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**Consumer motivation in e-sports: Exploration of one segment of the virtual experience  
economy**

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Bachelor of Science in Global Business

by

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## ABSTRACT

*The objective of this paper is to determine consumer behaviour in electronic sports in one segment of the virtual experience economy. Different from online games, electronic sports are becoming more and more accepted by social groups, gradually forming a unique economic model. This study discusses the main motivations of esports players or amateurs interested in esports. In esports, esports players build relationships with teammates through participation, training, and competition, and enjoy the satisfaction of winning in the virtual world. This paper collected effective data through literature review, relevant interviews and questionnaires, verified relevant hypotheses, and analyzed the relationship between each variable and consumption motivation. The results show that the influence of e-sports consumption motivation comes from the dependence on the virtual economy, the habit of e-sports, the interest in competition and the payment. According to this study on factors related to consumption motivation, consumption experience is the most important factor for consumers' consumption motivation, that is, players can have good e-sports experience both psychologically and physically. Therefore, in the e-sports market under the virtual economy, consumers with different motivations have different consumption behaviors. This research can attract the interest of the e-sports generation, and it can also attract marketers who are engaged and learning about the e-sports market and help them better understand and grasp the business models or trends in the e-sports market.*

**Keywords:** *Virtual experience, Consuming motives, Marketing trends, Marketing behavior*

## INTRODUCTION

Electronic Sports is one emerging athletics, which is based on electronic games and information technology as the core, has emerged as an important aspect of virtual-world consumption. Electronic games, with the support of information technology, become one of the most popular entertainment ways and consumption habits for young people as well as become one kind of new marketing landscape of the experience economy (Seo, Y, 2013). The development of electronic sports is changing people's consuming behavior and lifestyle. It affects the economic pattern of society, too. Therefore, one side, my topic will attract the interest of a large number of young people who are interested in technological innovation. On one hand, it will attract companies or marketers that want to learn the business model or trend and help them start the business.

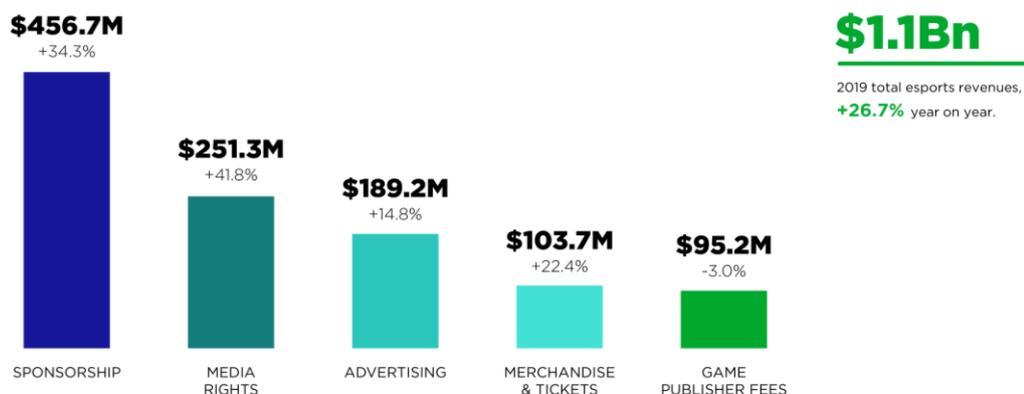


Figure 1, 2019 ESPORTS REVENUE STREAMS|GLOBAL

Source: Newzoo: *Global Esports Economy Will Top \$1 Billion for the First Time in 2019*. Newzoo. <https://newzoo.com/insights/articles/newzoo-global-esports-economy-will-top-1-billion-for-the-first-time-in-2019/>. Accessed October 29, 2019.

It stated that “Around 82% of the total market (\$897.2 million), will come from endemic and non-endemic brand investments (media rights, advertising, and

sponsorship). The highest-grossing individual esports revenue stream worldwide is sponsorship, generating \$456.7 million in 2019” (Newzoo).

