

# Game Streaming in the Wake of a Pandemic

Topic: Live Streaming and Branding

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Requirements for the  
Master of Science Degree

by Nicholas Martucci  
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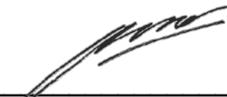
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Date \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_ Dr. Ana Jofre First Reader

X   
\_\_\_\_\_ Dr. Ryan Lizardi Second Reader

## Abstract:

The purpose of this study is to determine what the key motivational factors for creating a live stream gaming channel in the wake of a global pandemic are. This is executed by generating a series of podcast interviews from live streamers, generating branding for the launch of a live stream gaming channel and launching the channel. With the world in a current state of emergency, the live streaming industry under Twitch.tv has boomed, giving streamers and viewers alike an opportunity to interact, communicate and form communities like never before in the shadow of these pressing times. In light of this, we seek an escape from the harsh reality that is quarantine and find comfort in engaging with others all the while having fun indoors.

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## Introduction

In today's wild and crazy world, there are so many ways to earn a living. This comes in the form of physical work, digital work and mix between the two. Throughout the past decade there has been a rise in popularity in one occupation in particular, Live Steam Gaming through a service known as Twitch (or Twitch.tv). Twitch is a live streaming platform that allows anyone to screen capture video as they use the service. Live streaming is "a real-time video broadcasting process with the advantage of audience interactivity." (van Moessner Research, *Online Video Streaming Glossary: The Stream 2020*). Typically, live streamers pair this with a web camera and microphone and add live commentary to the video they are recording. A Live Streamer in the world of gaming will typically be playing a video game, engaging with their audience as they flow into a given live feed.

In the continued duration of the SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) Pandemic, there has been a notable rise in viewership in this industry and in the Twitch service. This begs the question of what makes a stream successful. By interviewing several streamers and their community or their target market - "a group of potential customers to whom a company wants to sell its products and services. This group also includes specific customers to whom a company directs its marketing efforts." (Kenton, *Target Markets: What Everyone Should Know 2020*), I found out and built my own based on the best practices unveiled by these interactions. This thesis explores the true motivations behind streaming, whether it be for monetization, "the process of turning a non-revenue-generating item into cash, essentially liquidating an asset or object into

legal tender.” (Ganti, *Monetize Definition* 2020) or if it be purely for recreation and enjoyment of a hobby, how streamers build a community, whether it be specific to a type of people or if they are open to market to anyone, whether or not they use an agency to so, as well as the social implications of this endeavor. To understand the background of these objectives I used the areas of literature that fall within academic articles, website based periodicals and streaming service’s terms of service.

The goals of this research are not only to find what makes streaming and streamers popular but also to determine best practices for streaming whether that be a built persona or personal branding, targeted audiences, the influences of monetization of a given stream on a platform, and if marketing has a key influence on the popularity of a streamer. In order to determine these characteristics, the methods used entail interviews with four live streamers of various points in their careers and interacting with the user bases on forums within Reddit.com under the subcategories of Twitch, Streaming and Video Games will be performed, as well as an action phase of experimentation of building a stream to uncover the process of determining what goes into generating a Twitch live stream. This endeavor will yield a number of artifacts: a functional website housing the numerous branding materials generated in creating a stream, four podcast episodes entailing the interviews with the four given live streamers, as well as a few video clips from the first series of live streams scheduled after its launch.

There are a number of anticipated results and obstacles that come inherently with this project. Firstly, in terms of research, results will show how a live stream works and what it means to be a live streamer, how the COVID-19 Pandemic has directly

impacted streaming and the livelihood of streamers, as well as how monetization influences decision making for a streamer. As for experimentation, the expected result is to produce a live stream channel that gains popularity, as well as completes an image with branding and target audience in mind, as well as the production of an informative podcast series that give listeners the opportunity to learn from figures in the industry. Anticipated obstacles have been identified as the ability to engage with viral and highly popular streamers, more popular and experienced streamers may not be limited to one platform nor exclusively belong to or affiliated with Twitch.tv, finding seasoned streamers versus those who are just starting out in their careers, and finding the right time frame to most accurately obtain the highest potential amount of viewership.

## Literature Review:

There are many things that go into video game streaming, from personality, to brand and even genre of game. However, there are many things that beg questions about the field of streaming such as: What kinds of people are video game streamers? What is the motivation behind streaming? Is your community as a streamer something you create or something you strive for? Does a streamer develop their brand over time or is it something they need from the start? How does a service like Twitch.tv and Youtube Live motivate people to become streamers? What are the kinds of streamers? What effects has the Coronavirus (Covid-19) Quarantine had on streaming and the video gaming industry? All of these questions have answers just lying below the surface of the topic of video game streaming. In the world of live video game streaming, there are many factors that play a key role in not only viewership but also in generating

content and developing a sense of brand for yourself as a streamer. This can take the form of following a release of a highly anticipated video game and then sharing the content with the world as you play through it, passing the time in order to escape from your current reality, while getting lost in another, and even just creating content for yourself and others to review at a later day to generate strategies in a competitive field.

