Study on How Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivations Influence Chinese Online Esports Viewership

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Abstract. As a spectator sport, Esports has attracted more than half a billion viewers worldwide and significant investment from endemic and non-endemic brands, which further booms the economic development of the Esports industry. However, as to what the intrinsic motivations are, and how different extrinsic motivations are behind Esports online viewers’ consumption, are still not well studied currently. The purpose of this study is to explore and analyze internal and external motivations that influence Chinese Esports online viewership and consumption, providing recommendations for Esports brands and industrial enterprises to advance their business performance. An online questionnaire is conducted to assess the impact of the motivational variables. Findings resulted from the quantitative study are: 1) for intrinsic motivations, enjoyment has been identified to be the dominating factor for participants playing Esports games, while knowledge acquisition or skill improvement, vicarious sense of achievement and socialization opportunities or friends’ bonding have been recognized to be three main driving forces for people watching Esports content; 2) among four extrinsic motivational variables, only streaming platforms demonstrated having less influence on Esports online viewership; streamers, incentive mechanism and interaction are discovered to be the important roles influencing the consumption of Esports online audiences; 3) the study also examined participants’ attitudes towards brand promotion (advertising) in-platform, the results show that although most respondents have a distaste for advertising in-platform, they are more likely to accept brands or products recommendations from their favorite streamers.

Keywords: Chinese Esports Online Viewers; Motivations; Brand Promotion; Marketing.

1. Introduction

1.1 Overview of Esports Evolution

With the incredible growth of the global Esports market over the past decade, Esports has become the “new addiction” for many specialties worldwide from the economists to the academics. Although there are still some skeptical voices against the development of Esports, inevitably, it is the choice of today. The young worship it, capitalists infuse it, and the media accelerates its growth [1].

Esports as we know it today is a new-fashioned term, but competitive gaming has been around since the Pong days when home consoles first became somewhat common in 1972 with Magnavox [2]. The first Esports event — *Space Invaders* Tournament (shooting game) — was held by Atari (the American video game company) in 1980, attracting 10,000 participants across the United States. At the beginning of 1990s, tournaments for fighting games, like *Street Fighter* and *Mortal Kombat*, grew in popularity, followed by first-person shooters (like *GoldenEye*) later that decade, later paving the way for *Starcraft*, *Warcraft*, *Overwatch*, *Call of Duty* and *Halo* series [3]. In 2006, the USA Network first televised an Esports event for *Halo 2*. However, broadcasting Esports did not show fruitful until the inception of Twitch in 2011, when players and audiences could actively interact with each other [4].

Over the last decades, Esports has become the fastest growing industry that threatens the market of those real-life sports. In 2018, the Esports industry (where its main economic drivers are media rights, advertising, sponsorships, merchandise and ticket sales) made a total of $906 million in revenue. Out of this, 77% came from direct investment (e.g. sponsorships and advertising) and indirect investments (e.g. media rights and content licenses) by endemic (Sponsors that are highly associated with Esports due to the use of, or integration of their products and services into Esports activities..) and non-endemic (Sponsors that offer products and services that are not directly related to the production or execution of Esports activities.) brands [5, 6]. Among those, advertising and
sponsorship are the leading sources of revenue for every sector in the Esports industry, and the primary forms of brand activation include: online game media advertising and in-game advertising; sponsorship and naming rights for the events, teams or clubs; endorsement for famous individuals or groups, etc [7]. According to the report from Newzoo, at least $1.6 billion revenue will be generated from brand investment in Esports by 2021 [8].

A global Esports market report jointly released by Newzoo and ECO Krypton shows that the global Esports audiences reached 458.8 million in 2019. The number is expected to hit 645 million in 2022 [9]. With the huge population, China is reported to have 26 percent of Internet users watch Esports at least once per month, more than double the rate of audiences in the United States and Western Europe. For Example, The League of Legends 2018 World Championship, China drew a concurrent audience of 203 million solely, compared to 2 million for the rest of the world [10].

Currently, the most popular games in the world include League of Legends, Call of Duty, CS: GO (Counter Strike: Global Defense), Dota II, and Fortnite. Among those, Fortnite is considered to be the biggest Esports event in terms of total prize money, with $64,338,000 (£49,883,000). League of Legends is regarded as the most popular one based on the number of sheer hours watched and the peak viewership it drew. (reached over 137 million hours watched and peak viewership hit 3.9 million in the 2019 LOL World Championship) [11].

