

ESPORTS BRANDING: A PRELIMINARY LITERATURE REVIEW

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Outline

- Introduction
- Problem Statement
- Literature
- Methodology
- Data Analysis
- Insights
- Conclusion

Introduction

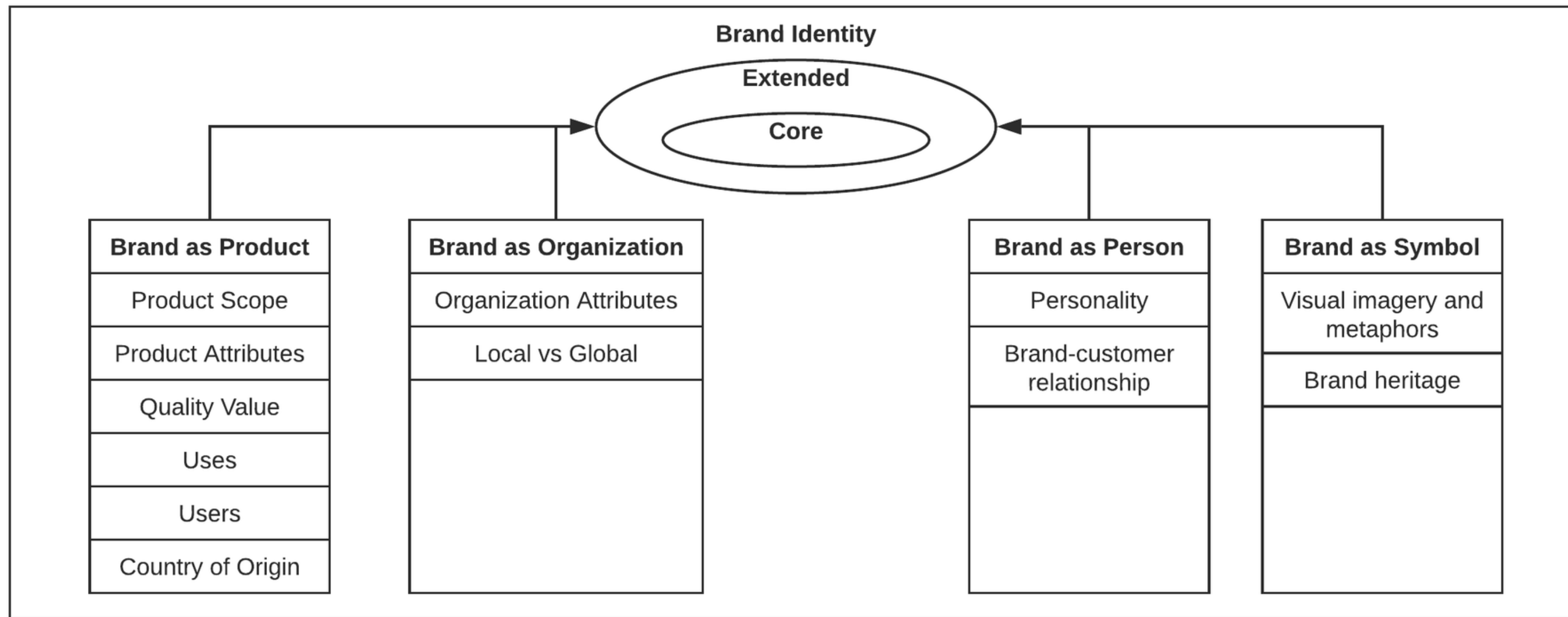
The field of digital sponsorship, specifically in the field of eSports, is one that requires further investigation, according to various authors (Huettermann, Trail, Pizzo & Stallone 2020), (Elasri-Ejjaberi, Rodriguez-Rodriguez, Sergio, Aparicio-Chueca & Pilar 2020)

This research will thus explore the current state of the literature regarding Branding in eSports, and more specifically the link between Game and Level Design and Brand Placement in eSports.

Problem Statement

To what extent has the link between Game and Level Design and Brand Placement in eSports been explored in the literature?

Brand Identity Model



Adapted from: (Aaker & Joachimsthaler 2012)

Literature

The field of Digital Sponsorship is still nascent, but there is a growing body of literature exploring various aspects of Digital Sponsorship.

Authors are generally commenting on the lack of detailed research within this field and performing their own exploratory literature reviews (Elasri-Ejjaberi et al. 2020).