## Careers of live streamers

The careers of video games streamers start for a plethora of reasons, the motivations vary from person to person. Johnson and his associate Woodcock carried out a study on streamers and their lives pre and during their streaming careers. Johnson continues to explain how streaming changed the life of one streamer who was without a job or source of income for a half decade and then started streaming. This streamer started to do it for fun, then started earning money from it. The streamer reported that streaming has since given him a new purpose in life so to speak. Of the 39 experienced full-time streamers interviewed in the study, most tend to be under the age of 25 and make under 50,000 USD through streaming while also working 35 hours on a platform like Twitch.tv as a quasi-Full-Time position (Johnson & Woodcock, 2017). Johnson then goes into the growth of eSports and streaming over the years, highlighting motivations of prize money, different genres such as party fighters versus first person shooters (FPS), networking between gamers and what work goes into opening a twitch channel, and finally the future of platforms, streamers and their companies. It seems that a lot of the leg work for small time streamers is done by themselves but once becoming affiliated with a service, the benefits start to flood in. This can come in the form of sponsorships, merchandising, custom frames for the stream and other features.

In order to receive benefit from streaming, one must play the part as a streamer. This can take the form of a built persona or just being yourself. Matsui et al. dive into the aspect of video game streaming that involves the showmanship of “esports” and how the player not only engages with the game but also with their streaming viewer community or their user base, defined as “(computing) The established group of users for a particular computer program, technology, etc.” (Wiktionary, *userbase* 2019). Their study focuses on the platform of gaming known as Multiplayer Online Battle Arena (MOBA) with the game League of Legends (LoL) as the primary game of the genre. Findings show that with the interaction with the streaming community or chat, user engagement is extended (Matsui et al., 2019). Polygon, a frontrunner in video gaming and technology news, highlights the change of status of two streamers Tyler1 and Dr. DisRespect. Due to complications at home and with words spoken on live stream, Tyler1 was banned from Riot Games and subsequently Twitch.tv for a short period, allowing Dr. DisRespect to become the frontrunner for Twitch’s #1 streamer (Alexander, 2018). This was due to the absence of Tyler1 from streaming, showing that to be “big time” in streaming, one must be competitive, aggressive, and also fit within a brand. In the case of Dr. DisRespect, he has been cast off of and returned to streaming platforms due to the persona he has built. Wang and Li share their findings on the social media construct of live streaming through means of traditional social media like Facebook, WeChat and Youtube, then moving to the context of video game streaming in that of Twitch.tv and Youtube Live. They delve into the concept that streaming builds community, solidarity and shared emotion between viewer and streamer. This comes in the form of something known as Information Ritual Chains (IRC) with the following four

features as its definition: “physical assembly by bodily presence, barriers to outsiders, common focus on an activity or an object, and shared common emotion or mood experience”(Li, Wang, & Liu, 2020). This further supports the notions that branding can make or break a given streamer, simply if viewers do not like what they do, the streamers lose portions of their user base. In a sense, this speaks to how there is an inherent obsession in pop culture in “unscripted” reality television shows and the connection between this genre and live streaming can be similar in attracting community and audience.

## Demographics

They take into consideration the age, gender, genre of game, number of “gifts” received and likes on a given stream just to name a few, of which all play into how the community plays a role in how a streamer interact with their community and how much monetization the streamer can gain from a given session. They further divide the genres into two categories, video gaming and talent shows, both requiring talent and skill to perform their objectives. Johnson and Woodcock also speak on the monetization of streaming, the increase of popularity due to the decline of television subscription, the utilization of viewers and streamers alike to boost crowdfunding of independent games, as well as the shift from traditional game development/ audience to something more of something developed to be entertaining to not only play but to watch as well. Their information comes from offline ethnographic studies via semi-formal interviews with streamers at video gaming conventions. The study revealed that the influence of Twitch.tv and streaming has reshaped game reviewing, boosted game lifespan and empowered users and viewers alike in the gaming industry. This enhances the notion

that streaming and the video game industry have a key symbiotic relationship (Johnson & Woodcock, 2017).