1.2 The Development of Esports in China

China, a country where the growth potential of Esports was realized far before the rest of the world, has strived mightily for the development of Esports in recent years. The development of Esports in China can be outlined with three stages --1) before 2004: the sprout of the internet and technology spread and popularized a series of video games (e.g. StarCraft). Internet bars were the main gathering places with a crowd of passionate teenagers addicted to video games, and the owner of those bars became the major financial beneficiary of the rise of video games beside the game publishers at that period of time; 2) 2004-2012: after a two-years ban enforced by the National Administration of Radio and Television, the National Administration of Sport of China has officially re-included and re-defined Esports as the country’s 78th sports event under the genre of competitive sports. With a line of encouraging policies issued by the government, the National Administration of Sport of China has established the national Esports team participating in various worldwide Esports tournaments for China. Because of the clear policy, some capitalists and businesses have preliminarily attempted to lay out their money on Esports by establishing clubs and teams; and the fundamental structure of the Esports industry has emerged in China; 3) 2013 until now: The Esports industry is experiencing a golden era. An increasing number of academies have been found in developing Esports programs. In 2019, Shandong Sports University became the first university with the major of Esports in China in 2019. A career in Esports is a feasible option for many people. Meanwhile, the prosperity of live streaming platforms (strength and a large user base), the high attention of capital (establishing teams, clubs and Esports arenas) and the competitive innovation of the gaming or tech developing companies (supplying quality video games) structured a sound Esports industrial pattern [12, 13, 14, 15].

The advertisers in China are extremely active in the Esports industry, among which game manufacturers, hardware equipment manufacturers and various fast-selling enterprises are the core parts. Teams wear brand logos on their jersey, use products or equipment where applicable and produce social media content around their sponsors. The streaming platforms can allocate screen space, influencers or even entire channels to a single brand. Event organizers can provide name placement, showcase them in highlight reels or, for hardware companies, literally build the events on the back of their latest product lines. In fact, market research has demonstrated that the sales for gaming hardware and peripherals increases significantly with Esports viewers, who want to buy better gear to maximize their own competitive performance. This has resulted in an entirely unique consumer group within the gaming industry [16]. The government will also become the main advertisers in the large-scale events it supports, but most of them are non-commercial advertisements [17].
1.3 Purpose of Study

Sports fandom, as the commercial engine of forming all sporting and entertainment activities, is always the popular field for worldwide researchers to investigate. Over the past hundred years, there is tons of research focusing on those who are interested in traditional sports (e.g. baseball, football, swimming, etc.) and consistently advancing the traditional sports industry with their academic research. However, with the rapid growth of the Esports market, few research projects are done specifically for examining Esports fandom to contribute to the fast-paced development of Esports. Although some research shows that Esports fans appear to have much in common with fans of traditional sports, it is reasonable to assume that the former possesses some unique motivations and characteristics inherited by the nature of Esports and the external factors affected by the structural evolution of society and culture. Therefore, it is theoretically meaningful to conduct a study to explore the insights for scholars to better understand the psychological determinants influencing Esports online viewership and consumption. Findings from such studies will serve as the tool to help Esports marketers who target on maximizing Esports online viewers’ satisfaction develop strategies and improve their business performances.

1.4 The Frame of the Work

The paper summarized the relevant studies conducted by worldwide professional scholars examining fandom and consumption within the Esports domain. Those served as the fundamentals for structuring and framing the questionnaire. By combining with the marketing theory in analysis, this study will come up with insights and suggestions for Esports marketers to advance their services maximizing the satisfaction of the Chinese massive Esports online audiences.

1.5 Research Questions

(1) What is the intrinsic motivation behind people participating in Esports games and watching Esports streaming or related content?
(2) How different aspects of external factors that could potentially influence Esports online viewership and consumption of Esports?
(3) What is the Esports online audiences’ attitudes towards brand promotion and in-platform advertising?
(4) How businesses who target on advancing the satisfaction of Esports online viewership develop effective marketing strategies to achieve their performances?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Esports

2.1.1 Definition of Esports

Esports is described as online video games that are played on a professional level, with tournament structures, broadcasting, cash prizes, huge audience and even potential massive betting markets to make video games a type of sport [18]. Those games with competitors from worldwide leagues or teams are followed by millions of fans all over the world primarily through popular streaming platforms like Twitch and YouTube [19].

