

Abstract

This Master's thesis focuses on the roles of Czech gaming streams and their online communities in lives of their members during Covid-19 pandemic. The thesis aims to describe the ways in which streamers and online communities influence opinions of their members regarding the pandemic and how streams fit into viewers' everyday lives. Streaming is put into context of gaming as a spectator activity and concepts of opinion leadership, parasocial relationships, and online communities. The main part of thesis is dedicated to mixed methods research, which was split into three parts. In the first part, the author surveyed opinions and values of Twitch viewers through quantitative online questionnaire. In the next parts, she conducted qualitative interviews with streamers and viewers. These interviews were used to gain context and deeper understanding of the researched phenomenon. Based on the empirical findings, the influence of streamers and online communities on their opinions regarding the pandemic seems to be quite marginal. Streamers and especially online communities however played a big social role – they substituted leisure and social activities of respondents and gaming streams along with community chats became a place to escape from reality of everyday lives or talk through their problems in a semi-anonymous place.