## Monetization

The whole premise of monetization through Twitch.tv is not as clear cut as it might seem. Much like how Youtube has monetization from views, likes and subscriptions, the Twitch.tv service works much in the same way. A streamer can and must be eligible for subscriptions in order to start monetization of their stream. This is done by becoming a Twitch Affiliate, someone who has streamed 500 minutes or more in the last 30 days, stream at least 7 of 30 days, maintain an average at least 3 viewers at a time and gain 50 followers. Becoming an affiliate allows for the ability to gain a payout of \$100USD within 60 days and gain the ability to have at least 5 emotes for a given stream. Twitch affiliation is the only way to start that process, after that point starts the hard test of branding, persona implementation, gaining subscriptions, viewers and maintaining a stream schedule (Stream Scheme, C. 2019).

## Twitch.tv as a tool

Payne et al. look into the innovations of Twitch.tv focusing on the interpersonal relations between streamers and stream viewers that act as a learning environment to better the viewer at a given game or genre of game using tactics and principles unique to said games. The game of focus in this study was League of Legends (LoL) and its user base. The findings of this study had shown that viewers had learned vicariously through the shortsights of the streamer and thus teaching a valuable lesson in the dynamics of the game LoL (Payne et al., 2017). The motivations of a given viewer of a

stream differ from person to person, however at the end of a stream, one comes out of it with a lesson whether they realize it or regardless of the outcome of the stream.

Li et al. also discuss the field of streaming from its boom in user base, refined definition of Live Streaming and its features. Namely these features are the real-time conduction of the stream, the sociability, social media-like aspect, and the spread of suspense within the gaming community, specifically stream viewership. They categorize the subject into three fields, “Let’s Play, Speedrunner, and E-Sports” each holding different characteristics and different communities. They continue by saying that monetization is a major incentive for live streamers, the personalization and branding of a stream makes the popularity with the aesthetics of a stream reach an emotional empathetic level with the viewers(Li et al., 2020). With monetization, streamers also reward viewers who contribute to their funds view subscription and other means such as merchandise and “shout-outs”.

Poretski et al. focus on what goes into a stream in their research and what it means to stream content. With consultation of a gaming company, they landed in the hands of Atlus, a company that produced the fifth installment of the Persona franchise Persona 5, a Japanese RPG. The company warned to only allow for the streams to last for the first few hours of the game to not spoil the rest of the story for other players. Their data collection involved forum diving on Reddit, a forum website, and subreddits, individual forums within the site, involving the game and general gaming threads. Their findings showed that there are multiple factors that contribute to streaming, such as content, monetization, performance, game structure and overall scope of the stream. Their conclusions find that the major key factors of streaming acts as: broadcasting as a

quasi-television station, creative performance, community engagement and to a degree, storytelling, not only in the light of a video game or its story but at an interpersonal level (Poretski et al., 2019).

## Pandemic-level event effect on industry

Daniele explains how the pandemic has increased the online entertainment consumption with video game streaming being one of such entertainment that is on an upward trend. He continues to discuss the legal repercussions of video game streaming and how they are ambiguous under the “free use” and “fair dealing” terms where the copyright owners would ultimately come into play but specifically for the U.S and Canada. In addition he notes that streamers would be aware of copyright restrictions, especially in terms of music for their stream (Daniele, 2020). Smith also speaks on the video game industry and how the Coronavirus quarantine has allowed for the business to boom. He noted that major companies such as Microsoft, Nintendo and Twitch have seen an increase in sales and usership in the wake of the pandemic with figures from Microsoft alone to be at a “130-percent increase in multiplayer engagement across March and April”. Twitch saw an astounding 50% increase (1.49 billion game hours) of viewership from the same time period as well (Smith et al., 2013). However, Smith went on to discuss how supply chains have been disrupted across the board for all companies and proved to host delays in production or shipment for many of them, namely Nintendo, its console Switch and games such as Animal Crossing: New Horizons, due to the coronavirus outbreak. He then continues to discuss disruptions the virus has caused in and outside the video gaming industry, then how the pandemic has increased the online entertainment consumption with video game streaming being one

of such entertainment that is on an upward trend. He continues to discuss the legal repercussions of video game streaming and how they are ambiguous under the “free use” and “fair dealing” terms where the copyright owners would ultimately come into play but specifically for the U.S and Canada (Smith et al., 2013). In addition he notes that streamers would be aware of copyright restrictions, especially in terms of music for their stream. Chen and Chang delve into the psychology behind an online environment to further extrapolate data on the well-being and motivations of escapism using the vehicle of video game live streaming. According to the authors, a lot of viewership can be attributed online and video game addiction in addition to loneliness and escapism (Chen & Chang, 2019). It seems that the Covid-19 quarantine has given many people the sense of boredom because of all of this spare time they have to be bored on top of the isolation from one another that they have faced. This supports the trend of users flocking to online streaming platforms to be entertained or to entertain themselves in order to fill this void of social interaction. Being a part of a streaming community makes a user feel as if they are a part of something or have a new dynamic form of entertainment, bringing excitement to where their lives have become mundane, gray and depressing.