2.1.2 Controversial Identity

Throughout the year the identity of Esports has always been in contentiousness. When people question whether these video game tournaments are real sports, many industrial professionals are showing their pragmatic attitudes deciphering Esports. For example, Douglas Manning, PhD, argues that the enormous revenue potential produced by the Esports market makes the further attempts to prove or disprove Esports unconvincing [20]. Also, Heere Bob insists that Esports demonstrate certain degrees of sportification; and as the sport industry itself embrace eSports as a sport, sports scholars should examine the impact of Esports in sport management as they do for traditional sports [21].
Moreover, an academic report attempted to explore the community and differences between Esports and traditional sports mentioned that Esports are sports that meet the formal definition for sports, and that over time with further technological advancements, it would enable Esports to be much more associated with the conventional view of sports in society [22].

2.1.3 Unique Features of Esports

Unlike the majority of traditional sports, one unique feature of Esports is that the format of Esports is the game. It is designed by a developer or a company who is in control of interpretation and modifications made to the game like IP Rights (Intellectual property rights). Typically, those game companies (developers) play multiple roles within the Esports industry -- right holder, tournament organizer (mainly through brand partnerships), content creator, broadcasting distributor (to the streaming platforms, but sometimes exclusively).

Streamers and Streaming Platforms are considered to be two important and distinct components in the Esports industry. In addition to matches, events, and tournaments that are the primary attractions for traditional sports, Esports are also characterized by streamers with both professional players and amateur gamers. Urban dictionary and an article define Streamers as those who play games and share their screens online to the viewers who watch them playing [23]. In turn, Esport Streamers can be defined as streamers who are primarily covering Esport events on their channels. They usually are either professional, semi-professional or amateur Esports players. Those sole displaying are distinguished from the event broadcasts since those streamers are able to develop personal identities, followings and communities linked to their play style, personality, comedic performances, and interaction. Thus, those professional gamers become their own breed of celebrity and build tremendous fan bases that will worship them. A streaming platform refers to a service that enables the hosts to show their own game processes with video content in real time. For Esports, it is a very important part of the Esports business model with the ideal virtual infrastructure created by giant tech companies, like Twitch, Microsoft, Facebook, allowing organizers, personalities, spectators and brands to exist in a symbiotic relationship that benefits all parties [24]. Especially, when the public crisis, like the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, swiped up all live events for most of traditional sports where the live events are the fundamental financial driver, Esports where so much of broadcast is focused on online and not as dependent on the live audience, in contrast, has thrived in this special occasion.

2.2 Sports Fandom

Sports fans are enthusiastic followers of a sport, team, or athlete, engaging in various forms of supportive activities [25].

2.2.1 Traditional Sports Fandom

Many former studies have differentiated fandom with two categories -- Sports Fans and Sports Spectators. The distinction is critical in terms of consumption preferences [26]. Jones (1997) proposes that fans will be more intensively devoted themselves to the team or the sport itself, while spectators will observe a sport and forget about it afterwards [27] Sports fans refer to a person who supports a specific sport, team or athlete by participating in events in person, while a sports spectator is an individual who likes watching sporting events on TV without inclination towards one specific sport, team or athlete [28, 29, 30]. In comparison to sports spectators, sports fans believe the team or player they follow is a representation of themselves and tend to be more irrational and predictable for business interests due to their stronger emotional connections and higher level of loyalty to the teams or players [31].

The identification of being a sport fan leads to an emotional attachment that leads to the engagement in marketing activities in response to the teams' or players' performance [32]. In other words, the more identified fans are, the more they would consume, and consequently, the more the organization would profit [33].

Some suggest that the identification of a sport fan is formed by socialization. Turner and Tajfel (1986) recognized that individuals establish a shared social identity by joining in a fan based social
group and internalizing the values and faiths of this group as their own [34]. Another study conducted by McPherson’s (1976) who tried to discover how Canadian adolescents become sport fans, indicating that individual’s family, peers, school, and community are the four major socialization agents for affecting and forming the values, beliefs, attitudes, and norms of sport fandom to an individual [35].

2.2.2 Esports Fandom

Since few researches has been conducted specifically for Esports fandom, researchers believe that there is still much to be learned about Esports fans. Currently, one commonly recognized feature for Esports fans is that they connect and interact with each other virtually, as opposed to the fans in the majority of traditional sports.