Figure 1 shows the influence or trends of sponsorship, media rights and advertising on e-sports. Right now, media rights are the fastest growing e-sports revenue. Sponsorship is followed by media rights and advertising. Because the e-sports target audience is not only traditional media, other aspects, such as live software is a popular way to spread e-sports events. Most gamers typically spend more time watching other people's online games than they do watching live sports.

The development of e-sports games can drive the customized information of the target audience's consumption behavior, which will provide better opportunities for marketers to achieve their strategic goals of increasing purchase and expanding market share (Giannakis, A., Stricker, C., & Kotrotsios, G., 2006).

## **LITERATURE REVIEW – BACKGROUND**

Esports traces its origins back to 1972 when a Space Invaders Championship yielded 10,000 participants. As the 2000s rolled around, Esports gained serious momentum. Tournament hosts such as the World Cyber Games and the Electronic Sports World Cup debuted, followed by the launch of Major League Gaming (MLG) in 2002. MLG is considered one of the world's most prominent hosts in Esports today (Pickell D).

E-sports has been popular since the 1970s and 1980s, with more and more players and competitions, and some magazines and websites started to report relevant content, including some non-gamers who would follow the circle. The realization of the network of electronic games was supposed to be in 1990. The realization of the

network also means that players can play games online. It is this realization that makes the real development of the e-sports industry.

### **New Sports Practice form**

It is important to emphasize that “e-Sports as a phenomenon deserves to be investigated purely for its influence on society and culture” (Wagner, 2006, p. 3). With the development of Internet information technology, e-sports has been supported and loved by more and more players and audiences in recent years. Moreover, the broadcast of some e-sports events has become a worldwide mass event. It is not common to see e-sports games as a practical sports practice, but it is a problem worth paying attention to at present. The phenomenon of competitive computer gaming, called e-Sport, is in some aspects challenging the modern and hegemonic sport. There are no reliable data about exactly how many people there are, playing computer games; probably hundreds of millions worldwide (Danielsson, E-sport: rörelse utan rörelse). E-sports can be thought of as a form of sport. In much of the literature, they clarify what the practice of gaming involves and whether there is any reason to think that it can be an actual sports practice. It will address the unique characteristics that e-sports as a sport may have (Mariona Rosell Llorens, 2017, e-Sport Gaming). Sport in different forms plays an important role in every culture, both in the past and in the present (Guttmann. Sports: The First Five Millennia).

### **Electronic gaming features**

Playing computer games as an electronic sport: In search of a theoretical framework for a new research field. In J. Fromme & A. Unger (Eds.), *Computer games and new media cultures: A handbook of digital games studies* (pp.477–490). Computer gaming is, in contrast to involvement in organised sports, not a fully accepted leisure activity and parents and adults do not encourage and support the

activity it in the same manner (Brun. När livet blir ett spel). On the contrary, computer gaming is presented, in newspaper and other media, as an activity which confronts more wholesome activities like doing homework, being physically active, and socializing with friends (Jansz and Martens). Competitive gaming has some similarities with sports, such as regular training, teamwork or the perfect execution of tactics planned in advance (Hutchins, 2006). In a word, e-sports has been seen as a modern sport with less physical demands, an upcoming sport or a new sport in today's society (Taiwan eSport League).

### **Consumption Motives**

In more recent theories, there are various other types of motives that represent various personal, social, structural, and game-related features giving individuals a chance to gratify unfulfilled needs by engaging in eSports games (Lee, Cianfrone, Byon, & Schoenstedt, 2010). Demetrovics, Urbán, Nagygyörgy, et al. (2011, p. 823) state that “we have to consider that these applications (online games) satisfy basic and concrete human needs in the conditions of our modern society”. We know that the interest in competition and skills is critical to the player, and this may also influence marketers to focus on creating games and opportunities for the player. So that allows those players to compete with each other online, marketers provide tangible rewards to the winners. Many corporate sponsors are starting to do online advertising because online games have become a commonplace for promotions, where brands are constantly exposed to an eager target market (Chaney, Lin, & Chaney, 2004). As the multimedia channel covers more esports games, most players will receive more publicity and promotion from esports information. Players can not only improve the ability and psychological experience of game characters directly in esports, but also get entertainment by watching live or reruns. E-Sports is a phenomenon of mostly

younger generations. An average player of e-Sports is between 15 and 25 years old and trains 3–4 times a week for 2–4 h (Müller-Lietzkow, 2006; Topalov, 2007).