## Community of a livestream

Within the realm of video game streaming it is clear that there are many contributions to what makes a streamer big in a given community. This plays to the point that a streamer’s persona and surrounding brand has a direct influence on their

community and how they are perceived in the world. It creates a symbiotic relationship with not only the video gaming community but also the video gaming industry due to the ability of exposition that the game gets in both an entertainment aspect and also an instructional frame. This field has been a point for many casual, competitive, professional and full-time gamers in the fields of Let's Plays, Speedrunning and E-Sports to come and interact with their fellow games on interpersonal levels, even in the wake of something as large as a global scale pandemic. With the boom of gaming viewership on streaming platforms over the course of the pandemic we see more users flocking to their screens to not only partake in escapism but to also earn a livable wage in a time where dwindling jobs in the workforce is occurring. Streaming as an alternative source of income is a motivator for those who seek the monetization benefits but it may not be a motivator for others, it is not limited to the further sharing of a hobby and enjoyment with a given community and the passion of a streamer for video gaming and having fun. It is important for streamers to recognize that intellectual property of not only themselves but also to the video game manufacturers, composers of soundtracks and music artists that they use in their streams may be subject to copyright depending on where they are based, what permissions they have and how it is used/ displayed.

## Methods

There are a few paths to take within my research, I plan on performing interviews with domestic streamers to gather information from the primary source. "Forum diving" can provide useful information when engaging with a community who are dedicated to a particular subject. In addition, I will also experiment on my own with making a stream and seeing how successful it can be within a short amount of time. This method might

provide useful information that could make setting up a stream for someone a little more easy if there is proper documentation like in this thesis.

## Interviews

For my interview research questions pertaining to an individual streamer's business, I plan on interviewing four domestic streamers. These streamers can be a streamer who just started their business and are fresh in the field, a streamer who started during the Covid-19 quarantine, a streamer who started at the beginning of the Covid-19 quarantine and finally a streamer who began streaming before the Covid-19 quarantine. The streamers will be either full time or part time in order to extract data of what makes a "successful" streamer. These interviews contain the following questions:

- Is streaming limited to video games or do you partake in streaming of other things such as tabletop games like dungeons and dragons or monopoly?
- What was your motive behind streaming?
- Is it for money or for hobbies or both?
- If you have another job, why do you stream?
- What attracts you to streaming the most?
- How did you get into streaming?
- What do you like most about streaming?
- How do you market yourself?
- Do you have an agent/ agency or are you self promoted?
- What incentives do you get for streaming on a given platform?
- Would you consider to stream more on a service like twitch.tv or youtube live?

Why?

- What sort of groups would you say your stream is marketed towards?
- Is there a specific age group or community you try to engage with?
- How long have you been streaming?
- Why did they start streaming in the first place?

Asking these questions will give an adequate amount of data from a primary source to answer how video game streaming has been impacted in the wake of a global pandemic.

## Forum Diving

In terms of finding data on what makes streamers popular, I turned to a forum diving method where I searched a forum website such as reddit.com and its sub fora (subreddits) of r/streaming, r/Twitch, r/Games, r/streamontwitch, r/Twitch\_startup, and subreddits for specific big time streamers asking questions to the community and sifting through currently active threads using the keywords: streaming, monetization, audience, stream building, twitch; engaging with the users. This also can cover any data not available from the interview phase as well. Forum diving allows for a much larger sample size and response rate than having to find, communicate with and make time for interviews with individual streamers, although it would be ideal to get it from a primary source. In addition, the answers were limited due to the amount of answers and voices that give time in forums, as well as the given experience per user of a given forum (i.e. beginner vs. expert in terms of experience). Questions to ask the communities while “forum diving” were:

- What makes a streamer’s audience?
- Are there any incentives to play certain games or types of games?

- What is the standard monetization of Twitch.tv?
- What are the basics to building a stream?
- What is the hardest part of creating and maintaining a stream service?

While conducting my research I have found the answers to all of the questions posed in this thesis through the aforementioned methods; interviews and forum diving on Reddit for information gathering, as well as generating my own graphics for creating a stream by using Adobe Illustrator. Interviewing the Twitch streamers was an overall positive experience in that the streamers were very cooperative and flexible, as well as provided an incredible amount of useful information to help frame the building of my own stream and understanding the inner workings of what it means to be a streamer, tips and tricks to the streaming scene, and providing key information of the monetization of streaming such as rates or what it means to be a Twitch.tv “affiliate”. As for the Reddit fora posts, the engaging posts generated by me are geared toward the communities [r/streaming](#), [r/Twitch](#), [r/Games](#), [r/streamontwitch](#), [r/Twitch\\_startup](#), with a more narrow scope. The posts in each fora were framed as:

“Hi everyone,

I am a Master Student doing my thesis on the impacts of the Covid19 Quarantine on streamer viewership/

motivations to start streaming. I was wondering if anyone in this community would like to share their experiences

from either side.