To be rigorous for the definition of Esports fandom, a previous study specified Esports users with two terms: "Esports Players" who are devoted to playing games and "Esports Audiences" who are keen on watching games played by others [36]. Furthermore, Newzoo even categorizes Esports audiences into two distinct groups: Esports Enthusiasts (those who watch professional Esports content more than once per month and Occasional Viewers (those who watch professional Esports content less than once per month) [37]. However, others believe that many Esports fans own bi-identities -- both playing and watching other play--which may contribute to an informational difficulty to customize to one single group. [38] An article illustrated that a group of Esports players also become loyal Esports audiences due to the relaxation and enjoyment (appreciation) of watching other people play; but they emphasize their identity as gamers rather than viewers [39].

Also, some regard Esports fandom as an art culture in modern society. From a study held by Grooten and Kowert (2015) who were in an effort exploring gamer identities within societal discourse and virtual space believe that being a video game fan is a lifestyle and a distinctive identity which is thrived through societal interactions and regardless of the surrounding environment [40]. Meanwhile, another scholar examining the societal influence of fandoms mentioned that Esports fans are a group of individuals who engage in cultural production while consuming it [41].

Apart from that, the social interaction for Esports fans mostly relies on the internet, which differs from the offline-dominating interaction for most of the traditional sports’ fans. Given that many professional players in Esports are also active streamers, they become more accessible for the enthusiastic followers to interact with them, compared with those in most of the traditional sports [42]. There are prior works that imply that Chat Function within many streaming platforms, like Twitch, advances the social interactions for Esports fans, since those platforms are the main gathering place for Esports enthusiasts consuming Esports content [43]. Moreover, Play2Live (a novel Esports streaming platform) believes that only having chat function on the platforms is not enough, by adding functions, like voting and donating the content and setting the tasks or challenges for each other, the interaction between streamers and spectators will be advanced to a new level [44].

There are also scholars who made comparisons of the demographic characteristics of the Esports fans and traditional sports fans. According to Nielsen (global marketing research firm), the average age group of Esports fans is 31 years old which is comparatively younger than that of traditional sports’ fans, like MLB (57 years old), NFL (50 years old), and NBA (42 years old), respectively [45]. Additionally, the source provides that more than half of Gen-zers are more receptive to nontraditional sports [46].

2.3 Motivations behind Esports Viewership and Consumption

2.3.1 Similarity

A study exploring the motivational similarities and differences in spectatorship between eSport and traditional sport by surveying audiences in a sport event (the Korean professional soccer league match (K-League) and an Esports event (FIFA Online 3) separately reveals that Esports spectators and traditional sports spectators appeared to share the similar intrinsic and extrinsic motivations of participate in the events, including Interests In the Subject (Sport, Team, or Player), Aesthetics,
Drama, Role Model, Entertainment, Wholesome Environment, Acquisition of Knowledge, Physical Skill of the Athletes, and Enjoyment of Aggression [47].

Apart from those, motivations behind Esports consumers, like Friends Bonding, Competition Excitement, Competitiveness, Entertainment, Drama, and Knowledge Acquisition, were found to mirror the motivations behind traditional sport consumers in some previous studies [48, 49].

2.3.2 Bridge

When most of study focuses on the resemblance between Esports fans and traditional sports’ fans, however, it is imperative to assume that the unique nature set with Esports might make Esports fans a distinct group of people with different motivations for consumption behaviors. This point of view is supported by a research conducted by Anderson, et al. (2019) who attempted to explore the pattern of Esports fandom and motivations leading to the consumption behaviors. Based on their findings, it is suggested that the brands should discard the theory of “one size fits all” in the Esports market to maximize their investment since the diversity of the Esports titles, players, and communities makes Esports fans a distinct group in terms of consumption and fan-ship [50].

2.3.3 Differences

A study conducted by Qian et al. (2019) investigating the dimensions and consequences of Esports online spectator demand with semi-structured interview and online open-ended survey argues that without assessing content-specific preferences it is not applicable to conceptualize, measure and discuss motivations for Esports consumption solely based on the perspective of traditional sports. In their work, they found that the demand factors including Chat Room, Streamer Strains, Stream Quality, and Virtual Rewards appear to be unique in Esports and might affect Esports consumers’ cognition and behaviors. Besides, Skill Improvement and Vicarious Sensation are considered to be the two distinct and dominating motives for Esports spectators engaging in Esports content [51].