Comparing Digital Sponsorship to traditional forms of Sports Sponsorship (Huettermann et al. 2020)

Exploring the possibility of Brand Harm and Digital Sponsorship (Freitas, Contreras-Espinosa & Álvaro Pereira Correia 2019)

Methodology

Data sources are highly mediated, but unstructured, using the mixed methods framework of Plowright (Plowright 2011)

Brand Identity will be used as the primary categories for classification (Aaker & Joachimsthaler 2012)

Themes will be tabulated, summarised and discussed, especially to identify any existing gaps in the literature. The themes will also be linked to Aakers Brand Identity model

Search term: esports branding

Date range: Since 2020

Data Analysis

In this preliminary phase: eight sources were analysed in detail. It was decided to stop after these sources as **(a)** this was only a preliminary investigation, **(b)** high quality sources had been identified, and **(c)**, theme saturation had been reached at this point.

content	9
influencers	9
livestream	8
social media	7
sponsorship	6
player brand	5
as Person	5
engagement	5
authenticity	4
demographics	4
non-endemic	4
branding	4
ROI	3

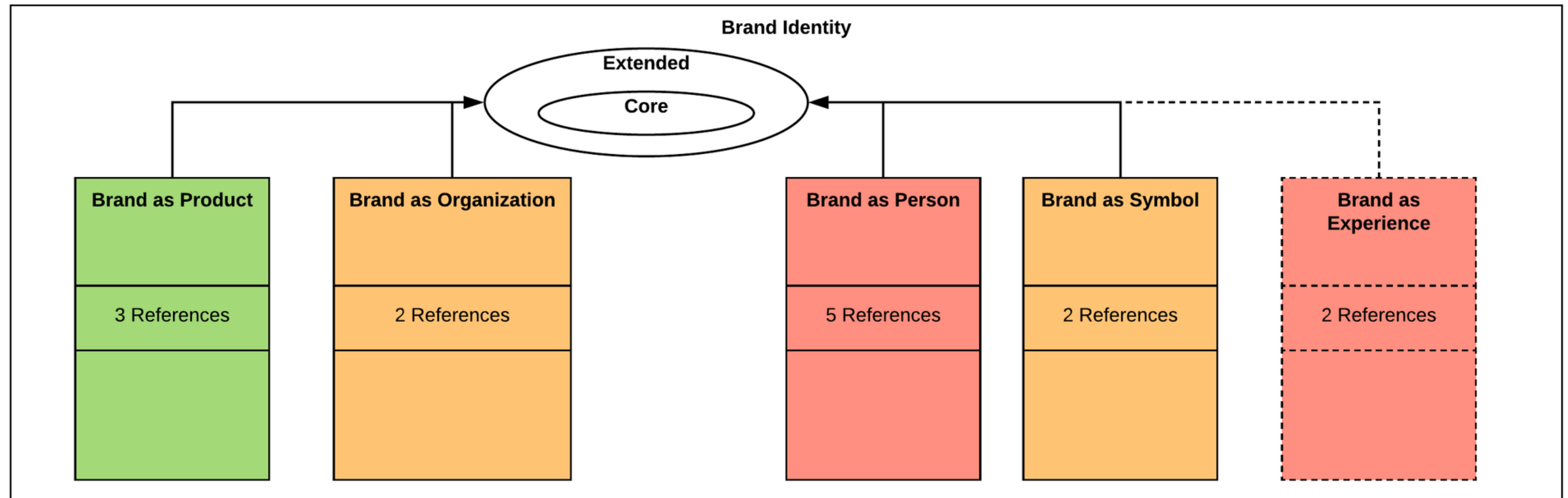
Data Analysis II

The only aspect of Aaker's Brand model that appears in this top 10 is "the Brand as a Person", and the relationship the consumer has with the Brand. This aspect gets a little muddled as this deals both with the sponsor's brand, the game's brand and the player/teams' brand(s).

The most important aspects are all related to the content produced by players, via livestreaming and social media, that enhance themselves, their teams and their sponsors as a brand. This content must be engaging and authentic.

Two other interesting themes snuck into the top 10, namely the issues of endemic vs. non-endemic brands and the question of ROI for sponsors of eSports

Brand Identity Model



Adapted from: (Aaker & Joachimsthaler 2012)

Insights

- **Content is King**
- **Players need to manage their Personal Brands**
- **Experience is more important than Product**
- **Content and Experience must be Authentic**
- **Non-endemic brands need to work harder**
- **eSports has a dynamic but complicated ecosystem**
- **Streaming and social media are primary channels**
- **Not apparent link between Branding and Level Design**

Q & A

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