

# Chapter 17

## The Fall of the Fourth Wall: Designing and Evaluating Interactive Spectator Experiences

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### ABSTRACT

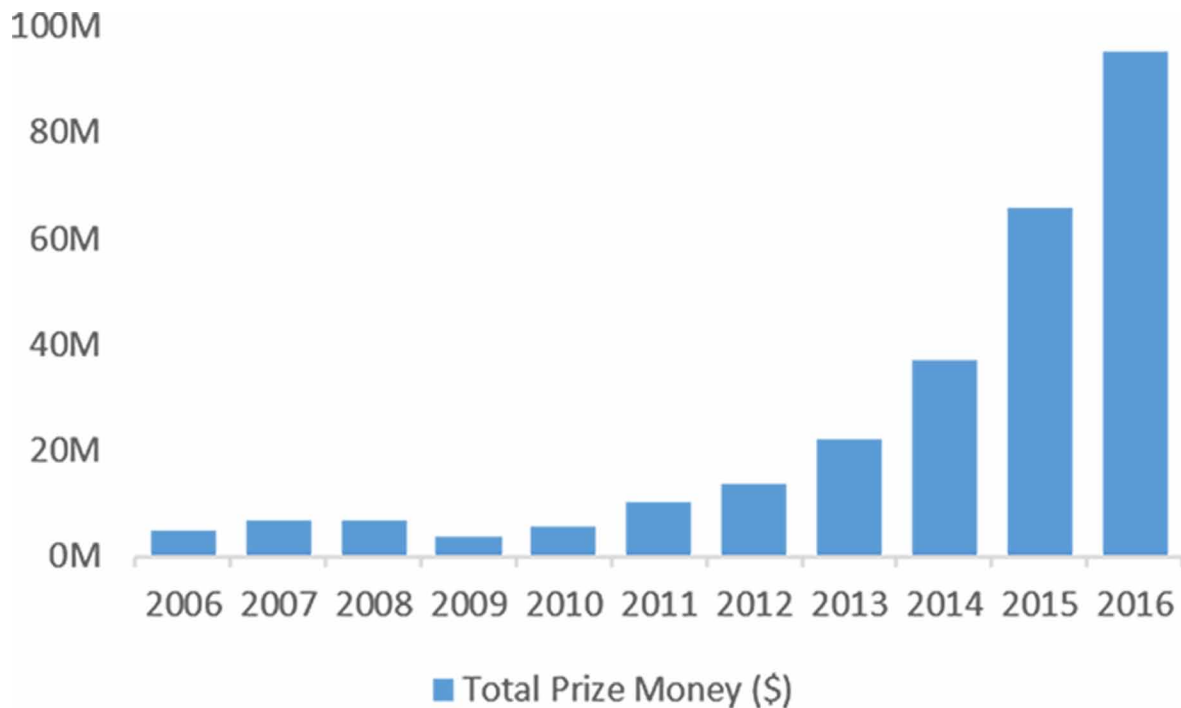
*Over the past several years, the live-streaming of digital games has experienced a vast increase in popularity, coinciding with the rise of eSports as an entertainment medium. For a rapidly growing audience, streamed content provides material from an ever-increasing roster of games, tournaments, and special events. Recently, streaming platforms, game developers, and professional players have experimented with the inclusion of viewer interaction through mechanisms such as chat, broadcast messages, donations, and voting systems. With the advent of these mechanisms, the concept of game viewership has entered a transitory period; while still largely focused on consumption, for many spectators, the viewing experience is no longer an entirely passive act. The idea of interactive spectatorship (the authors refer to it as Spectator-players) carries the potential for audience members to engage with content at a much deeper level, participating actively in a novel form of entertainment and contributing to an enriched gaming community. This novel form of gaming interaction poses interesting challenges for game designers, as it requires design considerations to meet the needs of players, passive viewers, and active audience members alike. In this paper, the authors examine the opportunities and challenges presented by the design of interactive spectator experiences. Ultimately, they propose a series of design guidelines aimed at the exploration of development in the area of interactive spectator experiences.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Although eSports are not a new phenomenon, their popularity has surged in recent years. Competitive gaming has seen a drastic increase in players, tournaments, and prize money over the past few years (eSports Earnings, 2017) (Figures 1, 2, and 3). In terms of total revenue, eSports generated \$325 million in 2015, a figure projected to increase to over \$1 billion by 2019 (Newzoo, 2016). This is staggering, given that many consider the beginning of eSports to have occurred in 1997 at the Red Annihilation tournament for Quake (id Software LLC, 1996), with just over 2000 participants. ESports initially focused on first-person shooters (FPS), sports games, and arcade games, but quickly adopted other genres, notably real-time-strategy (RTS) with the release of StarCraft: Brood War (Saffire Corporation & Blizzard Entertainment Inc, 1998). The nature of competitive games released in the late 1990s and 2000s allowed for fast-paced and compelling gameplay attracting both players and observers (Nagpa, 2015).

*Figure 1. Total prize money (in dollars) by year*



While there have been some issues in terms of socially legitimizing eSports (such as public perception and the differentiation between eSports and traditional sports) (Skubida, 2016), it is important to understand that despite the differences in play spaces and levels of physical exertion, both forms of competition have many common elements. On some level, the eSport industry takes many cues from traditional sport industries, including professional team structures and sponsorship deals (Schmidt & Shreffler, 2015). Commonalities between spectators and followers of sports and eSports exist as well, as Schmidt and Shreffler sought to identify motivations for eSport consumption using an existing analysis on traditional sports fandom (Trail & James, 2001) as part of their theoretical basis. In contrast to some

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