In addition, a study aims to compare the differences in motivations and level of enjoyment when people consuming media related to Esports and traditional sports, a total of 1,300 American Esports participants who are both Esports fans and traditional sports fans participated in the questionnaire. The results showed that even though the participants engage in media for both Esports and traditional sports with similar intention (specifically Social Sport, Fan Ship, and Schwabism), they are far more dedicated to the Esports content [52].

This paper will focus on the Esports online audiences who engage in watching Esports content.

3. Research Method

3.1 Quantitative Research

Quantitative Research is an important research method in natural and social sciences. It is designed to quantify problems or describe phenomena by analyzing the numerical data collected from polls, questionnaires or surveys with a large sample population, or by examining statistical data developed by the previous works with computational techniques [53]. Since statistics is based on mathematical principles, quantitative methods are considered to be scientific, objective and reasonable [54].

3.2 Questionnaire Design

In order to better understand how different motivational variables that affect the consumption of Esports online viewers, the questionnaire is classified with two macro dimensions — Intrinsic Motivation and Extrinsic Motivation — that are refined from previous works specializing in Esports. (Figure 1)

The questionnaire combined a series of closed-ended questions, a list of biographical data questions, and a Likert Scale questions to measure participants’ opinions.

It is structured with three sectors: identification of Esports online viewers (includes involvement level, favorite genre of games; the amount of time and money they typically spend on Esports content); personal information (includes age, gender, education, salary, occupation, etc.); and evaluation of an
arrange of internal and external factors that influence Esports online viewers engaging in Esports content — internal variables include: Vicarious Sense of Achievement, Socialization Opportunities (Friends Bonding), Knowledge Acquisition (Skill Improvement), Enjoyment, Escapism, and Role Play; external variables include: Esports Streamers (personality, background, knowledge, interaction style, fashion style, attitudes towards life), Streaming Platforms (graphic design, video quality, function of third-person view, ease of switching between streams, video smoothness), Incentive Mechanisms, Interaction Model, and Attitudes for Brand Advertising.

With a total of 35 questions, the survey incorporated 22 multiple-choice questions with 4-6 options each and 13 Likert-type questions used to measure participants' opinions by dividing the degree of respondents' consent to a statement into five points: (1) strongly disagree; (2) disagree; (3) neither agree nor disagree; (4) agree; (5) strongly agree.

3.3 Data Distribution and Collection

This paper utilized the online self-administered questionnaire platform, Wenjuan.com, developed by Shanghai zhongyan.com. It is the most active online survey community in China and also the leading market investigation technology platform. Comparing it to similar services, this platform is more time-saving and free for the survey distribution. The group of samples recruited in the questionnaire is the college students at Shandong Sports University (the first university to establish an Esports program in China in 2019), which is in line with the sample population of the research. (Appendix 1 for questionnaire content and links).

Within 13 days, 280 questionnaires were sent out randomly and 201 were received by the end. Since the concentration of this study is to examine Esports online viewers, invalid respondents are those who only play Esports games and do not spectate any Esports related content. After eliminating invalid data, a total of 115 students were finally drafted.
4. Results

The data of the questionnaire were analyzed by SPSS statistical software (version 20.0).

4.1 Reliability

Firstly, the research adopted Cronbach’s α measurement tool developed by Lee Cronbach in 1951 to assess the reliability of the questionnaire. Based on the results, the α values 0.725 (as shown in table 1), indicating that the internal consistency of the questionnaire is reliable. (According to SPSS, if α > 0.8, the reliability is high; if 0.7 < α <0.8, the reliability is good; If 0.6 < α <0.7, the reliability is acceptable; and If α < 0.6, the reliability is poor.) (Figure 2)

![Cronbach Reliability Statistics](image)

Fig. 2 Cronbach reliability statistics

4.2 Sample

The samples’ gender, favorite game genre, and the amount of time and money spent on Esports content were analyzed with Descriptive Statistics. The data shows that among 115 participants, the number of men (79.13%, n = 91) outweigh the number of women (20.87%, n = 24).

For their favorite game genre, 61.74% (n = 71) of participants chose Multiplayer Online Arena, and First-Person Shooter was ranked second with 26.09% (n = 30).

When asked participants how long they usually spend on watching Esports content for each session, most of them (53.04%, n = 61) usually spend 1-3 hours. Apart from that, 77.73% (n=98) of participants spend less than ¥100 on Esports or related products monthly.