**Specifically for streamers:** What were your motivations to stream? Do you prefer one platform over another? What is your community/ target audience? Have you built a persona around your stream? Are you in it for hobby or money”

The question posed in this way is to announce the purpose of the post, alerting the users who chose to respond that this is a form of study being conducted for a thesis. All user’s personal information outside of their usernames are concealed and will not be mentioned. This premise was also given to the streamers who were interviewed and will only be referred to as their streaming usernames.

## Stream Generation

In order to fully grasp the process of streaming, I plan on experimenting with creating my own stream, even if it progresses to the fetal stage. This experiment will consist of building a stream from scratch using programs like adobe photoshop and illustrator to generate my stream graphics and compare this to Streamlabs, a service for streamers by Twitch, as well as other tools that I may find during this experimental journey. I understand that the stream I produce will not be a viral sensation nor generate revenue/ monetization immediately due to the nature of being affiliated with a service. In the case of Twitch.tv, one must have at least 100 subscribers to start to receive monetization at the lowest level. Some goals I will work toward are:

- Creating Branding
  - Logo
  - Stream Graphics

- Launch the stream
- Reach at least 10 followers
- Create a schedule

## Research Outcomes

### Interview Motivations

Interviewing the streamers was a wonderful experience, all of which were very willing to talk about their experiences both personally and professionally as streamers. Interestingly enough, the streamers were mainly interested in the occupation with the motivation to make friends, engage in a community and have fun, which was surprising until it was revealed how hard it is to become “affiliated” and actually make revenue from a streaming platform such as Twitch.tv. Affiliation is reaching a certain number of viewers and followers combined with a given amount of hours dedicated to a stream in a span of time. All of the streamers mentioned that it was unrealistic to expect to make money as an average streamer and it is unlikely to become “big” unless you go viral or play what is most popular in the moment. All of them also cater to older, mature audiences due to the language used by the streamers and the nature/content of the games played. (i.e. games with blood, violence, adult themes or explicit language used). The most interesting piece of information was how positive streaming is viewed in the realm of mental health. The streamer `The_Daft_Mau5` noted that they got into streaming during a darker period in their life and wanted an escape from life mentally. Streaming was the perfect outlet for them in order to have that positive human interaction with random strangers, building friendships and community just based off of playing a video

game (The\_Daft\_Mau5, personal communication, November 8th, 2020). All of the streamers interviewed had started streaming within the past year and a half with the exception of H3R0NS (personal communication, November 5th, 2020) who had been streaming for the past four to five years. Most of the streamers also had the intentions of streaming as a hobby since they already like video games to begin with but in addition to that shared motivation, H3R0NS went into streaming with the intention of getting better at gaming by reviewing his own clips, The\_Daft\_Mau5 had the intentions of escapism, Cece\_Lafluer and ScudsDavidson both just wanted to do what they loved. Out of the four audio interviews, Cece\_Lafluer was the only streamer who got into streaming also with the intention to make money out of their hobby.

## Realism in Monetization

Throughout the audio interviews, it was revealed that it is actually very difficult to actually do that, make money. Streaming on twitch only becomes lucrative if you dedicate more than four hours at a time to a given stream, you stream consistently daily, are affiliated with the service and have at least 50 to 100 subscribers. Once you have become affiliated with Twitch, only then will your stream have the ability to accept donations and subscribers. Subscriptions to a given stream vary depending on what kind of subscription is given. During our interview, Cece\_Lafluer (personal communication, November 6th 2020) had gone into her backend and uncovered that they only make \$13.41 from regular subscriptions, \$7.49 from Twitch Prime subscriptions, \$18.11 from gifted subscribers and \$7.24 multi-month and \$0.73 from ad revenue in a given month after reducing their hours. Typically streamers will receive half of the cost of a subscription. Twitch subscriptions work in three tiers (tier 1 - \$4.99, tier 2 - \$9.99 and

tier 3 - \$24.99) and can be limited to a one time subscription or multiple monthly subscriptions. This goes without saying that if you are popular enough to receive multiple monthly subscriptions, then you will start to see more income from subscriptions.

## Effect of Quarantine on Streaming Culture

The increase in subscriptions, viewership and interaction between streamers and their communities has been prevalent in the wake of the SARS-CoV-2 (COVID19) pandemic and quarantine. All streamers interviewed seem to acknowledge, to some extent, that their streams have received more viewership than previous accounts. This seems to correlate with the willingness to stream more due to “more free time” between viewers at home and streamers with more time to dedicate to their craft. When the streamers dedicate more time, they choose to play more games, work on their streams and seek new ways to reach audiences. In the case of H3R0NS, they wish they could spend more time outside of video games and try streaming other things like cooking or even tabletop games. However, the consensus of playing a table top style game is that it is hard to pull off in terms of gathering individuals to play on top of dedicating the necessary time for playing out the full game or even having multiple sessions. With the pandemic looming around us, there is great hesitance in trying to meet up or scheduling a time between streamers because of prior obligations and fear of contracting the virus.

