concept in gaming is the engrained stereotypes discussed previously. In a book about sexism in the gaming industry, nearly an entire chapter is devoted to the subject of inferential sexism, discussing the damaging nature of this trend. It is stated that women "face content themes, audience members, or industry trends that are not meant to be negative or sexist. However, these elements rest in deeply naturalized assumptions that "gamers" are and should be men" (Cote, 2020a, p. 59). The author of this book interviewed female gamers and asked their opinions on various specific topics related to this issue. Many of her interviewees mentioned how these subtler forms of sexist behavior have been just as damaging as some of the more obvious forms of discrimination, which can be witnessed in the lack of female playable characters, the overly sexualized characters, and verbal abuse. While some women claim to not be bothered by the overtly sexualized portrayal of female characters in games, some women may even avoid playing competitively due this promotion of objectification and the pervasiveness of sexist comments (Cote, 2020a; Ruvalcaba et al., 2018).

Within esports communities, the blatant sexism, in addition to inferential sexism, prove that at its core, esports has been built to sustain this masculine identity by prioritizing males as the main target market of gamers (Cote, 2020a). This triggers women to exhaust much energy navigating these stressful situations, possibly causing disinterest to form. In their study of toxic meritocracy in esports, Ruotsalainen and Friman (2018) had many of their interviewees explicitly mention gender-based reasons that prevent them from getting further involved and other studies have found that 1 in 4 females say this toxicity makes them never want to play games again (McBean, 2020). Darvin et al. (2020) used the theoretical framework of hegemonic masculinity to examine hostility and discrimination within the esports environment. They found that women reported experiencing toxic treatment when participating in esports which highly correlated to the negative environments in relation to gender bias. This hostile environment of toxic and discriminatory behavior has been fueled by the lack of governance and over-saturation of male gamers (Hayday & Collison, 2020).

GamerGate is arguably one of the most famous controversies which occurred in regard to gender toxicity in esports. Beginning in 2014, a game developed named Zoe Quinn received countless rape and death threats from gamers who launched an anti-progressive online harassment campaign against females in esports (Wingfield, 2014). The controversy originated from a blog posted by Quinn's ex-boyfriend in regard to her trading sex for positive reviews on the games she was developing. These accusations turned out to be unfounded (Lewis, 2015), but despite this, "gamergaters" continued to post angry messages online with grievances against many issues in relation to gender in esports such as the increasing number of women playing and being featured in video games and the relationships between some game developers and the media. Many of these conversations full of grievances were held on sites like Twitter and Reddit (Lewis, 2015).

Another similarly anti-progressive controversy trended in 2018 on Twitter with the hashtag "#NotMyBattlefield," where players of the game Battlefield V pushed back on game developers for including female-playable characters on the front lines of the battles, as they claimed this was historically inaccurate (Farokhmanesh, 2018). The creators wholeheartedly backed their decision and made a rebuttal to this controversy by coming out with their own hashtag of "EveryonesBattlefield," stating that female players should be included in this game and will continue to be in the future to foster inclusion in esports and be representative of the people who are playing their games (Farokhmanesh, 2018). This depicts the widespread interest of game developers and brands to root out the toxicity in gaming, however it still occurs in various forms.

As previously mentioned, it has been stated that athletics research can often correlate to esports research as they are similar in many ways. Women can experience toxic environments within both traditional sport and esport fandom communities, as plenty of research has shown this sexism and intolerance of female fans within both arenas, as well as other customarily male spaces. A study within the professional sporting industry identified that female fans have created their own micro-communities in which to enjoy their beloved teams without the unnecessary sexism and harassment. This move to separate online communities has been coined as “cyberbalkanization” (Fenton et al., 2021). These micro-communities have been criticized for ostracizing fans and players as they exist outside of the main communities, and therefore do not integrate themselves into the overall fandom. A similar trend is visible within the gaming sphere, with new all-female organizations, leagues, tournaments, and social groups popping up all the time. Every female organization has different agendas or missions, such as specifically tournament-based institutions, some are strictly social, and some are a combination of purposes. In Gothenburg, Sweden specifically, an example of this is the organization Female Legends, which organizes tournaments, coaching sessions, Discord servers, and other ways for female gamers to connect with each other over social media. Thus, the way that female gaming organizations are defined for the purpose of this research is the following: an association, group, or community which caters towards a female (or transgender/non-binary) audience for the purposes of enjoying gaming. This definition is broad enough to include most organizations of varying purposes, while also being specific enough to research. Paaßen et al. (2017) argues that despite giving greater visibilty to female gamers, female-only leagues, as well as communities, could be reinforcing the negative gendered stereotypes in esports and Shaw (2010) similarly argues that these female gaming groups privilege the dominant male gamer identity and marginalizes all other identities by reducing their visibilty in the community as a whole. Therefore, this research seeks to determine the current value of these organizations among female gamers.

Before concluding this section devoted to toxicity, it should be mentioned that these experiences of harassment are not representative of the totality of experiences for female gamers. Despite these unwelcome and toxic experiences, women continue to enjoy and play video games. Companies such as Xbox have started to create rules around what is acceptable when playing, and there are even established guidelines on proper procedures, etiquette, and unacceptable content for moderators of tournaments through AnyKey (ESL, 2019). Riot Games, creators of the ever popular League of Legends, created what they coined as “The Tribunal” to combat this toxicity and empower players to act against the perpetrators of these destructive behaviors, but The Tribunal has since been disbanded for other replacements (Blackburn & Kwak, 2014; League of Legends Wiki, n.d.) Some other methods used by various companies are the institution of banning players with high rates of being reported by other players, or restricting their in-game text and voice communication to others. In 2019, Electronic Arts donated $1 million towards organizations which promote inclusion in gaming and fight against bullying (Gera, 2019) and in the years since, they have committed to other inclusionary methods such as requiring every game launched in 2019 and 2020 to feature prominent female characters (Electronic Arts, n.d.). The gaming industry is attempting to make steps towards increased equality, but the methods they employ have been flawed (Blackburn & Kwak, 2014) and many of these same issues still occur despite their ongoing efforts (Türkay et al., 2020). In a study conducted with participants in the US and the UK, 33% of male respondents and 40% of female respondents stated that the “gaming community isn’t doing enough to encourage female gamers" and additionally, 47% of male and 51% of female respondents stated that the processes in place currently are not enough to prevent abuse (McBean, 2020, p. 12), so there continues to be a need for focus on this issue, for the benefit of both male and female gamers.

2.3 The Concept of Value in Marketing

Many marketing managers and academics alike can agree that one of the most basic principles of business is delivering something of superior value to consumers, and additionally, this is one of the biggest challenges to conquer for organizations (Ulaga, 2003). But as many have identified, the concept of value can be slippery to define. Value consists of a very abstract meaning and is extremely conditional on subjective and individualized perceptions (Grönroos, 2011). There is no creation of value until a consumer has consumed and determined their own perception of worth, thus consumers are essential for service providers to create value (Blazquez-Resino et al., 2015; Lusch & Vargo, 2006). Therefore, the knowledge of a consumer's perception of value is essential for service providers to create products that consumers benefit from. Especially when an offering is relatively new, such as female-oriented gaming organizations, it is essential to determine if the consumer sees value within the offering. There are two recognized ways to interpret the term customer value; the value a customer perceives of a brand or the value a customer creates for the firm (Smith & Colgate, 2007). The research will be focused on the concept of consumer value when it comes to their perceptions. Available literature was read to find relevant aspects of customer value in marketing.

Naturally, this study adopted the marketing outlook of service dominant logic (SDL). Traditionally, marketing held a goods-dominant logic, meaning the focus of companies was to manufacture and sell goods in a way that maximized profits, placing value on tangible items (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). Inversely, SDL prioritizes the overall experience of the consumer in the servicescape, while recognizing that value is subjective and complex (Anderson & Narus, 1998; Vargo & Akaka, 2009). SDL has four basic principles; 1) service is the fundamental basis of exchange, 2) the customer is always cocreator of value, 3) all economic and social actors are resource integrators, and 4) value is perceived by the user (Lusch & Vargo, 2006; Vargo & Akaka, 2009). SDL creates a market where services are the focus of exchange, and therefore more value is placed on consumer perception than in a goods dominant logic.