### **New marketing landscape**

Competitive computer gaming (eSports) has emerged as an important aspect of virtual-world consumption (Seo, Y, 2013). Compared with traditional sports, e-sports is undoubtedly a unique market, which will require a new perspective to better understand the consumers in these two areas. Business history remarks on the experience economy as a concept that was first identified by the work of Pine and Gilmore (1998). The idea of the experience economy emerges from the commentary on global economic change over the last few millennia (for instance, transitions from agricultural to industrial and then to services production). Toffler referred to what he called the experience industries as contributing to the “throw away culture” in which “man’s relationships with things are increasingly temporary” (1970, p. 51, emphasis in original). The experience industry could turn out to be one of the pillars of super-industrialism, the very foundation, in fact, of the post-service economy (Toffler, 1970, p. 226).

### **The explosive growth of e-Sports**

This sport will soon be a 1 billion dollars business with a global audience of over 300 million fans. But it doesn’t involve a ball, stadiums or grass pitches (Alex Gray). Battle.net, for example, is a highly popular online gaming network among consumers, with more than 12 million active users and more than 17 million for Xbox Live, the other largest online gaming network (Electronic sports, 2009). It may be a moot point. An industry that is projected to make \$1.4 billion by 2020 is unlikely to require the approval of naysayers. For most national esports associations, the common goal is important, but the approach and goals vary. BESF, the Belgian federation of

electronic sports, supports and assists tournament organizers and players by informing the Belgian government of laws and guidelines (Belgian Electronic Sport Federation). They also arranged a competition for members to participate in to promote e-sports (Korea e-Sport Association).

## **STATEMENT OF HYPOTHESIS**

In esports, esports players or amateurs participate, train and compete to achieve a sense of teamwork, create friendships with teammates or friends and enjoy the satisfaction of winning in the virtual world. It seems that these players get a pleasant experience both mentally and physically, which is the main motivation for their interest in e-sports. When consumers have different motivations in e-sports, they will show different consumer behaviors. The marketer needs to determine consumer`s marketing by consumers. From the above existing content, I derive the following hypotheses.

**Research Question (RQ): How can marketers determine consumers' consumption motivation in the market of e-sports in the virtual economy?**

H1: Regarding electronic gaming features

1a – Different form online games

1b – Sports features

H2: Regarding the new marketing landscape

2a – People pursue the experience economy

2b – In the virtual world, player compete with each other (Competitive interest)

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Qualitative Method**

To clearly understand the different consumer motivations for esports players, use useful direct feedback from those consumers, a qualitative study combining interviews and feedback was conducted. In 20 face-to-face interviews with people who frequently consume esports (called skilled players), those people said they chose esports for certain motivations or interests.

### **Quantitative Method**

The survey was designed based on the qualitative study and previous related research design. Make a questionnaire using Wen JuanXing to assess consumer motivation or behavior, a total of 201 people participated in the questionnaire survey, thus obtaining effective reference data for a series of questions.

#### ***1. Survey Question on Consumption Motives***

Six options were presented as possible responses for the question

- Consumer experience of players
- Consumer habits of players (Player dependence on the game)
- Trust in the game (Satisfaction)
- Get award or remuneration
- Create friendship
- Competitive interest (peer pressure)

In addition to the most common responses in the qualitative pilot study, options such as player consumption experience, consumption habits and reliance on and trust in the game, as well as interest in e-sports and pressure from peer entertainment were included, as these options were identified as relevant factors in the

previous literature. “Presence seems central in shaping the experience of electronic games” (Tamborini, R., & Skalski, P., 2006).

