Valorant Against The World of FPS

Games have always changed across the different centuries of human existence. From the early existence of throwing dice and sticks [1] to nostalgic retro games, the concept of "games" has always existed, and will always continue to grow alongside mankind. Technology has evolved, and with that evolution comes the ability to make even more interactive and immersive games. Counter-Strike: Global Offensive was the biggest FPS game for the 2010s. A simple terrorist versus counter-terrorist game where the objective is to plant and detonate the bomb, or defeat the terrorists and defuse the bomb, depending on the side you were playing on. The tactical shooter genre blew up, due to CS:GO's massive success.

Riot Games found massive success when they released their multiplayer online battle arena (MOBA) named League of Legends. In 2019 however, they launched a closed beta test for a game temporarily titled Project A. The goal behind this project was to create a more casual game for players with an esports scene that still remains passionate. Project A was their attempt to dive into the tactical shooter market, and in June 2020, the game was released, under the name Valorant [2]. However, the uncertainty of Valorant's success was very prevalent.

This uncertainty was due to the already saturated first person shooter market. The leading game was the aforementioned Counter Strike, but there were plenty that also had its fill of the market. Another notable example is Overwatch. While there are much more, these two are going to be the main comparisons when discussing Valorant against the World of First Person Shooters. This is due to Counter Strike's similarity in objectives, and Overwatch's character ability pool. While

each game has its unique features, comparisons will be made to argue how Valorant stands out or falls short compared to other FPS games.

Before discussing any main points, clarifications about each game must be made, as they are all unique to one another. The main game in Counter Strike, as mentioned before, is terrorists against counter-terrorists. Terrorists must plant a bomb on a target location and defend it until it detonates. Meanwhile, Counter-Terrorists must either eliminate all terrorists before the bomb is planted, or defuse the bomb once planted. With five players on both teams assigned randomly, they fight in a best of 30 rounds [3].

Blizzard Entertainment released a first-person shooter game in 2016 under the name "Overwatch". It is a multiplayer game, set in a distant future in which robots and humanity are under siege, necessitating a team to be created to fight back. The name of this organization is "Overwatch", and each member had unique abilities or skills players could utilize in game. Teams were divided into two, with six players on each side.

Within the game, there are four different game modes. The first is "Assault", or as players call it "2CP". In this mode, teams alternate between offense and defense, where the offense aims to capture two points under a time limit. Second is "Escort", where there is an offense and defense once again. The offense has to escort a mobile payload through three preset checkpoints. The payload moves only when uncontested, as when there is opposition nearby, it will not move, or it will be stationary, depending on how many players there are. Third would be "Hybrid", which is a combination of the two previously mentioned modes. Here, the attackers need to capture a

point before the payload can be escorted. Last is "Control", where both teams fight to control the central location of a map. The first team to win two out of three sections would gain the overall victory. [4] Your team composition would usually have a mix of DPS (Damage per Second), Tanks, and Support. DPS is a role primarily filled by the players wanting to dish out the most damage. Tanks are characters that would absorb damage and become a shield for their team Supports prioritize either healing their team or "buffing" their team, a term which would usually mean increasing their damage, or other ways of giving their teammates an advantage.

Last, but not least, is Valorant. Riot's venture into the FPS genre is a team based five versus five bomb defuse type of game, similar to Counter Strike's iteration. However, there are different characters, or "agents", as the game calls it, that the player can choose from. As of writing, there are 23 agents that the player can use. The game introduces two parallel Earths, the Alpha Earth, where a resource called "Radianite" has been found, and it is in abundance. The other Earth, Omega Earth, also has found Radianite, but the resource has been run dry, and they are struggling to survive. Exposure to this resource has caused some abilities to manifest in people, which called for the need to form the "Valorant Protocol". Omega Earth, however, utilizes their Valorant agents to travel to Alpha Earth and plant the "spike", which would teleport the Radianite in the area back to their world. Alpha Earth's Valorant agents are tasked with defending the area, and making sure that no more Radianite is stolen. The lore goes much further and deeper, but that would be the basic premise of the gameplay structure.