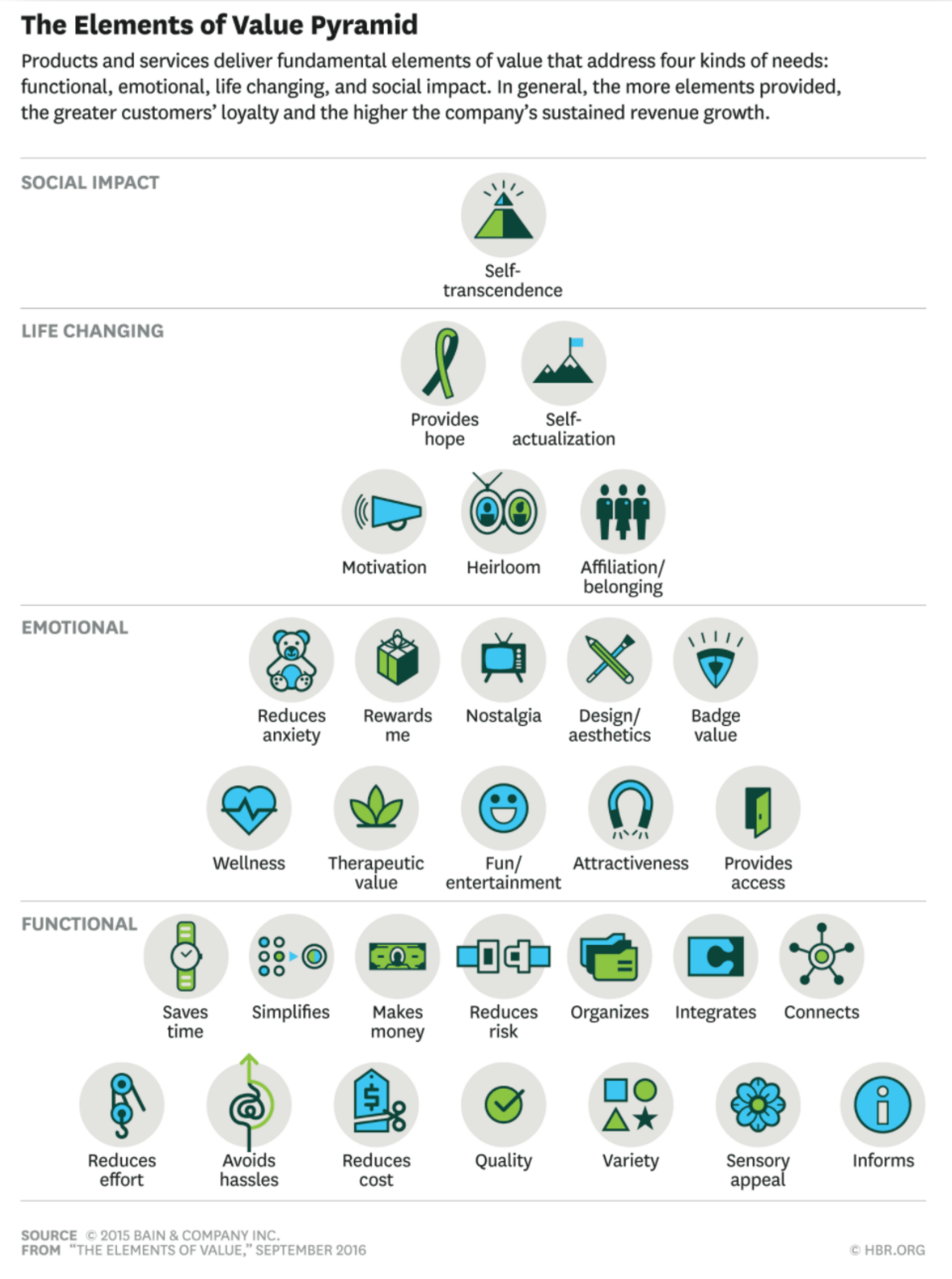
2.3.1 The Elements of Value

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is a well-researched concept on the essentials of motivations for humankind and consists of *basic needs, psychological needs*, and *self-fulfillment needs* (Maslow, 1943). It is commonly represented by researchers in the form of a pyramid, where the bottom is the most basic needs, and the top is self-actualization. As the most basic needs (*sustenance, warmth, rest, safety and, security)* are met, the motivations of the individual can move up the pyramid into psychological needs (*friends, intimate relationships, feelings of accomplishment, and pride*), and then finally into self-fulfillment (*self-actualization and achieving one's highest potential*). However, needs do not need to be met in this order, for example, thrill-seekers and adrenaline junkies can reach self-actualization in taking risks such as sky diving, while also ignoring the most basic need of safety. This model of human motivations has been widely used throughout research and has been extended into many realms of academic study such as medical diagnoses (Zajicek, 1996) and social psychology (Sheldon et al., 2001) just to name a few. Within business research, the Hierarchy of Needs has been used for many years, as can be seen in these studies from various decades regarding motivating employees and improving job satisfaction (Meltzer et al., 1960; Spector, 1997), and investigating consumer motivations towards electric vehicles (Cui et al., 2021), marking the legitimacy and continued relevance of research based on this model.

A recently proposed and extended version of Maslow's Hierarchy is the Elements of Value, which details the segments which combine to create consumer value (Almqvist et al., 2016). This model can be seen in Figure 3. In this model, the Hierarchy of Needs is expanded into specific elements that are essential for the manifestation of value. The pyramid is expanded into the sub-categories of *functional, emotional, life changing*, and finally *social impact* at the top of the pyramid. Within each of these sub-categories are the 30 specific Elements of Value which the authors identified. Enacting the perfect combinations of these elements can help to create customer loyalty and sustained growth (Almqvist et al., 2016). Within the category of functional, there are 15 elements which were identified, ranging from *saves time* and *makes money* to *creates variety* and contains *sensory appeals*. In the next section of the pyramid, emotional, there are 10 elements. These range from *therapeutic value* and *fun/entertainment* to *provides access* and *rewards*. In the section of life changing, there are 5 identified elements such as *motivation* and *affiliation/belonging*. Finally, the top of the pyramid is social impact and contains only one element called *self-transcendence*. Further explanation of each of these elements and real-world corporate examples of each of them can be found in Appendix 1.

The authors stated that it is unrealistic for one company or brand to be able to provide all 30 elements, and in their research, even the high-performing company with completely brand loyal consumers, Apple, only scored highly on 11 of 30 of these elements. Using this logic that not all elements apply to all industries, the researchers identified five main elements for major industries such as apparel retail (quality, variety avoids hassles, design/aesthetics, saves time), banking (quality, provides access, heirloom, avoids hassle, reduces anxiety), and food and beverage (quality, sensory appeal, variety, design/aesthetics, therapeutic value) to give an idea of areas that impact certain industries the most. This thesis will use this framework in identifying the most relevant elements of value that female gaming organizations currently have.

Figure 3 - Elements of Value Pyramid (Almqvist et al., 2016, p. 7)



The Elements of Value Pyramid

Products and services deliver fundamental elements of value that address four kinds of needs: functional, emotional, life changing, and social impact. In general, the more elements provided, the greater customers' loyalty and the higher the company's sustained revenue growth.

SOCIAL IMPACT
Self-transcendence
LIFE CHANGING
Provides hope
Self-actualization
Motivation
Heirloom
Affiliation/belonging
EMOTIONAL
Reduces anxiety
Rewards me
Nostalgia
Design/aesthetics
Badge value
Wellness
Therapeutic value
Fun/entertainment
Attractiveness
Provides access
FUNCTIONAL
Saves time
Simplifies
Makes money
Reduces risk
Organizes
Integrates
Connects
Reduces effort
Avoids hassles
Reduces cost
Quality
Variety
Sensory appeal
Informs

SOURCE © 2015 BAIN & COMPANY INC.
FROM "THE ELEMENTS OF VALUE," SEPTEMBER 2016

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2.3.2 Customer Value Creation

Smith and Colgate (2007) recognized the importance and applicability of research in customer value and synthesized the most successful parts of other theories to create a theoretical model called Customer Value Creation (CVC). This research stemmed from the acknowledgement that previous studies on the subject (Butz & Goodstein, 1996; Holbrook, 2005; Ulaga, 2003; Woodall, 2003; Woodruff, 1997) had competing definitions and conceptualizations on the concept of consumer value. This theory is helpful in the development of marketing strategy and measuring consumer value in academic studies through the creation of a measurable scale. The detailed descriptions of each category can be seen in Appendix 2. Four main categories of value were identified by their research: *functional*, *experiential/hedonic, symbolic/expressive*, and *cost/sacrifice*. Functional is made up of three key facets: 1) correct, accurate, and appropriate features, functions, and characteristics; 2) appropriate performance; and 3) appropriate outcomes. Experiential/hedonic is focused on the way in which products or services create feelings, emotions, and appropriate experiences for consumers. Symbolic/expressive value concerns itself with the attachments and associations consumer have from a psychological perspective. The final category of cost/sacrifice is related to the risks involved in the transaction for a product.

The other interesting aspect of this framework is the addition of a grouping called sources of value, which details how customers can find value within each of the previously mentioned types of value. These are helpful in determining which specific areas of business are determinants of value. These sources are information, products, interactions (with employees and systems), environment (purchase and consumption) and ownership/possession transfer. As the authors state, this framework can be applied as a method for doing the following:

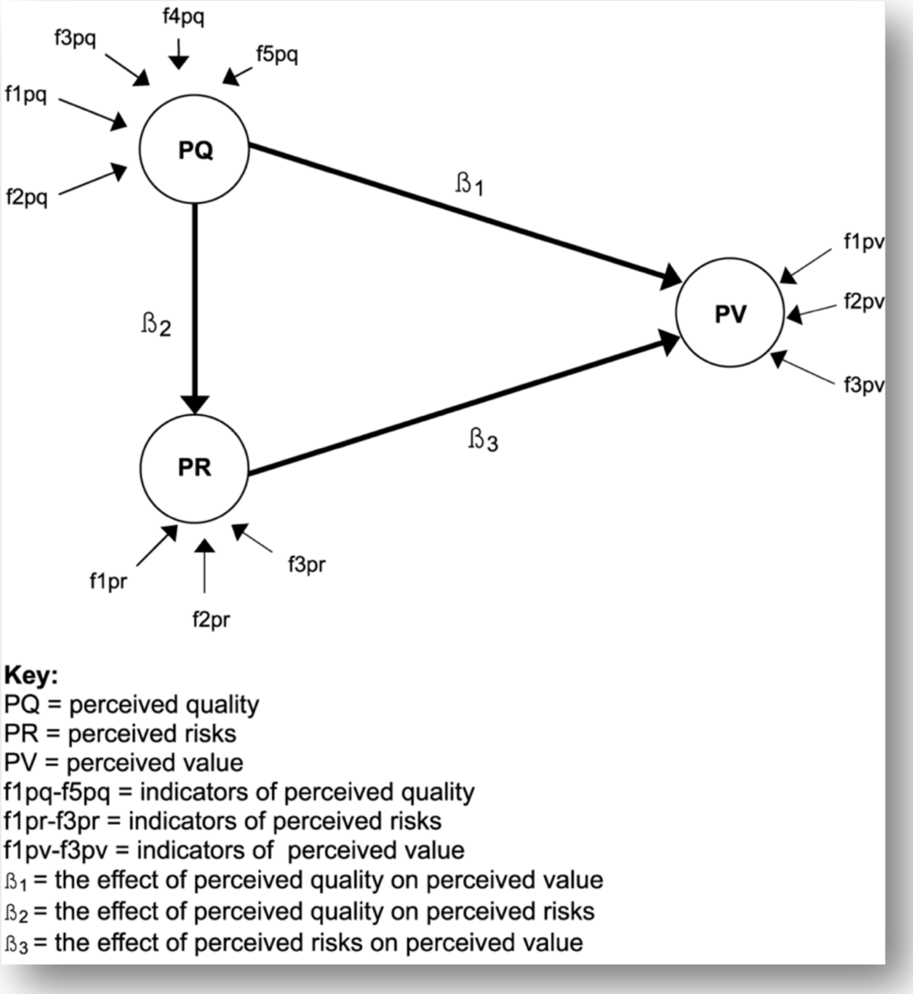
> 1) *Describing a generic marketing strategy*
> 2) *Enhancing product concept specifications*
> 3) *Identifying value creation opportunities*
> 4) *Developing measures of customer value*
>
> *(Smith & Colgate, 2007, p. 15)*

The specific aspect of this tool that is the most interesting for context of this thesis is the development of measures for customer value. Within the process of developing this framework, they also created examples of questions that could be asked in marketing research efforts to investigate consumer value perceptions. These examples from the scale were used later in the creation of an interview guide for the research.

2.3.3 Perceived Value

One more framework on the consumer perception of value was created through the lens of comparing benefits to risk in relation to value (Snoj et al., 2004). Their research was done in the context of consumer attitudes towards mobile phones in Slovenia. Antecedent to the creation of the perceived value framework (PVF), the authors of the study identified that the utility theory lies at the base of the theoretical base for the concept of value. The utility theory emphasizes that consumers purchase products based on their unique set of attributes which bundle together to create a combination of benefits, and therefore value (Caruana et al., 2000). The Snoj et al. (2004) proposed model, therefore, is made up of three categories: perceived quality and perceived risk which combine to make perceived value. Figure 4 is the complete framework that came out of their research.