## **2. Survey Question on New sports practice form**

Five alternatives were provided to measure the factor of sports practice form:

- Real-time competition
- Live webcast
- Teamwork
- Use of electronic equipment
- Uniform rules

Today's electronic games create virtual environments in which consumers interact in ways that are hard to distinguish from real-world interactions, so these are the differences in experience. We can think of playing video games as a psychological and social phenomenon, and those specific game features may also attract more people to play video games. For example, Wood, Griffiths, Chappell and Davies(2004) found that “video game players considered certain features more important when playing games, such as sound, images, background Settings, game duration, game speed, use of humor, control options, game dynamics, win/lose features, character development, brand assurance and multiplayer features.” Game formats also seemed to play an important role in that a standalone PC/Mac format was more popular than other types such as game consoles, mobile phones, PC/Mac online/multiplayer, and portable consoles, respectively (Wood et al.).

## **3. Survey Question on Explosive growth of e-Sports**

- The huge market environment attracts marketers or consumers
- Information technology development provides a stable platform

- People are increasingly satisfied with their spiritual or quality of life.

Internationally, esports is either recognized or accepted as a sport, but in more than 60 countries around the world, especially in Asia, esports has gained some recognition because countries are financially encouraging esports (Müller-Lietzkow, Bouncken and Seufert.). Whether we like it or not, the explosion of esports is upon us. The technology and lack of physical activity behind esports make traditional sports stakeholders skeptical when asked to support new trends. Rapidly growing mobility, low-cost organizations, and accessibility may change their minds shortly soon (Papaloukas, M. 2018, November).

## ANALYSIS / RESULTS

A total of 201 online questionnaires were collected. Basic information about people's age and gender is shown in table 1. Among the respondents, the frequency between 18 and 22 years old accounts for the vast majority of the respondents, with a total of 156 respondents, accounting for 78%. Among them, 110 males, accounting for 55%, and 91 females, accounting for 45%.

Title	Options	Frequency	%
What's your gender?	Male	110	55%
	Female	91	45%
Total		201	100
What's your age?	Under 18	22	11%
	18 to 22	156	78%
	22-30	18	9%
	More than 30	5	2%
Total		201	100

Table 1 Frequency of age and gender

Table 2 shows that chi-square test results show that different genders in their understanding of e-sports have correlations ( $\chi^2=18.889$ ,  $p=0.000<0.05$ ). The degree of

girls' never knowing e-sports is significantly higher than that of boys'. Male students' average understanding of e-sports is significantly higher than female students.

			What's your gender?		Total	$\chi^2$	p
			Male	Female			
How much did you know about e-sports before that?	Never	Count	9 <sub>a</sub>	23 <sub>b</sub>	32	18.889	0.000
		Expected Count	17.5	14.5	32.0		
		%	28.1%	71.9%	100.0%		
	Low	Count	30 <sub>a</sub>	35 <sub>a</sub>	65		
		Expected Count	35.6	29.4	65.0		
		%	46.2%	53.8%	100.0%		
	Moderate	Count	52 <sub>a</sub>	23 <sub>b</sub>	75		
		Expected Count	41.0	34.0	75.0		
		%	69.3%	30.7%	100.0%		
	High	Count	19 <sub>a</sub>	10 <sub>a</sub>	29		
		Expected Count	15.9	13.1	29.0		
		%	65.5%	34.5%	100.0%		
Total	Count	110	91	201			
	Expected Count	110.0	91.0	201.0			
	%	54.7%	45.3%	100.0%			

Table 2 Crosstabulation

As can be seen from table 3, chi-square test results show that different individual consumption levels are also correlated with e-sports participation ( $\chi^2=19.692$ ,  $p=0.034<0.05$ ).

