

Overview

Esports operates primarily through chosen aliases, but there's no systematic study to examine the importance and functions of these usernames. This dissertation fills that gap, drawing on different pathways such as identity theory, chosen name scholarship and esports branding.

Question and Aims

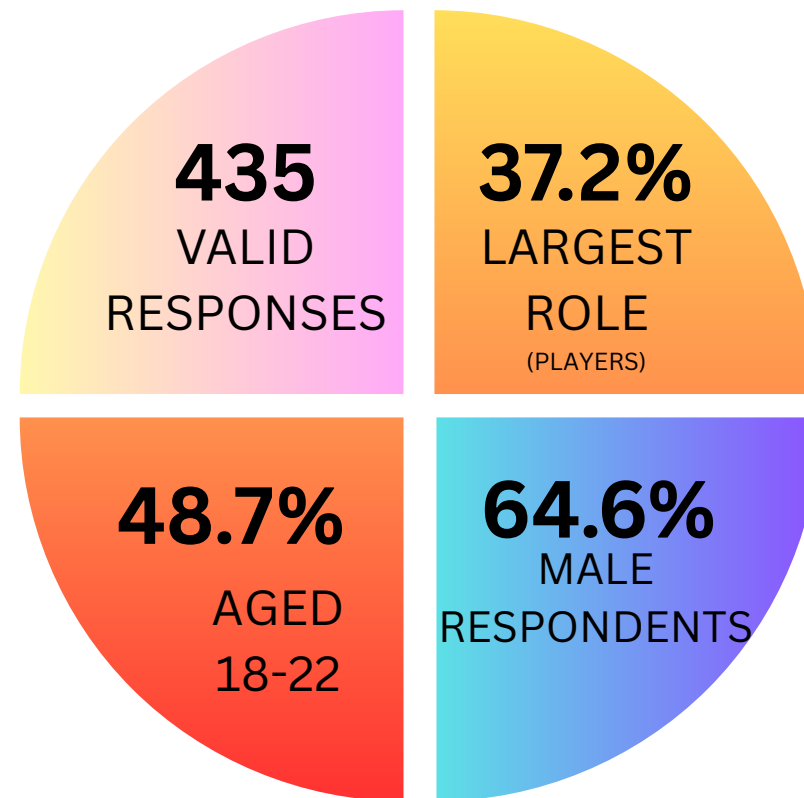
How do esports usernames impact participants across dimensions of identity, marketability, performance and persona and how can we utilise them as tools within the esports industry?

- ★ Examine how esports participants relate to their chosen usernames
- ★ Investigate the commercial and marketability functions usernames serve within the industry
- ★ Explore how username characteristics, demographics and experience shapes that relationship

Methodology

Positivist because findings are generalisable and social reality is measurable
Quantitative, cross-sectional self-completion questionnaire.
435 valid responses across 7 esports industry roles
20-item likert scale across 4 themes : Performance, marketability, persona and perception.
Frequency analysis, descriptive statistics, Spearman correlation, Mann-Whitney U, Chi-Square, and skewness normality checks.

Sample



Implications

Esports usernames are not professional aliases but they are authentic expressions of self that accrue real identity and brand value over time
The chosen name literature (transgender affirmation, drag identity) provides a powerful and underutilised framework for understanding username attachment
Corporate attempts to change or rebrand player usernames risk meaningful damage to player welfare, audience relationships, and brand equity
Non-binary identity and chosen names are deeply intertwined, with implications for inclusive industry practice
Future research should employ longitudinal and qualitative methods to capture the full narrative complexity of username identity development

'The username is not a mask. It is the person.'

Common Findings

1. Usernames are considered critically important - 81.8% of people agreed that having a chosen name is important.
2. Username retention is near-universal - 98.4% of respondents intend to keep their name long-term and 57.2% have already had it for 6+ years.
3. Usernames are self-expression, not an alter-ego - 61.1% agreed their username reflects their personality but 66.1% disagreed that they adopt a different persona.
4. Usernames function as memorable brand assets - 81.7% found their username memorable to audiences. Brand equity is built independently.
5. Strong resistance to name change - 73.1% disagreed that they would change their name.
6. Masculine username skew exceeds male sample proportion - 64.6% of respondents identified as male but the proportion of masculine names is about 15% higher, suggesting women adopt masculine usernames, reflecting the industry's masculine domination

Unique Findings

1. Non-binary participants have the highest marketability score - the gender neutrality of their usernames has ranked them highest in all 5 of the MARKETABILITY questions.
2. Players report lower real-life confidence from their username than others - Mann-Whitney U test shows that non-players associate their username with real life confidence whereas competitive players don't suggesting usernames carry a greater professional weight for those outside of playing.
3. Personal meaning correlates with gender signalling - usernames with high personal significance tend to signal a specific gender a lot more.
4. Username-personality aligns grows with time - people who have used their username for longer have a higher connection to their username suggesting that the longer someone is within esports, the more their usernames become genuinely integrated into their identity.

Framework

Names are embedded in self-concept, social recognition, and group membership: Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Stryker, 1968)
Self-chosen names, when publicly enacted, become powerful sites of identity affirmation, drawing parallels with transgender and drag performance scholarship: Chosen Name Literature (Russell et al., 2018; Campana et al., 2022)
The male-dominated esports environment shapes naming norms and creates more complex identity landscapes for non-male participants: Gender Dynamics (Spears & Lea, 1994; Roccas & Brewer, 2002)
Usernames are genuine commercial assets built on narrative authenticity, accumulating brand equity that functionally belongs to the player: Branding Literature (Goffman, 1990; Zarrella, 2010; Chaudhary, 2022)