Figure 4 - Perceived Value Framework (Snoj et al., 2004, p. 161)


f4pq
f3pq
f5pq
f1pq
f2pq
PQ
β_1
f1pv
f2pv
f3pv
PV
β_2
β_3
PR
f1pr
f2pr
f3pr
Key:
PQ = perceived quality
PR = perceived risks
PV = perceived value
f1pq-f5pq = indicators of perceived quality
f1pr-f3pr = indicators of perceived risks
f1pv-f3pv = indicators of perceived value
β_1 = the effect of perceived quality on perceived value
β_2 = the effect of perceived quality on perceived risks
β_3 = the effect of perceived risks on perceived value

Looking at their theory more in depth, they identify indicators of each segment. These indicators are specific to their study on mobile phones, such as screen size, financial risk, and value of investment. Then, the final piece of the framework is the linkages that connects each of these categories and effects they have on each other. The research was completed using quantitative methods. There is an effect of perceived quality on the perceived value, an effect of perceived quality on perceived risks, and an effect of perceived risks on perceived value. Despite there being an effect of quality on risk, the perceived risks do not have an effect on the perceived quality. Nor does the perceived value have an inverse effect on the perceived quality and perceived risks. They concluded that both perceived risk and perceived quality have a large impact on the overall perception of value, but have an inverse effect, as one could infer. Also, they stated that there is a negative relationship between perceived quality and perceived risks.

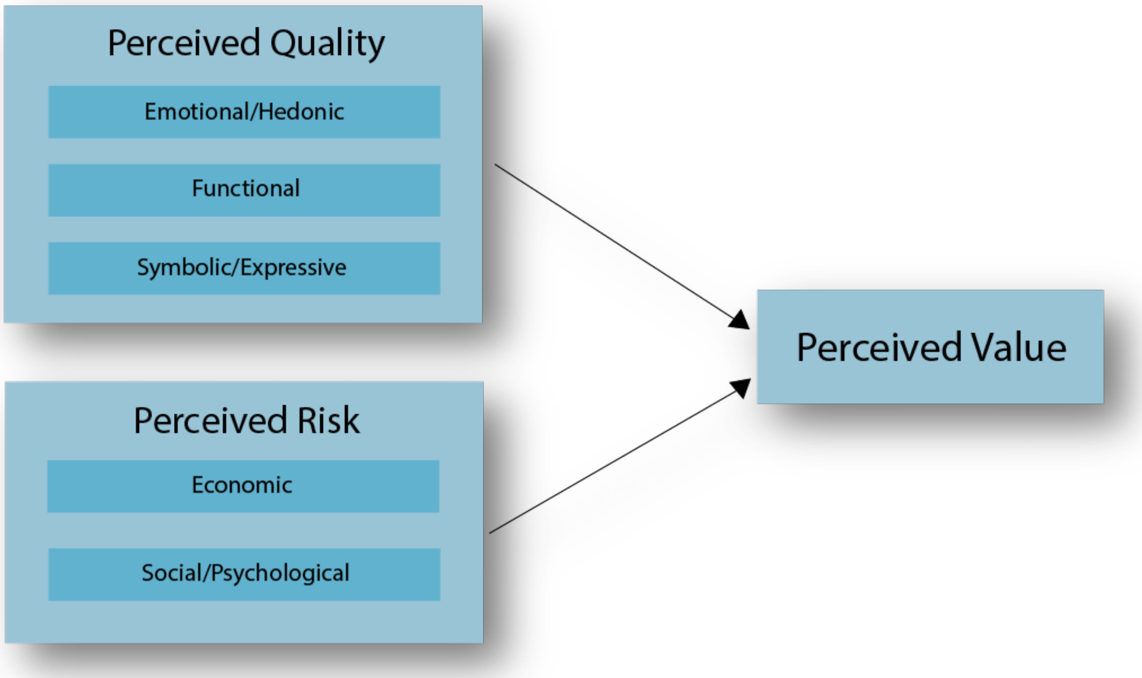
In the conclusion of their research, the authors specifically stated that their results can only be used in the context of mobile phones but suggest applying the model to other markets to increase knowledge on the complex topic of consumer perceived value. Therefore, if future studies are to use their model, the indicators must be adjusted to the specific industry and its consumers in order to get relevant results. For the purposes of this research, these indicators will be adapted from the previously mentioned framework and model in order to fit into the context of female gamers.

2.4 Theoretical Framework

Utilizing inspiration from these researched areas, a theoretical framework seen in Figure 5 was developed consisting of the elements of the previously mentioned theories which are the most applicable to studying the motivations and value perceptions of women in gaming. The PVF was used as the base for the shape and structure of the theoretical framework, where a combination of quality and risks make up the total perceived value for the consumer. Looking into the aspects of quality and risks in more detail, the CVC and Elements of Value make their appearance in place of the indicators that were used in the PVF study. The similarities of CVC and the Elements of Value was noted, but they each add their own unique viewpoints to the topic of consumer value. From each of these, the origins of quality are examined through the areas of emotional/hedonic value, functional value, and symbolic/expressive value. Furthermore, the perceived risks are examined through financial and social risks.

Within each of these areas is where the Elements of Value comes in. They were separated into categories that are similar to those of CVC, so where the two overlapped, they were combined to create a single category in the theoretical framework. Where areas didn’t overlap, they were included on their own. For example, the elements of value identify the reduction of risks, but include those in the functional category. Therefore, the category of perceived risk was taken from the CVC, as they recognized the connections between risk and value, where the elements of value did not. The arrows are seen going from perceived quality to perceived value, as well as another arrow from perceived risk to perceived value. The arrows for both of these categories are one-directional. These arrows signify the impact that each respective category has on perceived value. Being that each arrow is only pointing towards perceived, value, this indicates that perceived quality has an impact on perceived value, but not the other way around. Similarly, the arrow for perceived risk indicates that it impacts perceived value and not vice versa. The reasoning for the arrows being one-directional is due to the way in which value is formed. As discussed previously, value cannot be created until a consumer has consumed and perceived the quality and risk in relation to the product (Blazquez-Resino et al., 2015; Lusch & Vargo, 2006; Snoj et al., 2004). The value is created upon consumption, and therefore, the value cannot impact the quality and risk. This proposed theoretical framework, along with the suggested interview guide from Smith and Colgate (2007), were used in the creation of the interview guide.

Figure 5 - Theoretical Framework


Perceived Quality
Emotional/Hedonic
Functional
Symbolic/Expressive
Perceived Risk
Economic
Social/Psychological
Perceived Value

3. Methodology

The following section will discuss the best practices in research philosophy, research approach and design within the context of this study. Then the methodology employed by the researchers is introduced, as well as the data sampling and ethical implications.

The most basic characteristics that research requires are that the data is collected systematically, the data is interpreted systematically, and there is a clear and evident purpose throughout the process (Saunders et al., 2016). Identifying the research methodology that will be best suited to the purpose is a crucial step in the process. This section discusses the specifics of the chosen methodology in detail to explain the reasoning behind specific choices.

To begin the selection process for methodology, the research onion was utilized (Saunders et al., 2019) This layered model explains the steps required to begin the progression of research and contains six distinct stages to follow during decision making. Starting at the outermost layer (or the first stage) and working inward, the layers are the following: research philosophy, research approach, methodological choice, research strategy, time horizon, and research techniques and procedures (Saunders et al., 2019). Following these steps gives a structured, systematic approach to the methodological choices. The choices made in these topics are discussed in the upcoming sections.

3.1 Research Philosophy and Approach

Research philosophy refers to the "system of beliefs and assumptions about the development of knowledge," (Saunders et al., 2019, p. 130). There are three key types of assumptions made in research: ontological assumptions, epistemological assumptions and axiological assumptions (Saunders et al., 2016). Ontological assumptions are those which refer to reality and how one views the world of business (Saunders et al., 2019). Epistemological assumptions are related to knowledge and what is legitimate and reliable. Axiological assumptions are associated with the values and morals we hold internally. These assumptions are the basis for research collection and interpretation, as everybody inherently has their own system of beliefs and understanding of the world around them. Using a consistent set of assumptions amongst researchers creates a base for a reliable research philosophy.

Positivist philosophy assumes that collecting objective facts is the best way to research, and therefore generally implies quantitative methods and leads to easily generalized information but can lack rich and multifaceted explanations of phenomena (Saunders et al., 2019). This lack of deeper interpretations leads the author to not use a positivist philosophy, as the objective is to gain insights into the perception of consumers rather than quantifiable objective facts. To gain these deeper insights, personal interaction and conversation will be critical. Subjectivism assumes that reality is created by and from the perceptions of society and therefore everyone can view reality from their own personal lens (Saunders et al., 2016). A subjective research philosophy seeks different opinions and narratives to understand the wider perception of reality, and therefore is the best choice in the context of the work.

Moving along, the next choice within philosophy must be discussed. There are five major philosophies which have been identified among business research: positivism, critical realism, interpretivism, postmodernism, and pragmatism (Saunders et al., 2019). The philosophy which makes the most sense for the intended purposes of this research is interpretivism. Frequently, this style of research is used along with qualitative methods and is typically applied to situations where a greater understanding of a phenomenon is sought from the consumer viewpoint, rather than the testing of specific hypotheses (Malhotra et al., 2017). An interpretivist view can help in finding new and creative insights in relation to real life. Interpretivists start out with a theory to guide the research while attempting to validate the theory through in-depth questions of broad topics (Malhotra et al., 2017). It is important to recognize with the concentrated inquiry of the topics in question, it can be difficult for researchers to tackle sample sizes large enough to generalize, and therefore, smaller sample sizes than that of deductive research are acceptable in this type of study (Malhotra et al., 2017; Saunders et al., 2019). Abductive research relates to the idea that not all data fits effortlessly into the existing theory, and therefore, helps create new hypotheses for which new observations should be collected (Tavory & Timmermans, 2014). Abductive processes are centered on a coherent relationship between theory, method, and observation (Tavory & Timmermans, 2014). In this research, the existing theory was used to create a base for a theoretical framework which is applied to this study. Upon collecting data, the framework will be revisited, and potentially updated to reflect the actual data trends which were revealed. Therefore, the abductive process will be used in this study.

3.2 Research Design and Strategy

Research design can consist of either quantitative or qualitative data collection, or it can be a mixed method where both of these designs are employed in the study (Saunders et al., 2016). As implied by the previous selections of an interpretivist philosophy and an abductive approach, qualitative methods was selected. Ruvalcaba et al. (2018) identified that there is a need for future studies regarding player experiences and gendered patterns with open-ended questions. This implies the need for qualitative studies, where the researcher is in discussion with the participants to explore topics with a wide lens, rather than quantitative studies which ask direct questions with a choice of answers for the participants to choose from.

The next step is to decide upon the exact strategy which will be practiced. Research strategy can be a variety of specific methods, but the exploratory strategy was chosen for this thesis. This allows the author to be able to further investigate the phenomenon of female gaming organizations in order to gain a better understanding of what motivates women to join them and their corresponding perceived value of them. Exploratory studies consist of open-ended questions (Saunders et al., 2019), which also corresponds to all the previously selected criteria. Finally, the time horizon will be cross-sectional and focus on perceptions of value in this specific moment, due to the limited timeframe for the writing of this paper.