Valorant also has an agent category system. Four categories of agents exist: Duelists, Sentinels, Initiators, and Controllers [6]. These agents have different specialties that may bring their team

an advantage to win a round. Duelists are the aggressive agents. Their abilities focus on gathering space for their team, and trying to get kills in order to gain an advantage. This class may be the one to dictate the pace of the round and control the game. The most popular example is Jett, a Korean duelist that has the ability to dash towards a certain direction and reduce the distance between her and the enemy [7]. Next is Sentinels, a category focused on maintaining space. Their specialty is the ability to hold a part of the map that their team already has control over. For example, Cypher's main ability is tripwires that will reveal enemies upon contact [8]. Initiators can gather information on enemy locations or assist a duelist initiate onto a site. Sova, a Russian agent, can shoot an arrow that will reveal all enemies within line of sight [9]. Lastly is controllers, agents who can smoke areas of the map off to reduce the chokepoints and allow easier fights. They can reduce the amount of angles their team has to check before attacking. Brimstone, for example, has three smokes in his arsenal [10].

The best way to begin is by comparing the mechanics of the game, the very backbone that holds up each game. For this section, a comparison to Counter Strike is more relevant due to the fact that they are similar in styles of play. Valorant is a team based game in which economy, gunplay, and team play are incredibly important. Players start on the randomly predetermined side, and are given thirty seconds (aside from the first round, which gives forty seconds instead) to purchase a combination of guns and abilities [5]. The economy system is built up when a round is over and a winner is determined, which gives teams a different amount of money based on objectives completed throughout the round (planting the spike, kills) and of course whether they win the round or not.

Once a round starts, players move out, trading blows with one another, and exchanging pieces of information through abilities or duels. Players take space through the map, and the attackers hit the site they think is weaker, plant the spike, and defend it until it explodes. Defenders, during this time, must try to figure out which site attackers are going to hit, and attempt to stop it or defuse the spike. Players can also gather "ultimate orbs" for their character to build up to their ultimate ability. These are obtained through either killing an opponent, dying, or collecting an ultimate orb which are spread throughout the map. Team compositions can also be a large factor in how a game might go due to the different agent types.

Now we move on to Counter Strike's mechanics. In contrast to Valorant's best of 13, Counter Strike instead has a best of 16. The main method of how a game goes is similar to Valorant, in terms of the attacker and defender objectives. Map control and the trading of information is the integral backbone of winning a round. However, one large contrast between Valorant and Counter Strike is the latter's lack of agent abilities. Instead, everyone plays similar characters that can purchase incendiary, smoke, and flash grenades to play the map. This stark difference in available utility is the major difference between the two.

Thus thematically, in terms of a macro play, Valorant is a much more challenging game due to the insane amount of different abilities that require you to plan much further ahead. As there are five different controllers, that equates to five different ways to "smoke off" the map, or to split up areas of the map. The same can be said for all the agents within each class, as they all have many abilities and different ways to play around them. The "meta", which is short for "most effective tactics available", is always changing, especially since agent abilities and maps are

always getting changed and reworked. Counter Strike, however, seldom does these kinds of changes. Some maps would require you to smoke a certain area to take a specific part of the map, maybe you need to gather space in three spots, or you need to take fights towards a lane [11]. The way you play never truly changes, which is why it is much more difficult to control the flow and pace of the game in Valorant.

The second point regards the character design and abilities within each game. As mentioned before, Counter Strike does not have any agent variety whatsoever. You load onto the map, and you have the exact same utility options as the other nine players within the game. Overwatch and Valorant, however, have different roles and abilities, which makes for an interesting case to cover.

Overwatch's game is incredibly fast paced. Regardless of the gamemode, the overall pace of the match would be extremely quick due to the massive amounts of damage characters can do and how fast objectives can be completed. Overwatch requires fast reactions, thinking, and adaptations as the ability to change characters in the middle of the game is an option. Players need to defend the payload, to hold down a part of the map, and once someone is eliminated, they respawn quickly so they can return and recontest the areas.