4.3 Analysis of Intrinsic Motivations and Extrinsic Factors

Then, the paper used Descriptive Analysis (Frequency) Method to analyze the influences of internal motivations and external factors on respondents’ engagement in Esports.

4.3.1 Intrinsic Motivation

As it is shown on Table 1 and Table 2, Enjoyment (87.00%, n = 100) is the core driver for most of the participants’ participating in Esports. While Knowledge Acquisition or Skill Improvement (33.00%, n = 38), Vicarious Sense of Achievement (28.70%, n = 33) and Socialization Opportunities or Friends Bonding (27.00%, n = 31) are indicated to be three important determinants for them spectating Esports streaming or related content.

4.3.2 Extrinsic Motivation

Finally, the paper investigates the impact of external factors, including Streamers, Streaming Platforms, Interactive Mechanism, Incentive Mechanism and Brand Promotion, on Esports online viewership.

4.3.2.1 Esports Streamers

We examined how Streamers’ Personality, Fashion Style, Knowledge about Esports, Interaction and Life Attitudes influence their time spending on watching Esports or related content. It is noticeable that among these variables, only the Fashion Style (10.00%, n = 12) may not be an important factor affecting Esports online audiences’ engagement; Professionalism and Knowledge (61.80%, n = 71), Personality (59.20%, n = 68), Interaction (58.30%, n = 67) and Streamers’ Attitude
Towards Their Personal Life (58.20%, n = 67) all have certain degree of impact on Esports online viewership. (Table 3).

Besides, respondents were asked the Importance of Streamers’ Professional Background. Most participants (85.20%, n = 98) indicated that they do not care whether the streamer they follow has a professional Esports background.

Table 1. Intrinsic motivations behind Esports enthusiasts playing Esports games

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyment</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>87.0</td>
<td>87.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role play</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Escapism</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.2</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Intrinsic motivations behind Esports fans watching Esports content

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vicarious Sense of Achievement</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>28.7</td>
<td>28.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socialization Opportunities/Friends Bonding</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>27.0</td>
<td>27.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge Acquisition/Skill Improvement</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>33.0</td>
<td>33.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. How Esports streamers influence the consumption of Esports audiences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Very Much</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Not Much</th>
<th>Not At All</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Streamers' Personality</td>
<td>23.50%</td>
<td>35.70%</td>
<td>35.70%</td>
<td>3.50%</td>
<td>1.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Streamers' Knowledge About Esports</td>
<td>27.90%</td>
<td>33.90%</td>
<td>33.90%</td>
<td>4.30%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Streamers' Fashion Style</td>
<td>2.60%</td>
<td>7.80%</td>
<td>51.30%</td>
<td>18.30%</td>
<td>20.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Streamers' Highly Interactive Streaming Style</td>
<td>20.00%</td>
<td>38.30%</td>
<td>35.70%</td>
<td>5.20%</td>
<td>0.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Streamers' Attitude Towards Their Personal Lives</td>
<td>25.20%</td>
<td>33.00%</td>
<td>37.40%</td>
<td>3.50%</td>
<td>0.90%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In addition, participants were queried how likely they would catch up on a certain Esports live streaming that they are not interested in only because of their favorite streamers. The finding is that 34.70% of the respondents (strongly agree 13.00%, agree 21.70%) showed the positive attitudes to this question, meaning that in a group of Esports online audiences, the streamers have influence on their engagement. (Table 4)

4.3.2.2 Streaming Platforms

The research then investigated the influences of different aspects related to streaming platforms on the respondents' consumption of Esports content. (Table 5). The results show that the User Interface, Video Quality, Video Smoothness, Function of Third-person View, and Function of Multitasking or Ease of Switching Between Streams have little effect on their engagement. In contrast, the Virtual Rewards (Very Much: 12.20%, Somewhat: 19.10%, neutral: 45.20%) is considered to be more influential in the circumstances.