3.2.1 Data Collection and Sampling Methods

It was decided to conduct in-depth semi-structured interviews with the participants. This type of interview is frequently used and deemed beneficial as it allows for deeper and more detailed answers from the interviewees (Adams, 2015). The choice of semi-structured interviews is important because it gives the researcher a chance to create a general interview guide as a starting point connected to the literature review and theoretical framework while also giving the participant the opportunity to answer in any way they choose without being limited. Additionally, conducting semi-structured interviews gives the interviewer the chance to ask follow-up questions to garner unique answers from each individual. As stated by Adams (2015) "dialogue can meander around the topics on the agenda—rather than adhering slavishly to verbatim questions as in a standardized survey—and may delve into totally unforeseen issues." This means that each interview was unique in its own ways, and not all topics were covered by all interviews.

The sampling method deliberately chosen was purposive sampling. This method is suitable when the research problem relates to a specific group of people that will have relevant information to the confines of the research margins (Bahl & Milne, 2006). The restrains of the group were sought out were Swedish female gamers between the ages of 18-35 and were ideally casual gamers but no typologies were excluded. Some reasoning behind this selection is that with the university being in Sweden, the researcher had relatively easy access to resources within the country to seek out participants. Moreover, Sweden is recognized as one of the largest markets for video games in the world, with over EUR 2.3 billion in revenue in 2019 (Dataspelsbranschen, 2020). Males were not selected to participate as the study sought to determine the perceptions of female gaming organizations, and men are not allowed entrance to these organizations, so they would not have the ability to discuss the topic. The age range was chosen due to the statistic that 38% of gamers fall between the ages of 18-35 (Entertainment Software

Association, 2020). And lastly, casual gamers were ideal, as there is a lack of research regarding this typology and casual gamers are the lifeblood of the industry, so they deserve more attention (Hedlund, 2021).

The participants were recruited using a few techniques, the first being that the author was granted access to a Female Legends online community and allowed by the administration of the group to reach out to members asking for their willing participation in the study. The next technique utilized was reaching out to individuals on Instagram who fell within the restraints of the research demographic group using the specific hashtags of #girlgamer, #femalegamer, #swedishgamergirl, and #swedishgamer on social media. This allowed the researcher to find people who would have the knowledge and ability to answer the questions.

3.2.2 Interview Guide and Protocols

As previously identified, not all 30 Elements of Value are relevant to all industries (Almqvist et al., 2016), and therefore some elements which the author regarded as irrelevant to gaming motivations were not included in the interview guide. Using the various motivations towards esports models for reference, the author made the decision not to include the following elements when creating the interview guide as they are not associated with gaming: saves time, simplifies, reduces risk, organizes, reduces effort and reduces cost. The interview guide was created in part following the recommendations of the CVC framework's measurable scale. Along with the examples of questions, the authors of CVC included a potential coding scheme for content analysis, such as that from interview transcripts (Smith & Colgate, 2007). These two tools were used in the data collection and data analysis.

First section of interview guide sought to get the interviewee comfortable, get a baseline for their gamer typology and motivations, and to introduce them to the subject of the interview. Before the interviews commenced, the researcher engaged in casual conversation with the participants in order to make them comfortable and relaxed. The topic of the study was also introduced, as well as the definition of female organizations detailed within this research to ensure informed responses to the interview questions. Additionally, basic demographics questions were asked. The second section of the interview was questions which sought to determine the typology of the participant, as the typology may affect their overall opinions of the benefits of organizations. Next, they were asked to share their experiences with toxic masculinity within gaming to gather some information on their thoughts on inclusiveness in the industry. Then specific questions about their opinions of female organizations, the benefits and/or risks, and their overall perception were discussed.

The interview guide was used a base for the questions asked of the participants and therefore was not seen as an exact script for the management of interviews. If the interviewees brought up an interesting topic, or were interested in speaking more on something specific, the interviewer allowed the tangent to occur so as to collect the most interesting and relevant data possible. Exploratory research suggests that respondents will share information which the researcher had not originally considered, and thusly, when the participants expressed interest and excitement in a specific topic, they were allowed to discuss these.

Eleven semi-structured interviews were conducted from June to July 2021. Each is identified below in Table 2 anonymously by the names P1 – P11. The participants were female gamers between the ages of 20 through 28. All eleven of the participants were Swedish citizens. The majority of the participants were casual gamers, but two of them were streamers with decently sized social media followings. Of the participants, four are members of female organizations and the other seven are not. Women both involved and not involved in female organizations were chosen to give the most unbiased account of the value perceptions surrounding female gaming organizations. The interviews themselves were conducted over online video chat software and lasted an average of 45 minutes. In total, 496 minutes of interview data was amassed. Due to the length of the interviews, there was plenty of material to analyze, and therefore the eleven were deemed an acceptable number according to the data saturation (Denscombe, 2010). Eight of them were over Zoom and three were on Discord. The interviews on Zoom were recorded directly through the software system, whereas the interviews on Discord were recorded on built-in laptop recording software. All participants gave consent to being recorded and the purpose of recording was to ease in transcribing the interviews after they were over. Notes were taken during the interviews, but the recordings were used to make sure all information was collected accurately.

Table 2 - Participant Demographic Information

Participant ID	Age	Typology of gamer	Part of a female organization	Length of Interview
P1	23	Casual - Fun	Yes	59 mins
P2	26	Competitive (Streamer)	No	48 mins
P3	21	Competitive (Streamer)	No	45 mins
P4	26	Casual - Social	No	54 mins
P5	25	Casual - Competitive	Yes	42 mins
P6	24	Casual - Social	No	37 mins
P7	21	Casual - Competitive	Yes	51 mins
P8	28	Casual	Yes	39 mins
P9	22	Casual - Fun	No	43 mins
P10	24	Casual - Fun	No	42 mins
P11	20	Casual	No	36 mins

3.2.3 Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis has been used often in qualitative research of sport and exercise and rather than being a method of data collection, it is simply a method of data analysis, making it known as being a flexible and accessible method for analyzing interview data (Braun & Clarke, 2012, 2019) and therefore this method was utilized in the analysis of the collected data. Braun and Clarke (2012) identified the following important steps in the process of conducting thematic analysis; 1) familiarization, 2) initial coding, 3) generation of themes, 4) reviewing potential themes, 5) defining themes and finally, 6) writing it down.

Step one of thematic analysis requires you to familiarize yourself with all the data first (Braun & Clarke, 2012). This entails listening to the recordings, reading through the transcripts, and taking notes. This is essential to start critically thinking about the data and begin thinking about patterns among the interviews. Notes can be “stream of consciousness” as this is not the final coding. After feeling comfortable with the data, the next step is to begin the first iteration of the codes. This is when the researcher needs to start identifying potential information that is relevant to the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Coding can be based on verbatim words that are repeated throughout interviews or it can be largely interpretive and seek underlying meaning behind the data. Step three is the generation of themes. As said by Braun and Clarke (2012, p. 63), “we generate or construct themes rather than discovering them…like sculptors, making choices about how to shape and craft their piece of stone.” The next step is to review these potential themes that were just identified. This involves checking the potential ideas from the last step against the totality of the data to make sure it works well and everything is comprehensive. If the themes pass this test, the researcher can then define these themes and begin the writing process.

3.2.4 Ethical Implications and Integrity

It is important to make sure that all data collection is done ethically in order to preserve the integrity of the research. The author actively made choice to protect the information of the participants and ethically handle the information which was collected. As this research was completed within the European Union, the European Society for Opinion and Marketing Research (ESOMAR) was referenced. The main principles that ESOMAR (2016) states are essential to pay close attention to are transparency, protection of personal data, and protection of the subjects. Specific choices were made in order to adhere to these key principles.

For transparency, the interviewer made sure to inform the participants of the topic of the study beforehand to ensure that they were able to provide informed responses. During the pre-interview time, the conversation started with giving a brief overview of details about what information was going to be collected and the definition of female organizations used within this study to ensure that were informed participants. As far as the transparency of information, the interview guide has been placed in Appendix 3 so that any reader can look back on how the author conducted the interviews.

In adherence to the second ideal of data protection, the participants were provided with GDPR documents to read and sign for consent to being part of the study prior to the interview session. This allowed them an appropriate amount of time to read through all the details of the document. GDPR is a regulation that needs to be followed within research in the EU. Therefore, the participants were informed that all information collected would be kept on protected Jönköping University servers where it could not be accessed by anyone except the researcher. The anonymity of the participants was completely respected by not collecting any unnecessary personal information and not using any of their real names in the paper. After collected information was no longer necessary, such as the interview recordings, it was promptly deleted from the servers.

Finally, in order to protect the subjects overall, there were some steps which were taken. All participants were required to be at least 18 years old and capable of making the decision to take part. Through the adherence to GDPR, the participants were also informed that they were allowed to stop the interview at any point for any reason and they would not be asked questions. They were provided with contact information of the researcher and supervisor in case they had concerns, questions, or comments after the completion of the interview and wanted to reach out for any reason. Additionally, due to COVID-19, all interviews were conducted over video software in order to protect against the possibility of transmission of the virus.

4. Data Analysis and Findings

The systematic research process of thematic analysis was conducted upon the completion of the data collection. Based on the interviews, codes were identified within the responses of the participants based on their relevance and recurrence. Quotations taken directly from the interview data were selected to explain the choice of codes.

4.1 Codes

4.1.1 The Girl Gamer Identity

One of the reasons that the participants identified as a benefit of female organizations was a feeling of being a part of a group. Within esports and gaming, there is value within the ability to be part of the gaming culture in addition to the value within the games themselves (McCauley et al., 2020). As earlier mentioned, many female gamers don't consider themselves gamers based on the games they play, their level of dedication to playing, or potentially other reasons (Adinolf & Türkay, 2018). So, for some women, it can be difficult to see oneself as part of the gaming community as a whole. P1 stated, *"I think [female organizations] help me define myself as a gamer. In my view, part of gaming is the social component, and without Female Legends, I wouldn't have that.*" The female organization that she is a part of allowed her to identify herself as a gamer, giving her the ability to associate herself not only with the female organization itself but also with the wider gaming community as a whole. Something that has helped the women who are in female organizations be able to identify with, is being able to see themselves in the other member of the groups. That feeling of belonging stems from the idea that the people in the same group are similar to you or have the same interests as you. P1 went on to say

> *"I am part of another group called The GameHers. Because I have these female communities, I don't feel the need to join other groups which aren't just female or non-binary. I don't think I would get anything out of those groups. So I haven't really thought about joining any of the larger groups."*

She has been able to associate herself with the other members and therefore has been able to attach her identity as a female gamer to the fact that she is a member of these female organizations. Similarly, P8 said, *"I like that a lot of the people in female organizations are like me. They've experienced a lot of the sexism that I have, so I am able to relate to them,"* and P7 stated that she sees the group as a "*...bonding experience. Since so many of us have played with toxic dudes, we can share that with each other."*

4.1.2 Necessity of Support and Encouragement

A common idea discussed by the participants who are members of female communities was the idea of finding support within their female communities. They shared that they can sometimes feel alone in their experience as female gamers when so many of the people in the overall gaming community are men. P5 shared her thoughts on this: "*there are so many places that men can turn to for tips and to play games. I think we deserve to have our own female groups."* P9 similarly expressed this by stating that, *"It's important to have the support from other females and know that there are other females that like the same things as you."* A collective thought among them was also that it makes for a much more compassionate environment. P6 said that she thinks "*guys can be so competitive and I'm not exactly a serious gamer. Being around other women, you are way less likely to get yelled at for not understanding something."* This type of compassion has led to them receiving more encouragement to gain skills in their games. Getting positive encouragement from other gamers, rather than the negative feedback that happens in other communities, has helped them stay motivated to keep playing. Another way that the women can feel supported is through the opportunity to vent about their experiences with abuse. *"I reach out to my friends when I get harassed. Sometimes it's just to laugh at it, but sometimes it's also really hard to deal with alone."* (P4). Receiving support from other people who have gone through the same things as themselves can be very reassuring and encouraging to stick with it. Additionally, being able to get advice from others who are going through the same things can be undeniably helpful.