Valorant, on the other hand, is much slower paced, reminiscent of Counter Strike instead. Not only is it round oriented, but since Valorant's objective is more towards map control and outthinking the enemy, players tend to slowly play the map, gather information, maintain control of areas before executing or retaking a site. However, once a player is eliminated during a round,

they do not come back (with the exception of Sage's "ultimate", which can revive a character, though it requires a large amount of ultimate orbs). This forces players to be smarter with their lives, as a death will greatly impact the overall firepower of that specific round.

Abilities are incredibly important in both games. In Overwatch, the main reason for its intensity and face pace is due to abilities being the character's central identity. Rapid cooldowns and a diverse amount of skills are the reason for its insane pace, which forces players to master their primary weapons (which is preset for each character) alongside their abilities. Valorant's abilities are also an integral part of each character. However, they are designed to complement the gunplay instead of overshadow it. This slower pace requires players to carefully plan how they use their skills in contrast to Overwatch's constant flashy engagements.

So, Overwatch demands fast decision-making with reactions, while Valorant rewards a much more strategic and calculated support. Which point is better would lie in the player's preference in rapid engagements or strategic, methodical depth within Valorant's gameplay. Both games need a strong sense of adaptability, despite showcasing a different need for it. This is another reason why Valorant stands out in its uniqueness with Overwatch.

The next point to make would be the graphics of the games. This is a quick point to make due to its simplistic nature. Counter Strike, Valorant, and Overwatch all have rather different styles. Counter Strike implements a more "realistic" visual, as realism is one of the main focal points players pride themselves upon. Both Overwatch and Valorant, on the other hand, use a more cartoonish style for their worlds. One could wonder then, what exactly would set the styles of

Valorant and Overwatch apart. Well, simply put, Valorant goes for a more middle ground approach for their visuals, while Overwatch exaggerates its palettes and design to create a unique identity. This is not a bad aspect, due to the fact that Overwatch is a much faster paced and team oriented game. Valorant's approach makes sense as it has unique abilities yet straightforward gameplay.

The final point is the esports scene of each game. The most fair way to compare this would be to look at the most recent events, as Counter Strike: Global Offensive held its last tournament before it shut down, Valorant Champions 2023 (Valorant's largest annual event) just concluded, and the Overwatch World Championship also recently ended.

Counter Strike's last tournament is called the BLAST Paris Major 2023. According to escharts.com, the prize pool is 1.25 million USD. The event had a peak viewership of 1.5 million viewers, and had an average of 507 000 viewers. Valorant's most recent tournament is Champions Los Angeles. Evil Geniuses were the winners, with Paper Rex being the runner ups. The event peaked at 1.29 million viewers, and an average viewership of 491 000 viewers, which is relatively close considering the game is still in its infancy. The Overwatch World Cup, on the other hand, had a peak viewership of 318 000, and averaged at around 129 000 viewers.

So we can certainly draw some conclusions from these statistics. Esports is a massive market, and much can be gained from it. A lot of people find it enjoyable, as the suspense and drama is one of the core values that many appreciate. A lot of viewers enjoy watching the players, and the aesthetic beauty of it is simply worth watching [12]. Now for the numbers, it is clear Counter

Strike is the leader in terms of FPS esports, with Valorant coming close. Thus, it would be logical to say "Counter Strike" has the best esports scene. However, this statement is true if we were only considering the offline events.

Esports is often being streamed online, and popular streamers would "co–stream" the event, another word for streaming the event and providing their own commentary for their viewers. One popular Valorant streamer is Tarik, an ex-CSGO player who managed to win the Boston major. Many viewers enjoy watching his take on games, as he often has more viewers than the Valorant channel. However, even if you are a small streamer with one or two viewers, while you will not be an official partner, you are still allowed to co-stream games. The same can be said for the Overwatch League, On the other hand, with Counter Strike, as long as you are a large channel, co-stream permissions are no problem. However, small channels averaging less than 500 viewers or so have an incredibly low chance to obtain the permissions [11]. This is because most Counter Strike tournaments are outsourced to different organizers, thus creating complications when requesting access.

So, while Counter Strike may have higher viewership, the ability to co-stream and grow the scene's online presence is much more prevalent with Valorant. This allows much better growth for the esports scene, and a more sustainable ecosystem for the game. This has helped Valorant gain a better brand identity as a game, which also propelled its success [13].