When discussing the topic of marketing, Scudsdaavidson (personal communication, November 4th 2020) was the only streamer who said that they were working on their own graphics and not using an Open Broadcaster Software (OBS) like stream labs to generate graphics, animations and merchandise. Streamlabs seems to

be most popular with twitch streamers due to its flexible nature and low paywall. There are a lot of free elements that allow streamers to build and flesh out their streams for free but the more advanced and “cooler” effects and features for the streams are lodged behind that paywall. When experimenting with the software I found that my technical knowledge of the adobe suite was more than enough to generate graphics on par with what was listed on the software. Personally, although the items on the OBS were “cool” I feel it is more satisfying to create them on your own and really flex those creative muscles.

## Fora Motivations

When forum diving, responses I had received were interesting. Like H3R0NS, reddit user /u/PixelCatz turned to not only video games for their stream. Since they are a newfound graduate student in the wake of the COVID19 pandemic, they have been hit with, much like many other recent graduates, a lack of open positions in the workforce for them to come into post graduation. /u/PixelCatz (personal communication, November 10th 2020) mentioned how they use their MFA skills to their stream by streaming commission works, painting projects as well looking forward to other artistic works in the future. Other users such as /u/sierratostada (personal communication, November 10th 2020) fell into a sense of despair when the pandemic first arrived, forcing them into a “safe” life at home. This inspired them to start streaming along with their previous interest in video editing. Much like the interviewed streamers, they felt that it helped them escape from reality for a moment in a “breath of fresh air” while streaming and creating structure in their lives in this time of unprecedented uncertainty. Although many of the users do not exactly have a “community” or target audience,

many of them like the interviewed streamers cater to older audiences due to the innate amount of swearing that is a part of the older streamers vocabulary. A lot of the users also hope to meet new people, make friends and have social interaction opposed to making money where this would only be viewed as an extra bonus. One user /u/meetier (personal communication, November 10th 2020) reported starting their stream in August 2020 during the dip in COVID19 cases, spending \$200+ on web cameras, microphones and other equipment in order to launch their stream while /u/PixelCatz wanted to stream from other platforms such as the Nintendo Switch but it does not support Twitch.tv like the Sony Playstation 4 and Microsoft Xbox One do so addition screen capture cards are needed. /u/meetier noted that they totaled at roughly \$20 in income from their stream since then, showing that it is not very lucrative unless you have the viral exposure that many popular streamers have, stating “While money would be great I have no delusions of this ever being a real source of income.”

### Streaming “Best Practices”

/u/sierratostada (personal communication, November 10th 2020) also noted “I use Twitch right now, only because that’s just what I learned on, but I think the interface isn’t great for new streamers to get found.” much like what Cece\_Lafluer (personal communication, November 6th 2020) mentioned in our interview together as well. They stated that “the algorithms are s\*\*\*” meaning that they really only cater to who is popular and what games are trending. All of the streamers and Reddit users who responded noted that they only play what they want and hardly play what is recommended. The general consensus is that variety streaming is not the best for subscribers and viewers who are looking for particular types of content such as First Person Shooters (FPS) or

Massive Multiplayer Online Role Playing Games (MMORPGs) or Action/Adventure platforms to name a few. Having too much diversity in a given stream in a short period of time can negatively affect the likelihood of viewers coming back to your stream according to The\_Daft\_Mau5 (personal communication, November 8th, 2020). It was advised that one should stick to one genre or a couple games and build a community that way instead of trying to pursue what is most popular. With most games costing roughly \$20 to \$60 per game it would cut into any profits by a large margin to consistently do this as a business especially when first starting out.

With the global pandemic looming around us, starting and maintaining a live stream for video gaming would not be the most lucrative or beneficial business investment unless most of your time and external funds are dedicated to starting up and maintaining the business for, at the very least, the short run of the endeavor. Due to the factors of start up cost, to maintenance and recurring fees having to do with acquisition of new games and subscriptions to services if that route is chosen proves to put the streamer in the red in terms of profits. However, in terms of escape, social interaction and communicating with other like-minded individuals, streaming is great for this aspect. Times during this global pandemic are hard and trying on one's mental health and taking time to do things that make you happy are the most important, especially for both the interviewed streamers and the Reddit users who responded.