4.1.3 Gaming as a Leisure Activity

Naturally, of the main reasons that people partake in consuming gaming content such as engaging with communities, is for pure enjoyment purposes. Of course, all of the women who are members of female communities discussed this as a main aspect of being involved in them, but also many of the women not in these communities mentioned this as a potential reason for being in one. P10 reflected this by saying,

> *"A reason to join any kind of gaming community is for fun. I enjoy gaming so I want to meet people who like the same games as me. In the last year or so I've been playing a lot of Animal Crossing and I don't know a lot of guys who play that since it's a 'girly game.' So female organizations are nice because it's easier to find people in there who also play Animal Crossing."*

Additionally, P2 said, *"I'm not in any female organizations, but I know another Swedish girl that is in a ton of groups. And I know she really enjoys them!"* P1 more specific and mentioned something specific that she enjoyed, sharing that *"[she] participated in league coaching through Female Legends every Monday night for a semester. It was fun to have something planned and on my schedule weekly."* That was just one specific example of something that an organization she's a member of offers. There will be more discussion of the coaching sessions later.

Another aspect of female organizations that participants mentioned was the more relaxed environment. Many agreed on the fact that they are casual gamers, so they are involved in gaming for relaxation. "*Gaming is a hobby. It's my time to relax, so I don't like the super aggressive guys that are in some Subreddit pages. I try to avoid those guys,*" (P11). One participant had a differing opinion on this and said, *"Men are more competitive, in my experience. Female friends want to play and have fun,"* (P5). This participant in particular used to play professionally, but self-identified as a casual gamer and that she plays as more of a hobby right now. Based on her experience in playing professionally, it can be assumed that she is quite skilled, and therefore expects to play against people on the same level of competitiveness as her, which she claims are usually men. So, while she prefers playing for a mix of fun and competition, she echoes the idea that many women play for fun and join female organizations for enjoyment.

4.1.4 Learning from others

A common point of conversation was learning new information or being exposed to new topics. As mentioned above, P1 participated in coaching through Female Legends, which is a service they offer completely for free. This topic was very intriguing, so she explained a lot of detail about this offering. She first explained a little bit about how they worked: "*In the coaching sessions, they gave us information about the game and strategy. When playing with strangers, they would just get annoyed that I don't know details about the game, so it gave me the opportunity to learn."* This offer of coaching is available to all members of the organization for various games. The coaching gives new gamers the chance to learn in a reduced-stress environment. She then described a little bit more about her experience with the coaching sessions:

> *"...through the coaching, I learned so much, some things you just never get explained to you. Before that, I didn't understand a lot of the details. I felt so smart after I started learning. I could put my knowledge into the situations when playing with guys. I felt way more comfortable discussing games with them," (P1).*

She learned both new skills and gained confidence in her abilities. Similarly, it was mentioned that mentoring can happen even in a more casual way than the organized coaching sessions. A few of the participants mentioned the fact that many members of the female communities offer to help in any way they can. One person said that in the organization she is a part of, *"when people are having problems, I think there are loads of people that want to help...I think you can get help if you want it,"* (P8). When reaching out for assistance, gamers are able to get help from more experienced players. Echoing this, P5 explained that "*when people write in the group that they're new, I like to help and reach out to get people started. It's fun…I love to help get people started playing games*."

So, women in the female organizations not only agree that it's easy to ask for help, but also that they're willing to mentor others, confirming that this is accurate. Adding on to this, P3 said *"I like that there are female organizations…as a good base for new gamers,"* showing that female organizations are a good way to foster new gamers into being better players. It can reduce some of the learning curve often associated with being a female in gaming and allows them to learn in a more engaged manner. Finally, one reason that many of the respondents discussed was the idea that they can receive good information from being a member of these organizations. *"I usually go to the Discord group to get product recommendations and information about new games being released. Girls in there usually have the most updated info*." (P7). A way to get updated content is through female groups. Often, questions are asked regarding new set-ups, game recommendations

4.1.5 Importance of a Secure Envionment

One major reason that many participants identified as a reason for joining a female organization is the protection and security of being involved in one. As they identified, there is less risk of being harassed in the same manner that they experience in other gaming communities. P9 stated, "*I was specifically searching for female groups because I knew that would make me the most comfortable,"* and this concept is synchronized with the response from another participant: *"It can help bring female gamers together so that we have gamers to play with that won't judge or be weird,"* (P3). Another went to say the following statement:

> *"...you'll get comments from guys, teenage boys usually. They're the worst. I have no problem fighting back. I don't take shit from them. But sometimes I just leave [the community] when that happens. So, I prefer to play with other girls usually. You're less likely to be harassed when you're with other girls," (P4).*

When women are being harassed, they naturally are going to seek out spaces where this doesn't happen to them anymore. All participants reported being on the receiving end of toxic comments and gender-based harassment or discrimination. As previously acknowledged, people who are playing video games want to enjoy it; they used key terms like hobby, leisure time, or socializing with friends. This is evidenced in the following comment:

> *"When playing with those toxic 'dude-bros' who just attack you for being a girl, I feel like I can't improve my skills because I just get targeted. It's much more chill to play with women. And I just like to play as a hobby, so I don't like feeling stressed. It's my time to relax," (P11).*

Women want to be able to be in online communities and play video games without being negatively impacted by harmful comments. When discussing this topic, one participant said, *"I feel super uncomfortable…because they never take me seriously or are just really rude,"* (P10), and therefore, *"finding other girls to play with is key,"* (P7). The common idea among the conversations was that being a part of female organizations can help to remove large obstacles to gaming for females like harassment.

4.1.6 Bonding with other Girl Gamers

The next common subject among the discussions was the concept of bonding and connecting with other people, specifically other female gamers. Bonding is a concept that is reiterated throughout all the coding terms but can be examined more specifically here. This is due to the fact that it was so integral to the concept of female organizations, it was brought up by every single one of the participants, some multiple times. One participant stated, *"I wanted to find people to play with. And I was specifically searching for female groups on social media because I knew that's where I would feel the most comfortable,"* (P7). Another said, *"it's nice being part of a group of people who are so similar to me. I feel like I can connect to them better since we have similar interests*," (P8). This concept of bonding can be similar to the idea of identifying with people, as discussed in the previous section, but is different in the sense that people are simply looking to making friends and meet new people, rather than sociologically identify oneself with other people. One participant discussed inviting some friends to join Female Legends, *"I have two friends who I invited into the Facebook group. They both wanted more people to play with."* (P5). And one participant said she met someone in the group in real life: *"there's a girl I met who lives in the same city as me. We met through the group actually. And then we started playing together and then eventually started hanging out in real life," (P1).* So female organizations can bring people together online and in real life, creating opportunities to make new friends.

4.1.7 Effects of Exclusion

While there are many positives to joining a female organization, there were some negatives discussed as well. One of them was exclusion. This was brought up from two different angles. The first being from a standpoint of sexism. While women feel left out from some communities, many men have pushed back on the idea of female only tournaments as being sexist and exclusionary as well. This was stated by saying, *"I understand how [female organizations] can become sexist in the opposite way...some people can feel excluded. It can backfire like that,"* (P3). She also continued on to say that "*...you need a little bit of both. I kind of have a 'get over it' mentality when it comes to guys complaining about this,"* meaning that she thinks there should be both female organizations and larger ones, relating back to the idea that men have more opportunity to have their own spaces within gaming so women should be allowed the same.

The other facet of exclusion that was brought up was being sheltered, or inside a bubble. There was a certain level of nervousness amongst the participants that there is the possibility of becoming too comfortable within the group and becoming too sensitive to the toxicity in other communities. This bubble can be related to skills:

> *"If you're only going to keep to one small group, you're not going to get anywhere. Especially if you want to go professional. Trying to find success in a male-dominated sport in a female group is going to be way harder," (P2).*

This bubble could also be related to sexism. One participant stated, *"maybe it's too much of a bubble from the rude and hateful, so maybe you don't grow a skin, but everyone knows what's going on, I don't think you're completely sheltered,"* (P11). This brings up the point that being a member of these groups could shelter you so much from the truth and reality of other communities that it can cause more of a shock when involved in other communities. One person argued,

> *"personally, I don't think I would join one because I don't want to limit myself...it's not how the general community is and I'm afraid the separation from others to avoid toxicity gives absolutely zero tolerance to the toxicity once they decide to leave the group or go deeper into their gaming hobby," (P4).*

Another participant agreed with this statement and said, "*Maybe it's too much of a bubble from the rude and hateful, so maybe you don't grow a skin, but everyone knows what's going on, I don't think you're completely sheltered,"* (P11). In addition to not growing a thick skin, there is a possibility that male gamers look down upon women for being members of a female group. P2 mentioned that she has,

> *"heard people say [female organizations are] not a good thing. I have heard some guy friends saying that these organizations are just, I'm not exactly sure what they think, but they don't think good things. I would think the reputation is different among girls though. Nice, but still separate. I haven't heard girls talking badly about them though."*

Another interesting point that was brought up in the interviews was the idea of there being more drama among females. This is a societal stereotype that women create more drama than men. Two participants mentioned this. P6 said,

> *"I know that I can be a bit intimidating for women to go into a group of all females. Men are usually more outspoken...Females are not as outspoken. So you can sometimes feel like there's a lot of unspoken drama."*

This may be a downside to joining a female organization, however it was only mentioned by two of the eleven participants, so it may not be a shared opinion of everyone. So, these all indicate that there are potential risks to being a member of a female community.

4.1.8 Overall Positivity Towards Female Organizations

One of the interview topics was about the participants overall perceptions of gaming organizations. The overall perception of female organizations seemed to be generally positive.

> *"I think [female gaming organizations] are positive. I think it's good. I don't really think there are any negatives. I've met people through the group. If I were looking for people to play with, I would go to that page. Sometimes you just don't want to deal with men," (P8).*

The women who are members of female organizations naturally find value in them and even recommend them to other people but recognize that they may have some flaws.

> *"I understand that there is a bubble, but I think without it, people like me, wouldn't be able to reach out, would say no to playing with me, would feel too scary, in order to enjoy it, you have to be comfortable, getting that comfort from somewhere...it helps," (P7).*

While some participants had mixed opinions, many still agreed that there are some benefits to organizations, recognizing that even if they don't have positive perceptions of them, that other women in their same situation might.