			Q3				Total	$\chi^2$	p
			Less than 2000 yuan	2000-5 000 yuan	5000-1 0000 yuan	More than 10000 yuan			
Reason or motivation in e-sports	Have a good player experience	Count	28	48	7	1	84	19.692	0.034
		Expected Count	23.6	51.1	7.8	1.5	84.0		
		% within Q5	33.3%	57.1%	8.3%	1.2%	100.0%		
	Formed a fixed consumption habit	Count	14	49	11	0	74		
		Expected Count	20.8	45.0	6.8	1.3	74.0		
		% within Q5	18.9%	66.2%	14.9%	0.0%	100.0%		
	Trust in an esports game (Satisfaction)	Count	15	51	6	1	73		
		Expected Count	20.6	44.4	6.7	1.3	73.0		
		% within Q5	20.5%	69.9%	8.2%	1.4%	100.0%		
	Addicted to e-sports and dependent on it	Count	12	39	5	1	57		
		Expected Count	16.0	34.7	5.3	1.0	57.0		
		% within Q5	21.1%	68.4%	8.8%	1.8%	100.0%		
	Be influenced by the people around you	Count	39	54	7	3	103		
		Expected Count	29.0	62.6	9.5	1.9	103.0		
		% within Q5	37.9%	52.4%	6.8%	2.9%	100.0%		
Get award or remuneration	Count	17	29	5	2	53			
	Expected Count	14.9	32.2	4.9	1.0	53.0			
	% within Q5	32.1%	54.7%	9.4%	3.8%	100.0%			
Total	Count	125	270	41	8	444			
	Expected Count	125.0	270.0	41.0	8.0	444.0			
	% within Q5	28.2%	60.8%	9.2%	1.8%	100.0%			

Table 3 Reason or motivation\*Level of consumption Crosstabulation

Furthermore, as can be seen from table 4, the chi-square test results show that the degree of understanding of e-sports is statistically significant in the identification (motivation in e-sports) of e-sports with new sports forms ( $\chi^2=7.471$ ,  $p=0.025<0.05$ ).

			Q4				Total	$\chi^2$	p
			Never	Low	Moderate	High			
The identification of new forms of sports	Can compete and entertain with other players in live time	Count	16	35	42	8	101	7.471	0.025
		Expected Count	13.7	32.6	41.2	13.5	101.0		
		% within Q6	15.8%	34.7%	41.6%	7.9%	100.0%		
	Can be live on the Internet for new players or viewers to watch	Count	11	32	37	17	97		
		Expected Count	13.2	31.3	39.5	13.0	97.0		
		% within Q6	11.3%	33.0%	38.1%	17.5%	100.0%		
	Can work as a team to participate in esports	Count	20	35	52	17	124		
		Expected Count	16.9	40.0	50.6	16.6	124.0		
		% within Q6	16.1%	28.2%	41.9%	13.7%	100.0%		
	Can use smart electronic devices for better player experience	Count	12	34	37	15	98		
		Expected Count	13.3	31.6	40.0	13.1	98.0		
		% within Q6	12.2%	34.7%	37.8%	15.3%	100.0%		
	With more uniform and perfect rules of the game	Count	8	23	33	9	73		
		Expected Count	9.9	23.5	29.8	9.8	73.0		
		% within Q6	11.0%	31.5%	45.2%	12.3%	100.0%		
Total	Count	67	159	201	66	493			
	Expected Count	67.0	159.0	201.0	66.0	493.0			
	% within Q6	13.6%	32.3%	40.8%	13.4%	100.0%			

Table 4 The identification\*Degree of understanding Crosstabulation

Table 5 shows that the one-way variance test results show that the degree of understanding of e-sports is correlated with the degree of concern on the explosive growth of e-sports ( $F=2.012$ ,  $p=0.014<0.05$ ).

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	p
Never	32	3.6250	1.03954	2.012	0.014
Low	65	3.8154	.72656		
Moderate	75	3.5467	.90815		
High	29	3.3678	.96504		
Total	201	3.6202	.89197		

Table 5 Anova

## **CONCLUSIONS AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS**

This study discusses the main motivations for e-sports players to be interested in e-sports. The purpose is that in the virtual economy, marketers determine the consumption motivations of e-sports market consumers, that is, their participation in e-sports. As the analysis results show, with the explosive growth of e-sports, the huge market environment attracts businesses or consumers (e-sports players). Players with a certain amount of spending power have a higher participation rate in e-sports and know more about the impact of e-sports. At the same time, as a new form of physical exercise, e-sports players are increasingly satisfied that they can enjoy the satisfaction of winning in the virtual process by participating and competing with other players. What can be seen is that male players perform better in esports than female players, and they usually gain a certain reputation for their skills and performance in esports, which in turn is rewarded or paid by sponsors.