## Stream Branding

### Motivations

Bringing all of the culminated knowledge together, I developed my brand and stream. Branding is defined as: “a marketing practice in which a company creates a name, symbol or design that is easily identifiable as belonging to the company. This helps to identify a product and distinguish it from other products and services.” (Frediani et al., *What Is Branding And Why Is It Important For Your Business?* 2020). This continues with the reasoning of “Branding is important because not only is it what makes a memorable impression on consumers but it allows your customers and clients to know what to expect from your company. It is a way of distinguishing yourself from the competitors and clarifying what it is you offer that makes you the better choice. Your brand is built to be a true representation of who you are as a business, and how you wish to be perceived.” with my alias on Twitch.tv now being WackaWoot. The brand WackWoot is actually a derivative from a nickname that my father bestowed upon me as young child, “Wackawoo”. To me this nickname always represented childhood innocence where times were carefree and we had all the time in the world. That feeling is immortalized by doing something I love. Adding the “t” to form WackaWoot is a play on the sound “Woot Woot” for when individuals get excited. My hope is that my stream can get people excited to play, share and interact in this experience together.

## Brand Creation

As mentioned prior, the brand colors are inspired and derived from the artist Iron.Glacier's style of retro-3D coloring of blue and red with the addition of black, yellow and cyan. I had used the font DORAEMON, a sans-serif typeface that has the letter "W" with lips curved outward towards the outsides of the letter in both directions. Then I used the "W" letter as base to represent the brand and Wording of WackaWoot, layered and offset as Yellow, followed by Cyan, Blue then Red and capped with a centralized Black "W". The "W"s follow the pattern of warm colors (red and yellow) on the left and cool colors (blue and cyan) to the right, while in the center they mesh together and intertwine with a black "W" in the foreground creating the shape of the "W" appear out of the negative space when placed on a black background being highlighted in the positive space of the warm and cool colors. This color scheme is prevalent throughout the Wackawoot brand, in all borders for the stream and all merchandise created with the logo.

## Stream Creation

Once branding was created, I turned to Twitch Studio, the Twitch.TV open broadcast system that a live stream is based off of. The vanilla version allows you to start up your stream with default colors, text and imagery provided by Twitch, however, to create the fully custom experience and to establish the WackaWoot brand, I added all of my branding to the various pages. This includes not only the main screen, but also the "Be Right Back" default screen, "Chatting" screen and "Starting Soon" screen. In

order to build a given screen in Twitch Studio, the stream layout per page comes in the form of layers, starting with a background and layering it up with various elements both provided and customized such as countdowns, imagery, gifs, webcamera, content window, browser source, multimedia files, alerts, screen sharing, color gradients, chatbox and text just to name a few. On a main screen, the main elements are background, webcam screen and the focus of the stream, in this instance the video game window, and alerts. There is an option to put the chat window on the screen but I opted to start without it as to not distract from content, perhaps when when I gain more followers and have a more active chat or when I am doing a stream of something that I may ask the chat for their opinions will I then implement that feature. Be Right Back and Starting Soon screen both consist of mainly text and logo branding. When the time came to launch the stream, I posted on my social media accounts of instagram and twitter for my followers to join in on the fun with the message “Join me in the launch of my first stream for fun and a chill experience! We will be playing Destiny 2, follow me at twitch.tv/wackawoot!”

## Execution

For the first session, I played a total of 3 hours with a max of 5 viewers throughout the session. It was cool trying to engage with the chat although they were not very active. It was also a big day in the game Destiny where a “raid”, “a type of mission in massively multiplayer online role-playing games (MMORPGs) where a number of people attempt to defeat either: (a) another number of people at player-vs-player (PVP), (b) a series of computer-controlled enemies (non-player characters; NPCs) in a player-vs-environment (PVE) battlefield, or (c) a very powerful

boss (superboss). This type of objective usually occurs within an instance dungeon, a separate server instance from the other players in the game.” I felt that within this case it would not have been possible to obtain much more of an audience for those interested in the game and stream outside of those who I know who wanted to come and support the endeavor. Destiny 2 recently had a content update making it a popular game for streaming as an Action/MMORPG. While playing a user from chat, Noka, had joined me in doing a quest which was really cool to experience and interact with someone who I did not know prior. There were some funny moments and weird bugs that occurred during my time plays so they were clipped by a member of the audience which is now available on my clips section of my twitch profile. I also made them available to view on the stream section of the website that was built as a result of this capstone project.