> *"I don't like that there have to be female-only groups. I mean, don't get me wrong, I don't think they're a bad thing. But I wish that they didn't need to be a thing. But I think a lot of women still benefit from them. Hopefully we don't need them in a few years," (P9).*

And some participants just are not interested in them at all: *I'm not a fan of female organizations in general. I learn a lot from the larger communities on Reddit so I don't think I would have any interest in joining an all-female one,"* (P11). There was a range of opinions among the participants, but as noted, the majority see value in them, if not for themselves, then for others. However, they admit that female organizations should only be temporary: *"I don't really know how it helps with the inclusiveness…[I think] that it's a bubble instead of actually dealing with the problem of still not being included with the guy gamers,"* (P6) and posit that in terms of inclusiveness, *"I think we're going the right way, but I still feel like there's something blocking it,"* (P10). The consensus, therefore, is that these organizations can be beneficial to many women, but maybe not all, and they should not be used as a tool to change the gaming environment but should rather be used as a resource to foster and grow new female gamers into being the best versions of themselves.

5. Discussion

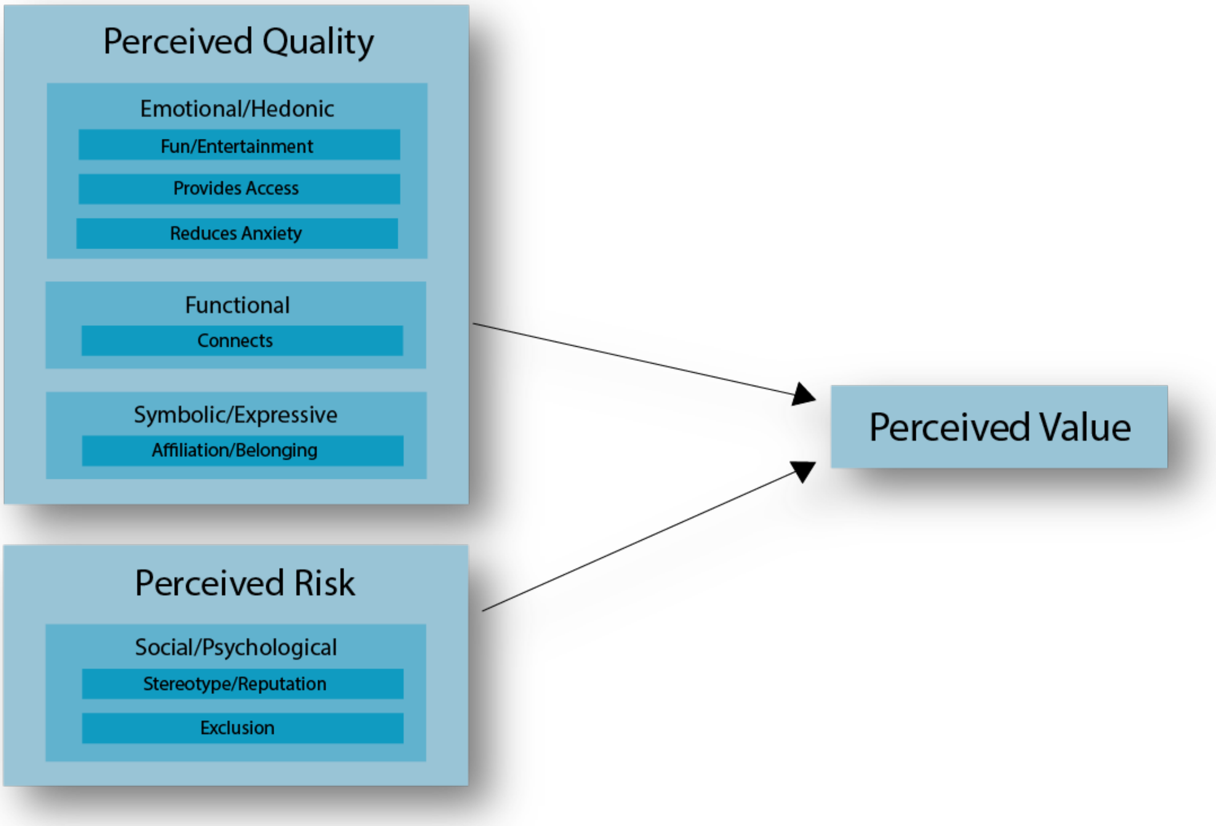
The purpose of this chapter is to provide relate the analyzed data back to the theoretical background. The analyzed data was compared back to the proposed framework and an adapted model will be detailed. The framework is slightly adjusted to reflect the findings. A discussion of the connections made back to the literature review is completed. Additionally, the findings are discussed in relation to the research problem.

5.1 Adjusted Theoretical Framework

Based on the analysis of the codes taken from the data, some adaptations were necessary on the theoretical framework. The adjusted theorical framework can be seen below and will be explained in the following sections. The themes identified from the thematic analysis were fun/entertainment, provides access, reduces anxiety, connects, affiliation/belonging, stereotype/reputation, and exclusion. The Elements of Value were used to group the qualities of female organizations highlighted by the interviews. As mentioned by the creators of that framework, specific companies and industries likely have five of the thirty qualities in the highest amount. The five that were found to be most relevant to female organizations was fun/entertainment, provides access, reduces anxiety, connects, and affiliation/belonging.

The Elements of Value however, does not include any risks in the framework, so that aspect of PVF was supplemental to framework. So, when analyzing the risks mentioned, the themes were created based on the data collection. Originally, economic risk was included as one of the potential risk factors in the theoretical model. However, none of the respondents stated feeling like they were risking money to be in any of these organizations. One respondent mentioned a reason for this, at least in regard to the Female Legends organization: *"It's free to join, so it's not like I have to pay anything. Sometimes you have to pay for specific events, but there's no fee to join or anything,"* (P1). Due to this, it was removed from the theoretical model, and therefore social/psychological was the only category which ended up being included in the model. Therefore, the adjusted theoretical framework is below.

Figure 6 - Adjusted Theoretical Framework


Perceived Quality
Emotional/Hedonic
Fun/Entertainment
Provides Access
Reduces Anxiety
Functional
Connects
Symbolic/Expressive
Affiliation/Belonging
Perceived Risk
Social/Psychological
Stereotype/Reputation
Exclusion
Perceived Value

After analyzing the data, it is important to revisit the research question to see if the data collection revealed any answers. As a reminder, the research question posed at the beginning of this thesis was the following: Do female gaming organizations create value for members? Through the research it was found that female organizations certainly create value for their members, but there is a possibility that some risks are involved in being a member. So, while there may be potential downsides, the values were seen as outweighing the risks in many situations. The biggest values identified through this research were entertainment, providing access, reducing anxiety, connecting to others, and creating a feeling of affiliation and belonging. These will all be discussed in more detail.

As identified by a study on value perceptions, overall perceived value is made up of both perceived quality and perceived risks (Snoj et al., 2004). First, perceived quality will be discussed, as the majority of the conversations had during data collection surrounded the concept of value within female organizations. While four are members of female organizations and seven are not, all the participants agreed that these organizations have value. Even the women who are not members of these organizations agreed that even if there was not a specific value for them personally, they could see the value in them for other female and non-binary gamers. Then risks will be detailed because there were some potential risks outlined by the women. Finally, then the overall value will be discussed.

5.2 Perceived Quality

5.2.1 Emotional/Hedonic

When comparing the collected data to the Elements of Value, the majority of the themes found in the research were emotionally or hedonically related. Since five overall values were identified as the rational amount for any specific industry or organization (Almqvist et al., 2016), five were selected as overarching themes. Of those five, three of them were within the emotional/hedonic category. Therefore, it can be assumed that the largest qualities of female organizations are beneficial to members for emotional and hedonic reasons.

The first category taken from the Elements of Value was fun/entertainment. The theme that was found which correlated to this quality was gaming as a leisure activity. Obviously, as can be assumed, gaming is an environment where the majority of people get involved for entertainment purposes. While some go further to become professionals, one of the qualities of gaming at its most basic level is enjoyment. Therefore, female organizations were seen by the participants of this study as having value through their ability to create fun and enjoyment for members. The organization Female Legends creates an opportunity for players to engage with their favorite games. Through the scheduling of tournaments, coaching sessions, and the creation of Discord servers and social media groups, women are able to come together around a shared interest and have fun. This is a concept that was agreed upon universally for all the participants in this study, regardless of their involvement in a female organization.

The next category that was seen in the thematic analysis was that female organizations provide access. The code which describes this theme is learning through others. Within the research on the Elements of Value, the category of providing access is described as something which creates access to information, good, services or other valuable items (Almqvist et al., 2016) There can be different types of access. Therefore, this category found in their framework is extremely relevant to the points brought up in the interviews. The participants discussed the ability to learn from others in the female groups, receive coaching from experienced players, and gain information from the group that is catered to their needs. This ability to be introduced into the gaming community can be so beneficial to new players of all genders, but specifically can be important to women. As a few participants identified, women can lack the confidence to play amongst all male gamers. So, learning in a comfortable environment can encourage them to take their gaming to another level and gain new skills. This can be invaluable to many. Since it was identified that there are always people looking to help new gamers, this can be a great resource as an entrance into gaming.

The final category within the emotional quality classification is that female organizations can reduce anxiety. This was taken from the theme of the importance of a secure environment. As found through the literature review, it has been researched by many researcher that harassment exists for women in gaming. For many of the participants, they have the expectation that they will receive harassment or be in toxic situations while gaming. They detailed experiences of feeling belittled, targeted, attacked, and looked down upon. Nobody enjoys that. It causes unnecessary stress and creates huge obstacles for women. Sometimes, the participants stated that they hold their ground against these attacks and strike back against the abuse, but this takes a very confident person. As they identified, removing themselves from those situations is generally the best course of action. One strategy to remove themselves from toxic situations is to join a female organization (Fenton et al., 2021). Men are not allowed in these groups (or in some cases, not encouraged to be in them, but allowed), so the risk of being harassed is exponentially decreased. The women who participated in this study stated that that is likely the number one reason to join a female organization. So, while toxic masculinity and marginalization within gaming exists, there will be a need for female organizations.

5.2.2 Functional

The code bonding was taken and compared to the Elements of Value and the most similar was the concept of forming connections and bonding with other girl gamers. This was within the functional tier of the elements. What the participants identified was that they seek out other women to play with based on their ability to gain friends with similar interests. Within this category, many considerations are taken into account. One is that it is already known that at least around 52% of women experience harassment online (Jagayat & Choma, 2021), and every single one of the respondents reported at least one instance of harassment, and additionally, it is known that women may be searching for places that they will escape toxic masculinity (at least for some time). This leads to this topic of making connections. When female gamers seek new friends to play with online, often times, they will seek the companionship of other likeminded females. It can be easier to show your enjoyment when you’re in an environment where you feel comfortable enough to express your opinions without being ridiculed or made to feel inferior. Many respondents reported making a conscious effort to look for other women to play with. Two of the four respondents who are members of female groups discussed the fact that they specifically sought out female gaming organizations for this purpose. On top of this, one made a connection with someone from the group, and they became friends in real life. This shows how powerful female gaming organizations can be.