In conclusion, games have been simply growing at an incredible rate throughout the past years. Counter-Strike: Global Offensive was a dominant giant in the first-person shooter genre, which

helped set the stage for Riot Games to enter the market with Valorant. Using unique agents and abilities, it managed to stand out and gain a large following over the past three years. CS:GO focuses on its gunplay, movement, and economy. Valorant prefers abilities to influence gunplay and map control. Overwatch goes for the ability focused, fast pace engagements. With its esports, thanks to Valorant allowing co-streaming, the platform is more accessible and inclusive, allowing for its growth over time.

Each discussed FPS game has its own unique strength. CS:GO's golden legacy, Valorant's rapid growth, and Overwatch's interesting gameplay cater to the diverse FPS market preferences. As the gaming market continues to evolve, Valorant does stand out while still making space for evolution within the competitive gaming landscape.

References:

[1] Brewster, P. G. (1970). The earliest known list of games: Some comments. *Acta Orientalia, 23*, 10. https://doi.org/10.5617/ao.5305

[2] Moore, B. (2023, September 13). *When did valorant release?*. Esports.gg. https://esports.gg/guides/valorant/when-did-valorant-release/

[3] *Counter-strike: Global offensive*. Counter-Strike: Global Offensive - Valve Developer Community. (n.d.). https://developer.valvesoftware.com/wiki/Counter-Strike:_Global_Offensive

[4] DeMartino, J. (n.d.). *Overwatch 101: What you need to know about Blizzard's team-based shooter*. ESPN. https://www.espn.com/esports/story/_/id/28960008/overwatch-101-need-know-blizzard-team-based-shooter

[5] Richard Wilcox, S. H. (2022a, August 23). *Valorant Economy Guide - Valorant Guide*. IGN. https://www.ign.com/wikis/valorant/Valorant_Economy_Guide

[6] Richard Wilcox, S. H. (2022b, September 7). *Concepts: Roles in Valorant - Valorant Guide*. IGN. https://www.ign.com/wikis/valorant/Concepts:_Roles_in_Valorant

[7] *Valorant agents: Jett, a duelist from South Korea*. VALORANT. (n.d.). https://playvalorant.com/en-us/agents/jett/

[8] *Valorant agents: Cypher, a Sentinel from Morocco*. VALORANT. (n.d.-a). https://playvalorant.com/en-us/agents/cypher/

[9] *Valorant agents: Sova, an initiator from Russia*. VALORANT. (n.d.-d). https://playvalorant.com/en-us/agents/sova/

[10] *Valorant agents: Brimstone, a controller from the USA*. VALORANT. (n.d.-a). https://playvalorant.com/en-us/agents/brimstone/

[11] YouTube. (2023). *CS2 Vs Valorant - Which Game Is Better In 2023? YouTube*. Retrieved November 13, 2023, from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_n-U85IT0gM.

[12] Xiao, M. (2020). Factors Influencing eSports Viewership: An Approach Based on the Theory of Reasoned Action. Communication & Sport, 8(1), 92-122. https://doi.org/10.1177/2167479518819482

[13] [Tylerranger22]. (2023, June). Can anyone co-stream CSGO events just without the broadcast but with the demo? [Online forum post]. Reddit.https://www.reddit.com/r/GlobalOffensive/comments/15aa86h/can_anyone_costream_csgo_events_just_without_the/

[14] Alexander, J., & Hidayat, D. (2022). The effect of perceived quality, perceived enjoyment, and social influence toward brand loyalty of Valorant. *Journal of Business, Management, and Social Studies*, *2*(1), 1–8. https://doi.org/10.53748/jbms.v2i1.30

[15] Blast.tv Paris Major 2023 / statistics - escharts.com. (n.d.). https://escharts.com/tournaments/csgo/blasttv-paris-major-2023

[16] Valorant Champions 2023 / statistics - escharts.com. (n.d.). https://escharts.com/tournaments/valorant/valorant-champions-2023-valorant

[17] Overwatch World Cup 2023 / statistics - escharts.com. (n.d.). https://escharts.com/tournaments/ow/overwatch-world-cup-2023