In fact, in esports, e-sport players may not only mentally and physically have a good experience, and it also formed a kind of players on the field focus and fascinating electronic competitive market, merchants and marketers that can compete with real-time live online, and a series of interesting and to attract more people to participate in the unified form. Therefore, in the e-sports market under the virtual economy, players or consumers with different reasons and motivations have different consumption behaviors.

## **LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH**

Although this study of the behavioral motivations of participants in emerging forms of physical activity is interesting, it has some limitations. In the research investigation, although the use of qualitative and quantitative survey analysis. It is difficult to find some interviewees who have great influence in e-sports in the

qualitative survey, so the number of interviewees through the face-to-face survey is limited. What's more, this study mainly conducted a quantitative survey and analysis through questionnaires. In fact, the statistics of the survey to judge those different e-sports players have different consumption motives may be inaccurate, so there are errors in the analysis of relevant variables.

In future research, more and more effective data should be collected for further analysis of e-sports players. As well as an in-depth understanding of how marketers accurately conduct marketing through different consumer behaviors in the context of the e-sports industry.

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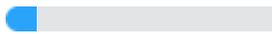
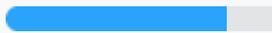
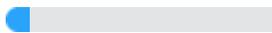
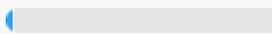
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## Appendix:

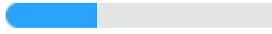
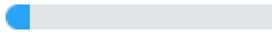
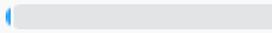
1, What`s your gender?

Options	Sub-total	Ratio
Male	110	 54.73%
Female	91	 45.27%
The number of person-times is valid	201	

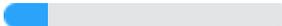
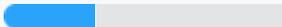
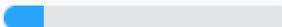
2, What`s your age?

Options	Sub-total	Ratio
Under 18	22	 10.95%
18 to 22	156	 77.61%
22-30	18	 8.96%
More than 30	5	 2.49%
The number of person-times is valid	201	

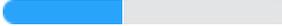
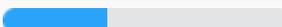
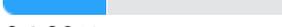
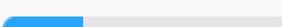
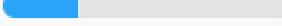
3, What is your monthly income or budget?

Options	Sub-total	Ratio
Less than 2000 yuan	65	 32.34%
2000-5000 yuan	115	 57.21%
5000-10000 yuan	18	 8.96%
More than 10000 yuan	3	 1.49%
The number of person-times is valid	201	

4, How much did you know about e-sports before that?

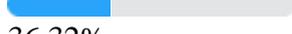
Options	Sub-total	Ratio
Never	32	 15.92%
Low	65	 32.34%
Moderate	75	 37.31%
High	29	 14.43%
The number of person-times is valid	201	

5, Compared to online games, what is your reason or motivation for getting involved in e-sports?

Options	Sub-total	Ratio
Have a good player experience	84	 41.79%
Formed a fixed consumption habit	74	 36.82%
Trust in an esports game (Satisfaction)	73	 36.32%
Addicted to e-sports and dependent on it	57	 28.36%
Be influenced by the people around you	103	 51.24%
Get award or remuneration	53	 26.37%
The number of person-times is valid	201	

6, Compared with traditional online games, which do you think is the new form practice?

Options	Sub-total	Ratio
Can compete and entertain with other players in live time	101	 50.25%

Can be live on the Internet for new players or viewers to watch	97	 48.26%
Can work as a team to participate in esports	124	 61.69%
Can use smart electronic devices for better player experience	98	 48.76%
With more uniform and perfect rules of the game	73	 36.32%
The number of person-times is valid	201	

7, Do you agree with the following reasons for the rise and explosive growth of e-sports?

Title\Options	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
The huge market environment attracts marketers and e-sports practitioners	37(18.41%)	82(40.8%)	47(23.38%)	30(14.93%)	5(2.49%)
The development of information technology provides a stable platform	42(20.9%)	86(42.79%)	55(27.36%)	8(3.98%)	10(4.98%)
People are increasingly satisfied with their spiritual or quality of life.	41(20.4%)	76(37.81%)	52(25.87%)	22(10.95%)	10(4.98%)