5.2.3 Symbolic/Expressive

The next theme is the girl gamer identity, which is associated with the affiliation and belonging of the Elements of Value and the symbolic and expressive category of PVF. The respondents identified that they wanted to be a part of a community where they can see themselves as being part of the group, allowing themselves to associate with a larger crowd of people with the same interests. Female gamers have historically had difficulties identifying themselves as gamers (Paaßen et al., 2017), due in part to the fact that the community at large seems to be a majority of the stereotypically recognized nerdy, male gamer. A linkage can be made from this to the typology of gamers. Most female gamers consider themselves to be casual gamers (Hedlund, 2021), so this may lead to them not seeing themselves as serious competitors. A respondent talked about the way Female Legends has allowed her to identify more as a female gamer, giving her more confidence to play and interact with the larger gaming community. A specific value can be the enhancement ones self-identify and offering of sociocultural meaning (Smith & Colgate, 2007), which can be seen through the ability of women to associate themselves to the group of likeminded people. On Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and other related sociological identification of needs, this need for sociocultural meaning can be characterized as a higher-level need than functional and emotional needs (Almqvist et al., 2016; Maslow, 1943). Many goods and services are not able to achieve this level of value, so this should be noted.

5.3 Perceived Risk

5.3.1 Social/Psychological

While there were two miscellaneous comments made about potential risks involved in joining an organization (time and increased drama) which did not fit into their own coding, they were outliers, and therefore not considered in the final thematic analysis. Two overarching things were taken from the thematic analysis: the concepts of exclusion and stereotyping and reputation. These can be grouped together into an overarching category of social/psychological risks, taken from the CVC framework (Smith & Colgate, 2007). As mentioned previously, this is the only category that potential risks identified in the thematic analysis can fit into, therefore other risks such as financial and personal safety were not included.

Stereotypes have been a long withstanding issue within gaming. Some respondents state that they have heard men say they have low opinions of female centered gaming organizations. This can be due to the fact that men can often have the assumption that women are only playing video games for male attention or that they are not nearly as skilled as men at the same games. This can lead to the negative views of female organizations. While the reputation of these organizations may be different among men and women, they still have this reputation. And as was mentioned, being able to identify oneself with the group and affiliate with it is a benefit. However, if the group has negative public opinion, women could not want to associate themselves to female organizations for this same reason: they don't want to be associated with something that has a negative stereotype around it. So this could certainly be a risk involved and prevent some women from joining

The concept of exclusion can be tricky. Many female organizations are created due to the increased need for female friendly spaces. However, it can be off-putting for some men, as they then feel excluded from these areas. Respondents suggested this as a potential negative to female organizations, but also mentioned that they don't necessary take these complaints seriously. They identified that men have their own spaces and women have just as much right to have their own. Alienating men from groups is not a solution to the problem of gender inclusiveness in gaming. On top of potentially alienating male gamers, female organizations can exclude themselves from the group, creating a bubble from the reality of the gaming community as a whole. This is the same criticism that female organizations have received from previous researchers (Paaßen et al., 2017; Shaw, 2010). This creation of a bubble can have multiple consequences. It can shelter the members from harassment too much, causing higher levels of sensitivity when exposed to it in other situations. It can reduce the ability to gain high levels of skill at games, therefore reducing the potential to become a professional. It can also reduce the visibility of female gamers, therefore perpetuating the stereotypes. These are all consequences discussed in previous research, and therefore it can be concluded that this research backs up the fact that these are potential risks. However, there are many benefits to these organizations which for some women may outweigh the risks. This will be discussed next.

5.4 Perceived Value

Overall, there seems to be a mostly positive perception of value from the participants, meaning that female organizations create benefits for their members through their programming and other functions. Through the thematic analysis, more qualities were identified than there were risks. However, not all participants believe that female organizations are a solution in the long-term, which coincides with the criticisms of previous researchers on this subject (Paaßen et al., 2017).

Despite the fact that there are growing numbers of female gamers, many of them hide their identities and therefore, female gamers say that it is hard to find other female gamers. It has been identified that many women can perform worse and cause women to lose interest in gaming due to these toxic environments

(Adinolf & Türkay, 2018), which has had a negative relationship to the number of women in esports and professional environments. When women lose interest in playing, they feel less motivation to endure the harassment and end up leaving the gaming community. Creating spaces for women to feel more comfortable allows for more women to play their favorite games without the fear of toxic situations. Based on the data collected, it can be concluded that female organizations can lead some women to stick with gaming longer than if they were not members of the organizations. The benefits certainly encourage women to gain knowledge and grow their love of gaming. It has been suggested by previous academics to research what factors contribute to women losing interest in gaming and the existence of less women at high levels of gaming (Rogstad, 2021). Female organizations have the potential to prevent some women from abandoning gaming. However, to explore this notion, a longitudinal study would need to be conducted.

Female communities give an opportunity for gamers to connect with each other, bond, avoid the harassment that is found in many other areas of the gaming environment, and learn in a comfortable space, all while still enjoying playing their favorite games. These organizations are a way for women to gain access to the gaming community from a safe and secure location while still being able to enjoy it. Female organizations should not be treated as an enduring resolution to the problematic issues of sexism and marginalization in gaming. Rather, they should be treated as a temporary outlet for women. Female gamers do not want these organizations to exist in the end. But for the time being, the consensus is that they are necessary. They can allow female gamers to get comfortable and gain enough skill to compete on the same level as men, such as examined through the offering of coaching sessions.

So, while these cyberbalkanized environments certainly do not solve the problem of hegemonic masculinity, it allows women to become more obsessed and gain skill to join their male counterparts in high levels of esports and additionally creates lifelong fans who spend more money. Women clearly see high value in female organizations and tournaments, so it is in the best interest of gaming companies to support these organizations and foster the love of gaming within their female fans, purely for financial reasons. Alienating potential customers just does not make business sense. Companies should be doing everything they can and earmarking resources towards fostering these types of environments for women, while at the same time trying to change the overall climate of the gaming industry.

6. Conclusions

The purpose of this chapter is to close out the thesis and detail the contributions of the paper, explain how these findings should be used, identify any potential limitations, and suggest potential research moving forward. This research was meant to begin a new area of conversation, and therefore the research should be continued.

6.1 Theoretical contributions

This research sought to find the value perceptions of female gaming organizations. Through the process of the literature review, there were three frameworks which stood out: the Elements of Value, CVC, and PVF. While each of them was valuable in their own right, when combined, they encompass more aspects of the concept of consumer value perception. The theoretical contribution of this paper is the framework which was created through the amalgamation of other previous research on consumer value perceptions. The Elements of Value created an extended version of Maslow's hierarchy of needs and brought modern qualities into the mix (Almqvist et al., 2016). However, as mentioned, it lacked a well-rounded view of consumer value perceptions that CVC and PVF consist of (Smith & Colgate, 2007; Snoj et al., 2004). And while CVC and PVF both include the concept of risk as a factor in the overall perception of value, they lacked a detailed list of qualities of value to explore. Therefore, this research contributes a theoretical framework which combines the best aspects of each of these models, creating a way to explore qualities of perceived value, perceived risk, and perceived value. This theoretical framework can be tested in other areas for validity and applicability to other industries and brands.

It is important to recognize that this specific adaptation of the framework may be only applicable to female gaming organizations, it can be adapted to other industries using the same tools of the Elements of Value, CVC, and PVF to fit any other industries in question. These original instruments were not gaming specific but rather were adapted to better fit the gaming environment, so likewise, it can be adjusted to fit other industries. This theoretical framework also creates the opportunity for future quantitative research on the same topic of female organizations in gaming.

Additionally, prior to this research, there was some criticisms of the phenomenon of female gamers carving out their own spaces, due to the potential affect that lowering female visibility within the gaming sphere (Paaßen et al., 2017; Shaw, 2010). While that research did not argue that female organizations were inherently negative, they also did not investigate the perception of quality of these organizations, and rather noted their existence and potential risks. Through the data collection and analysis of this study, many of these arguments were validated due to the numerous participants who agreed with these criticisms. However, this research also contributes this area of research by concluding that there is value within these organizations according to the consumers themselves. This research supplied an exploration of both the qualities and risks to weigh an overall perception of value. So while the risks from the previous studies have been confirmed by the participants, the gaming industry still sees a need for these organizations and therefore creates an avenue for future studies on this subject.

6.2 Managerial Implications

Based on this research, it can clearly be said that many women see value in female organizations. Through the programs offered to members and the ability of the communities to bring women together, female organizations have carved out a space in gaming that is uniquely female against a backdrop of a largely branded male industry. While organizations like Microsoft Xbox and Riot Games are attempting to create more inclusive spaces in the larger communities, the efforts are not working as intended and there is plenty of room for improvement. These organizations need to invest more time and energy into creating spaces for women to enjoy. As previously stated, it simply makes business sense for them to invest in female gamers. Women see value in these organizations, so companies should take these findings and find value in them as well. However, female organizations are not the end goal for inclusiveness. Companies and brands need to do better and increase the diversity and inclusion practices within their internal administrations. As acknowledged by many, female gamers would love to see a time when they are identified not by their gender, but simply as gamers. Finding unique and creative ways to encourage women to get involved in gaming communities is crucial to increasing their visibility in the industry and should be prioritized.

6.3 Limitations

There were some limitations to this research which need to be acknowledged. The first being that only Swedish female gamer were involved in this study. While that choice was deliberately made to create a more easily researchable sample size, this limits the generalizability of the research. Some responses in this study could be unique to the Swedish way of thinking and therefore cannot be applied to all groups of female gamers. Moreover, the researcher is not fluent in the Swedish language, and therefore was restricted to speaking English with all the participants. That may have affected the way that they were able to express themselves and their opinions. All participants agreed that they were comfortable speaking in English, but language can change the context and meaning of responses, so it would have been more ideal to conduct the interviews in their native language. Some other similar limitations are related to other demographics. Being that the research was restricted to women of a similar age and background, there could be conclusions which were made that do not universally apply in different situations.

Another limitation of this research is related to the resources of the researcher. There was no funding involved in the research, making it necessary to restrict the scope of the study. The time limit of the study was too short to perform any longitudinal studies which are well-suited to cause and effect exploration. And additionally, due to these time constraints, the sample size was limited. Performing semi-structed interviews and transcribing all the data is time consuming and therefore, the sample size needed to be kept relatively low. While the sample size was large enough to be acceptable, more data to have available could change the conclusions which were made.

6.4 Further Research Suggestions

Due to the lack of previous exploration on this subject, this research should just be considered a starting-off point for future research regarding female gaming organizations. This research sought to start the conversation around this and recommend that future researchers continue this work to get a better idea of the current situation. Recognizing the limited scope of the research, it would be intriguing to see future studies which expand the demographic reach. It is certainly possible that the results can only be applied to the young Swedish gaming community, so it would be interesting to see similar studies including people of different ages, nationalities, and even genders. Gathering the opinion of male gamers on this same subject and comparing it quantitatively to the opinions of female gamers could be thought-provoking.