Table 4. How Esports streamers influence the consumption of Esports audiences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Valid</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>21.7</td>
<td>21.7</td>
<td>34.8</td>
</tr>
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<td>Agree</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>45.2</td>
<td>45.2</td>
<td>80.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>92.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5. How streaming platforms influence the consumption of Esports audiences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Very Much</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Not Much</th>
<th>Not At All</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Streaming Platform User Interface</td>
<td>7.80%</td>
<td>12.20%</td>
<td>39.10%</td>
<td>27.80%</td>
<td>40.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Streaming Platform Video Quality</td>
<td>1.70%</td>
<td>6.10%</td>
<td>20.90%</td>
<td>38.30%</td>
<td>33.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Streaming Platform Virtual Rewards</td>
<td>12.20%</td>
<td>19.10%</td>
<td>45.20%</td>
<td>14.80%</td>
<td>8.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Streaming Platform Function of Third-person View</td>
<td>5.20%</td>
<td>12.20%</td>
<td>44.30%</td>
<td>27.00%</td>
<td>11.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Streaming Platform Video Smoothness</td>
<td>3.50%</td>
<td>7.00%</td>
<td>14.70%</td>
<td>35.70%</td>
<td>39.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Streaming Platform Function of Multitasking/Ease of Switching Between Streams</td>
<td>4.30%</td>
<td>11.30%</td>
<td>44.30%</td>
<td>28.70%</td>
<td>11.40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.3.2.3 Incentive Mechanism

When they were asked which of the following rewards (In-game Skins, Other Cosmetics, Virtual Currencies, and Accumulated Points) would motivated them most for the consumption of Esports content, the result demonstrates that In-game Skins (59.10%, n=68) is the most popular one in comparison to other items. (Table 6)

Table 6. Most popular virtual rewards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reward Type</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In-game Skins</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>59.1</td>
<td>59.1</td>
<td>59.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Cosmetics</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>65.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virtual Currencies</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>74.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customized Emotes</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>80.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accumulated Points/Discounts for a certain brand</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>92.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.3.2.4 Interaction Model

When asking participants’ opinion about their preferred way for interaction, as it shown on Table 6, 62.60% (n=72) of the respondents showed their inclination for Online Interaction Activities Between Fans and Streamers. (Table 7)

Table 7. Participants’ Inclination Towards Interaction Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity Type</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Online activities between fans and the streamer</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>62.6</td>
<td>62.6</td>
<td>62.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offline activities between fans and the streamer</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>83.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offline activities between fans</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>93.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online activities between fans</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.3.2.5 Brand Promotion

When they were asked which of the following rewards (In-game Skins, Cosmetics, Virtual Currencies, and Accumulated Points) would motivated them most for the consumption of Esports content, the result demonstrates that In-game Skins (59.10%, n=68) is the most popular one in comparison to other items. (Table 8)
Another finding is that in comparison to receiving recommendation for a brand or product from their peers in the fan community and favorite streaming platforms, they are more likely to accept recommendations from their followed streamers (59.10%, n=68). (Table 9)

### 4.4 Discussion

Viewership is the fundamental component of any kind of entertainment event. Any sports and entertainment events are based on audiences; if there are no audiences, there is no reason to have those events. Online spectatorship grew rapidly in recent years and is now a major driving force behind the continued expansion of the Esports industry. As we all know, Esports audiences are primarly grown from the internet, unlike traditional sports’. The interactions between Esports viewers and streamers are mainly virtual instead of physical. The aim of this study is to investigate how different aspects of internal and external motivations could potentially influence Esports viewership and consumption and provide strategic marketing recommendations based on those observations.

To answer the first research question, “What is the intrinsic motivation behind Esports gamers and Esports viewers”, it is important to first distinguish the differences between Esports gamers and viewers. For the first group, their participation in Esports is playing Esports games either professionally, semi-professionally or amateurly; for Esports spectators, their participation in Esports is mainly watching other people play Esports games.

The participation for Esports enthusiasts varies, some people only play, some people only watch, and some people play and watch. According to the data of the respondents, 57.2% (n=105) are both gamers and viewers. However, the motivation behind these two different groups should be

---

**Table 8. Participants' Attitudes Towards In-platform or In-game Advertising**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have; for my needs</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have; for the popularity of</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the products</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>12.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would buy; if I need it or</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>34.8</td>
<td>34.8</td>
<td>47.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>if it is my favorite brand</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would not buy; I never</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>51.3</td>
<td>51.3</td>
<td>98.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>believe any type of advertising</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 9. Participants' Opinion About Brand Promotion**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations from my</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>59.1</td>
<td>59.1</td>
<td>59.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>favorite streamer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations between fans</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>82.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial breaks via streaming</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>93.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>platform</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
distinguished. As the results show, Enjoyment is the main driver for Esports gamers participating in Esports, while Knowledge Acquisition or Skill Improvement tends to be a more important impetus for Esports viewers engaging in Esports related content. It is not hard to see that Esports enthusiasts seem to have a more serious attitude toward their engagement on Esports; and watching Esports games or streaming is an important tool for gaining knowledge for them to improve their playing performances in the game.

