

eSports: A New Era of Spectator Games

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Abstract

The purpose of the present study is to apply Barnard's Theory of Authority to Historically, eSports is the formalization of competitive play for video games. This industry has seen enormous growth in recent years. Different forms of businesses are attempting to enter the eSports market, ranging from videogame developers, professional team organizations, and corporate sponsors. Because of this growth, understanding why players participate in eSports is essential to the industry. It is common to assume that motivations for eSports will match motivations for other industries, such as traditional sports. While this provides a baseline for motivations, it is necessary to study the industry itself, not only use preexisting models. Based on a review of existing research in the field of eSports, important driving forces include accessibility, competitiveness, and socialization. Accessibility includes pricing models and media in which players can spectate and participate. Competitiveness includes players improving their skill, participating in tournaments, and equality. Socialization includes a sense of community, playing with friends, and community created content. These forces were examined in the present study. This study involved the creation and distribution of a survey online with questions pertaining to motivation and participation in eSports. The survey was distributed online, with a total of 750 respondents. The majority of respondents were males, 18-25 years of age. Results of the data analysis indicate that achievement and social factors are two main needs satisfied by participating in eSports, and most users who responded to the survey preferred to view eSports via the Internet over any other medium.

Based on the data analysis gained from the survey, some general conclusions can be drawn about H1a. Achievement factors, such as self-improvement, competition, and climbing ranked ladders, are important aspects of eSports and are part of the motivation for participating. The same conclusion can be drawn about the social aspect of eSports, such as community and a connection with others.

Perhaps, a more accurate conclusion, due to a lack of low engagement responses, cannot be drawn from this data for H1b. Based on what little data was gathered on the low engagement side of the spectrum, it appeared that achievement was more important overall, but this may be inaccurate.

The second specific research hypothesis (H2), that eSports participants prefer to use the Internet for eSports, was supported by the data collected. Most respondents preferred to use the Internet over any other medium for participating in eSports. This is likely due to social factors and interaction with others, convenience, eSports being a mostly online event, and that most eSports participants have a computer. It is important to note that this conclusion may be biased, as the survey was conducted online and the respondents may be more likely to use prefer the Internet over other media.

There are a number of dynamics interacting simultaneously when exploring the various sets of motivational factors associated with eSports. The field of fantasy sports has dealt with motivational factors as well, but few have points to the commercial implications of such research to increase fan engagement. As the study of eSports matures to include globalization standards and measures of quality in delivery systems, there is little doubt that providers of such program need to gain greater control of what truly constitutes a quality experience from the fan's perspective. Exploring the measurable aspects of quality engagement should result in a firm's ability to measure and increase customer trust and loyalty in the company; hence, greater profitability and happier, more satisfied fans.

One significant limitation to this study is the lack of diversity among the sample. Most respondents, as indicated earlier, were males in the age range of 18-25. This may not represent the entire population. The survey was also conducted anonymously, and while it is likely that responses are essentially unbiased, it is possible they are

falsified as the researchers could not physically verify who the respondents were completing the surveys. Another limitation to this study is the subjective use of Likert scales. Respondents likely based answers to questions on different criteria, causing inaccurate results.

KEY WORDS: *Empirical, eSports, gaming industry, marketing, motivational research.*

Relevance to Marketing Practitioners: This case study is relevant to marketers and researchers in dealing with motivational issues associated with the exponential growing eSports discipline.

TRACK: Sport Marketing