As the author was restricted by time and resources, a suggestion is made to conduct a long-term study on the effect of these organizations and their impact on the longevity of female gamers. A longitudinal study would be of great interest. Studying the effects of these organizations over time would certainly be a new development for research in gaming. Additionally, the researcher recommends future quantitative studies focused more specifically on stereotypes within gaming and believe it would be interesting to see another long-term research project studying the effects that female organizations have on these stereotypes.

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8. Appendix

Appendix 1- Explanation of The Elements of Value (Almqvist et al., 2016)

Level of Pyramid	Element Name	Definition	Corporate Example
Social Impact	**Self-Transcendence**	Helping other people or society	When TOMS sells a pair of shoes or eyewear, a new pair of shoes goes to an impoverished child or part of the profit goes to save the eyesight of people in developing countries.
Life Changing	**Provides Hope**	Providing something to be optimistic about	GNC stores sell a wide range of weight loss, nutritional supplements and other products designed to improve consumers' health and fitness.
	Self-actualization	Providing a sense of personal accomplishment or improvement	Consumers buy a Leica camera in part from the pride of owning a camera used by famous photographers over the course of the brand's century-long history.
	Motivation	Spurring people to achieve their goals	Spotify added a music-streaming feature for runners that detects their tempo and finds music to match it.
	Heirloom	A good investment for future generations	Patek Philippe positions its watches as cherished possessions designed to last and accompany successive generations.
	Affiliation/Belonging	Helping people become part of a group or identify with people they admire	The Boston Red Sox have built a loyal customer base by appealing to tradition and local patriotism in New England.
Emotional	**Reduces Anxiety**	Helping people worry less and feel more secure	Discover allows cardholders to instantly freeze and unfreeze their accounts without cancelling their cards.
	Rewards Me	Providing benefits for being a loyal customer	Starwood has earned strong customer loyalty among frequent travellers through a robust rewards program.
	Nostalgia	Reminding people of something positive in the past	Volkswagen's Beetle line of cars emulates the popular design originally created in the 1930s and produced through the 1970s.
	Design/Aesthetics	Providing an appealing form or design	Apple's attention to design has helped differentiate its computers, smartphones and other products from those of competitors.
	Badge Value	Representing achieved status or aspirations	Prada's understated luxury clothing and accessories are designed to be recognized by fashionistas.
	Wellness	Improving people's physical or mental state	Westin added fitness equipment in some guest rooms, "superfoods," and exercise clothing rentals to reposition the brand as part of the well-being movement.
	Therapeutic Value	Providing therapeutic value or well-being	Dr. Scholl's products aim to soothe a broad range of foot conditions.
	Fun/Entertainment	Offering fun or entertainment	Norwegian, Royal Caribbean and other cruise lines offer almost round-the-clock entertainment ranging from indoor sky diving to bumper cars to art auctions.
	Attractiveness	Having people feel more attractive	Victoria's Secret created bold retail designs in an undergarment industry that had been quiet and discreet.
	Provides Access	Provides access to information, goods, services, or other valuable items	CVS Health added in-pharmacy clinics that provide basic medical services and assorted wellness services.
Functional	**Saves Time**	Saving time in tasks or transactions	Target, REI and other retailers have in-store pickup for online orders and/or same-day rush delivery from store.
	Simplifies	Reduces complexity and simplifying	Amazon's 1-Click feature simplifies the order checkout process.
	Makes Money	Helping to make money	Google's AdSense helps independent blogs and websites to generate advertising revenue.
	Reduces Risk	Protecting from losses	Charles Schwab's Accountability Guarantee refunds fees if clients are not fully satisfied with the investment product.
	Organizes	Becoming more organized	The Container Store helps people organize their possessions at home.
	Integrates	Integrating different aspects of life	Square offers invoice management, payroll and other services that integrate billing functions into its point-of-sale hardware and software.

Connects	Connecting with other people	Energy drink maker Red Bull sponsors extreme sports competitions and communities that connect enthusiasts around the world.
Reduces Effort	Getting things done with less effort	Facebook added the ability to send money directly to friends via its Messenger app.
Avoids Hassle	Avoiding or reducing hassles	Zappos offers free shipping and generous return policies.
Reduces Costs	Saving money in purchases, fess, or subscriptions	Nordstrom, J. Crew and other retailers introduced budget brands.
Quality	Providing high-quality goods or services	USAA delivers high-quality insurance, banking and investment products and services tailored to its members—those who have served in the military and their families.
Variety	Providing a variety of things to choose from	Fitbit has branched out from a simple step counter to different products for everyday users and high-performance athletes.
Sensory Appeals	Appealing in taste, smell, hearing and other senses	Starbucks acquired tea company Teavana and bakery La Boulange to improve its non-coffee products.
Informs	Providing reliable and trusted information about a topic	Vanguard added low-fee advice to its core investment services.

Appendix 2 - Customer Value Framework Question Guide (Smith & Colgate, 2007, p. 20)

Customer Value Creation Framework

	Types of Value			
Sources of Value	**Functional/Instrumental Value**	**Experiential/Hedonic Value**	**Symbolic/Expressive Value**	**Cost/Sacrifice Value**
	• Correct/accurate attributes • Appropriate performances • Appropriate outcomes	• Sensory • Emotional • Social/relational • Epistemic	• Self-identity/worth • Personal meaning • Self-expression • Social meaning • Conditional meaning	• Economic • Psychological • Personal investment • Risk
Information	Information informs, educates, and helps customers realize performance and outcomes.	Copy and creativity can provide or enhance sensory, emotional, relational, and epistemic experiences.	Can position a product, help consumers identify with the product, help them make associations, and interpret meaning.	Helps consumers evaluate alternatives; make more informed, faster, and less stressful decisions; helps lower prices by greater competition.
Products	Products directly provide features, functions, and characteristics that allow performances and outcomes.	They provide sensory (e.g., restaurants), emotional (e.g., Six Flags), relational (e.g., board games), and epistemic (e.g., Disney Land) experiences: augmenting goods (e.g., IKEA) or as the focal product (e.g., Club Med).	Products enhance consumer self-concepts (e.g., Mac cosmetics), provide personal meaning (e.g., Campbell's soup), offer self-expression (e.g., Gap clothes), and provide social meaning (e.g., Hallmark cards).	Product price and augmented product considerations, such as operating costs, assembly, ease of use, warranty, and service terms, help to reduce costs and sacrifices.
Interactions (with employees and systems)	Sales call frequency and duration, service interactions and responsiveness, and interactions with systems (such as the telephone, billing, or customer support system) provide or enhance desired performances and outcomes.	Service attributes, such as staff politeness, friendliness, or empathy, create sensory, emotional, relational, and epistemic experiences for customers, as do service recovery, customer support, and other systems.	Staff and system interactions can make customers feel better about themselves and provide personal meaning to customers; privileged interactions support status and prestige. Equity policies can enhance sociocultural meaning.	Interactions with people and systems (such as electronic data interchange) add to or reduce the economic and psychological cost of a product and increase or reduce the personal investment required to acquire and consume the product.
Environment (purchase and consumption)	Furniture, fixtures, lighting, layout, and other decorative features and attributes of the purchasing or consumption environment contribute to functional/instrumental value by enhancing or detracting from product performances and outcomes.	Features and attributes of the purchasing or consumption environment such as music, ambiance, and atmosphere can create sensory, emotional, and epistemic experiences for customers.	Where a product is purchased or consumed can provide personal, social, or sociocultural meaning and can enhance self-worth and expression—a cup of coffee at an outdoor cafe may have more symbolic value than coffee at home.	Contributes to the economic cost of a product (e.g., popcorn at a movie theater), psychological cost (such as finding parking downtown), personal investment (how much searching is required), and risk (personal safety).
Ownership/Possession Transfer	Correct, accurate, and timely fulfillment processes (such as order taking, picking/packing, and delivery) provide functional/instrumental value.	Fulfilling delivery promises and how a product is delivered (such as the presentation of a meal) can enhance the customer experience—as can pride of ownership and product potency (future potential).	How a product is delivered (such as gift wrapped or via a ceremony) and by whom (such as the manager of a car dealership) can create symbolic value.	Can be enhanced with payment terms, delivery options, return policies, billing accuracy, order tracking systems, access to supplier personnel, and dispute resolution procedures.

Appendix 3 - Interview Guide for Research

There are no wrong answers. This is a conversation and I want to see your point of view as I am exploring the attitudes women have towards these organizations. If you are unsure of anything, please feel free to ask for clarification or for me to rephrase. As stated in the GDPR documents, you are free to end this conversation at any point.

Before getting started, I would like to share my definition of female organizations: My definition of female organizations is anything in gaming which caters towards women. That could be formal organizations created by associations or simply Facebook groups or Subreddits dedicated towards a place for female gamers to hang out.

Age:

Nationality:

Education:

Typology of gamer:

When did you start playing video games?

What are your favorite games?

Are there any specific genres you like better?

How many hours a week do you play?

Do you prefer to play alone, with friends, or with strangers?

What do you think about the current state of gender inclusiveness in esports?

Have you experienced any harassment while playing video games?

Can you tell me a little about that experience?

Are you apart of any gaming organizations/communities?
    How often do you engage with these organizations?

What do you know about all female gaming organizations?

Is anyone you know participating in any female gaming organizations?

Can you name any female organizations in your area?

Are you apart of any female gaming organizations/communities?
    If no, why not

If yes, why
How often do you engage with these organizations?

In your opinion, can female organizations help or hinder gender inclusiveness in gaming?

What would you say the overall benefits of joining a female organization are? Are there any downsides to joining one?

1. Functional/Instrumental
    a. What reputation do you think that female organizations have amongst all gamers?
    b. What reputation do you think that female organizations have amongst female gamers?
    c. What reasons are there for joining a female organization or tournament? (even if you’re not in one)
    d. Can you describe the environment in a female organization?
2. Emotional/Hedonic
    a. Can you describe your overall experience with female organizations?
    b. Have your experiences been mostly positive or negative?
    c. Have you met any friends through a group?
    d. Have you met any people to play games with through a group?
    e. Do you find these organizations to be educational or informative?
3. Symbolic/Expressive
    a. What is your view on the openness of these groups?
        i. Do you believe that being a member in a female organization would allow you to express your opinion or interests?
    b. Have you found any personal meaning through a female organization?
    c. Whether you are in an organization or not, do you feel as though being a member of one would enhance your self-expression as a female gamer?
    d. Do you think being involved in a female organization would give you a way to express your opinions better than being in a general gaming community?
4. Cost/Sacrifice
    a. Do you think there are any negatives to joining a female organization?
    b. Is there anything you would have to sacrifice to join a female organization?

c. Do you feel that being involved in a female gaming organization would force you to sacrifice anything?

d. Are there any fees involved in being a member of a female organization?

Is there anything overall not covered which you would like to discuss?