## Website Creation

The website consists of four pages: home, capstone, stream and podcast. The home page is a breakdown of what WackaWoot as a brand is and what it means. The capstone page is a breakdown of what a capstone experience project is, what mine entails and a call to action to view the other two pages. On the stream page, you will find the elements of my stream, branding, merchandising, videos and schedule as well as a button link that bring the user directly to my twitch.tv profile. Within the podcast page, there is a brief description of the scope and purpose of the podcast and project surrounding it with the addition of a Javascript JQuery based audio player housing all four of the interview podcasts with the aforementioned streamers. I chose to follow the same color scheme as the branding throughout the page in order to solidify the brand in

the works. Each of the pages are a different accent color found within the brand where the home page is cyan, capstone is blue, stream is red and podcast is yellow. There were no real reasons in choosing that order, however I feel that cyan is more inviting than having red as the landing page color, which is more associated with danger and fiery attitudes. On the podcast page I chose to make the player a flat design and have the background of the player be cyan as well to complement the yellow background as a tertiary color combination. Within the stream page, their hosts schedule box is the twitch brand purple to represent that Twitch brand, I limited my schedule to days where I have more free time, especially after work and university related activities are completed. As it stands, the days to stream are Tuesdays, Thursdays from 5pm to 8pm EST and Saturdays from 3pm to 8pm.

Some of the biggest challenges were getting the javascript playlist to function correctly on the podcast page and having the HTML5 flexbox gallery for the branding on the stream page. There were many readings and tutorials on how to complete these sections, particularly the flexbox gallery. The formatting for the player was the hardest aspect but once reading through the coding and understanding how it worked made things easier. The flexbox gallery was difficult in its own right because of the nature of flexboxes and columns. The way I originally encoded the flexbox gallery was in percentages based on the screen to allow for a dynamic page without the use of media queries in the css however, the section only seemed to be properly formatted without breaking with set pixel values, up until discovering this issue filled me to the brim with frustration but once it was made clear what the issue was, everything fell into place.

## Conclusion

Throughout the process of learning about a stream, interviewing streamers and building a stream of my own, I uncovered all of the answers to the questions and objectives posed at the start of this project. It was uncovered that a majority of the streamers interviewed and surveyed do not look for personal gain nor monetization of their streams going into the streaming scene. The majority of the streamers look for a way to use their hobby to interact with others, gain common ground with their viewer base, connect on interpersonal levels, have fun and even act upon an escapism mentality. With that in mind, it feeds into the fact that most streamers do not think too much about who their audience is aside from like minded individuals and people of the same relative age group, marking their channels for mature audiences due to the nature of adults between content and language used. Most streamers interviewed had an account for at least 6 months and those who were surveyed had a minimum of 3 months in existence. The most experienced streamer interviewed was H3R0NS with 5 years in existence, who offered the most meaningful advice into building a stream and how to run it. His message was essentially be yourself, be consistent with a schedule and content as well as give yourself time for a break, especially if it is something you are doing as a hobby as to not burn yourself out “mental health is important”. All streamers, both new and pre-established noted an impact that the COVID-19 pandemic had on their streams. Mostly, they saw improvement in viewership since more people were at home in the time of the global shutdown that occurred earlier in 2020, we can expect the same as the new year draws closer and the cold environment allows for the virus to survive longer in the world and the inevitable uptick of cases occurs. It seemed

that none of the streamers interviewed had representation of agents or talent agencies, showing that in order for one to be in this position, they have to be popular enough to not only afford that service but also be popular enough to have an income to support streaming as a full time job. This goes without saying that the average streamer is self-made and self-promoted in order to reach their fan base and spread their influence, primarily through word of mouth and social media outlets like Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat and Instagram. It seemed very clear that video game streamers are willing to pursue other things outside of just video games, such as tabletop games like Monopoly or Uno and even topics such as cooking. In regards to games that must occur through means of in real life (IRL) interactions like the game battleship or Monopoly, the global pandemic has hindered streamers from pursuing these wishes because of the nature of the virus. Overall, interviewing the Scudsdavidson, H3R0Ns, Cece\_Lafluer, and The\_Daft\_Mau5 was an outstandingly positive experience. Hearing the perspective of active players in the industry and to connect with them on a personal level was such an amazing feeling that reflects how the viewers of their streams must feel when interacting with them when they are live. The information, tips and tricks provided to me by them in the interviews have been an invaluable source of data and inspiration that drove my generation of the stream under the WackaWoot brand.

The building and manifestation of the WackaWoot brand was something that I now feel was within me waiting to come out through the right methods and motivations. In this instance it was curiosity and the thirst for knowledge of how things work, I thank all that helped contribute to this process and project for that. Furthermore, building the website housing the WackaWoot Brand, Podcasts and Stream information was an

undertaking within itself. By the end of the project, it took a total of roughly 30 cumulative hours to complete the website outside of research prior. At this point I am excited to have the opportunity to show my work in a media that is something considered to be my native coding language developed through both my undergraduate and graduate student careers.

Please view the website here: <http://people.sunyit.edu/~martucn/index.html>

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