Interestingly, the findings in the second research question (“how do different aspects of the external factors that might potentially influence Esports online viewerhip and consumption?”) appear to echo this indication, showing that the factor of Knowledge and Professionalism of an Esports Streamer tends to be more influential on Esports viewership than the other four variables (Personality, Interaction, Streamers’ Attitude Towards Life, and Fashion Style). In other words, Esports audiences feel more satisfied with a knowledgeable Esports streamer who is able to help them to gain game insights that will allow them to improve their playing skills. Therefore, by combining results from these two research questions, Esports entities who try to maximize the satisfaction of Esports audiences should be aware of the weight of Knowledge Acquisition for Esports viewership and should also develop strategies to fulfill this need. For instance, they could initiate streaming or interviews where top athletes are invited to share their experiences and techniques for Esports audiences to gain game insights. Also, since it is found that streamers play an important role for Esports viewership engaging in Esports events, and Esports event or tournament organizers could allow streamers to apply for special access to the events. This would allow them to share deeper game insights with their audiences and at the same time enable the events to reach more online viewers.

Global advertising spending reached more than $330 million in 2019. And while digital advertisers bombard consumers across platforms like Twitch, Facebook, television, billboards and more, consumers are trying to evade this bombardment by signing up for ad blockers and subscription services. According to HubSpot Research, 91% of people believe ads are more intrusive now compared to two or three years ago. As a result, the advertising industry faces an “existential need for change,” according to a blunt report published recently by the research firm Forrester. The final research question is to discover Esports online audiences’ attitudes towards brand promotion and products advertising and address how businesses could potentially develop effective brand promotion strategies in the Esports market.

However, it is not that there is no chance to reach out to this market. Although research data shows that more respondents hold a negative attitude towards product advertising on the streaming platform, they also expressed their inclination towards accepting brand or product promotion from their favorite Esports streamers. Therefore, it is critical for advertisers to be more strategic and creative when pumping money into their advertising campaigns. By considering those factors, brands should be more collaborative with individual Esports streamers based on their promotion needs and jointly develop brand-culture storylines embodied in the Esports streaming content to connect with targeted consumers. This is also supported by Coppola, who holds that many brands have caught onto the fact that these days, people make purchasing decisions based on the connections they have with the businesses themselves through the stories they tell and the values they hold.

Finally, in order to advance the influence of the Esports market as a whole and enhance the connection between Esports fans and Esports, it is essential to invent more interactive events or activities for Esports fans to engage with. As the results support, streamers’ highly interactive streaming style could potentially influence Esports viewership. Moreover, based on the data provided by respondents to the questionnaire, 62.6% preferred to interact with their favorite streamers online. Based on these results, Esports event organizers or producers should be encouraged to focus on organizing more online interaction activities, like raffles and gifted quizzes or contests.

5. Conclusion

This study attempted to disclose the intrinsic and extrinsic motivations for people engaging in Esports; and how those factors influence Esports viewership and consumption. This paper's main
purpose is to provide insights into how Esports-related businesses could advance their business performance. Findings revealed that the primary motivation behind Esports viewers watching Esports games and related content through various platforms is to acquire game knowledge and the respondents further voiced the importance of streamers’ knowledge about Esports. Thus, Esports streaming or related content have played a main role for those Esports enthusiasts to participate in Esports events and improve them in-game performances. Also, as the results showed, those online Esports viewers expressed the significance of having highly interactive Esports streamers and they are apt to attend online interaction events with their favorite streamers. With respect to Esports online viewers’ attitudes towards products advertising in the Esports content, it is found that even though more respondents have a distaste for products advertising on the platform, they showed an inclination towards having products or brands recommended from their favorite Esports streamers.

What should Esports stakeholders perceive here? 1) the importance of Knowledge Acquisition for Esports online viewers and what activities can be developed to fulfill this demand; 2) the importance of strategically collaborating with Esports streamers for advertising brands and products; 3) the importance of online interaction during the Esports streaming.

One limitation of the study was that the sample is centralized in one university which is lacking in diversity. Therefore, the results could be tendentious. Future research should diversify the sample size and explore whether those intrinsic and extrinsic motivations that influence Esports online viewership and consumption could be affected by geographic differences.

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