INVESTIGATING FANDOM, MOTIVES, AND CONSUMPTION PATTERNS OF ESPORTS CONSUMERS

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Devin Justice-Francois Anderson

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INVESTIGATING FANDOM, MOTIVES, AND CONSUMPTION PATTERNS OF ESPORTS CONSUMERS

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Devin Justice-Francois Anderson

APPROVED:

Ryan K. Zapalac, PhD
Thesis Director

Brent C. Estes, PhD
Committee Member

Erica A. Pasquini, PhD
Committee Member

Kevin D. Sweeney, PhD
Committee Member

Rodney C. Runyan, PhD
Dean, College of Health Sciences

DEDICATION

First and foremost, this thesis is dedicated to Ambry DeLeon. You came into my life when I was experiencing a plethora of life changes and this project was certainly one of the most dynamic challenges for me to date. Thank you for being my extra mind and helping me tremendously during this time period and beyond. You are the best.

Next, I dedicate this thesis to my friends and family, I would not have made it here without your undying and continuous support throughout my years at Sam Houston State University. To my friends, you know who you are, to my family: Stephanie Edwards, Charles Edwards, Carlton Anderson, Myoshia Boykin-Anderson, Ruby DeLeon Luis DeLeon, Xavier Ray, Isaiah Ray, Zion Ray, Shelby Chambers, C.J. Edwards, Jeremiah Edwards, Denzel Brewer and Derek Brewer, I love you all with all my heart. Thank you for being patient with me. To my late cousin Jordan Anderson, rest well.

Last but certainly not least, to all the gamers out there: keep gaming, connecting, and having fun!

ABSTRACT

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Esports is commonly referred to as "competitive gaming" (Robbin, 2016). Esports competitions are generally formatted by organized leagues, tournaments, and events with professional teams, or individual players, competing against each other towards a specific goal (trophy, prize money, etc.) (Hamari and Sjöblom, 2017). The purpose of this study was designed to be exploratory in nature due to the emerging nature of esports research, and the variety of results reported in prior studies. A total of 611 (N = 611) participants were included in this study. The survey package that participants completed consisted of general demographics, two modified versions of the Sport Fandom Questionnaire (SFQ) (Wann, 1995), a modified version of the Motivation Scale for Sport Consumption (MSSC) (Trail, 2012; Trail & James, 2001), and consumption variables related to attendance and viewership, social media usage, and spending. Three stepwise regression analyses were employed to examine the predictive capabilities of esports fandom and esports motivations on esports consumption variables. The first stepwise regression analysis used to predict 'Attendance and Viewership' was significant ($p < .001$), and the social interaction predictor accounted for most of the explained variance (31.7%). The second stepwise regression analysis used to predict 'Social Media' usage was also significant ($p < .001$), with the general esports fandom predictor accounting for a majority of the explained variance (28.1%). The third and final stepwise regression analysis used to predict 'Spending' was similarly significant ($p < .001$), with the vicarious achievement predictor accounted for much of the explained variance (17.0%).

The results from this study suggest that it is essential to consider the different fandom and motivational profiles of esports consumers in order to successfully reach target markets in the esports industry, thus promoting esports consumption.

KEY WORDS: Esports, Fandom, Motivations, Consumption

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

Throughout the years, the process of delivering an official definition that precisely explains the nascent industry of esports has been a challenge. Researchers have made attempts to describe esports as professional gaming that is played on electronic systems that require both cognitive and physical abilities (Hamari & Sjöblom, 2017; Vukelic & Jørgensen, 2018). Other researchers have also established alternative definitions for esports. Jenny, Manning, Keiper, and Ulrich (2017) and Pizzo et al. (2018) consider esports to be organized video game competitions in the format of organized tournaments, whereas Robbins (2016) compressed the definition even further and simply referred to esports as "competitive gaming." Jenny et al. (2017) elaborate on esports by stating that "competition is important to include in the definition because the foundation of the esports industry is centered on competition" (p. 4). The incorporation of competition is imperative since esports is connected to video-gaming culture, therefore esports should be recognized and interpreted as an "extension of gaming" (Karhulahti, 2017, p. 45).

Esports is composed of a broad set of diverse and unique leagues, tournaments, prize winnings, team/player organizations, games, genres, management structures, and even sponsorship agreements (Crawford & Gosling, 2009; Hamari & Sjöblom, 2017; Karhulahti, 2017; Vukelic & Jørgensen, 2018). In 2011, Szablewicz explained that:

> Broadly speaking, esports involves a number of different game genres including first person shooters, sports games, racing games, action games, and real time strategy games. These games are played competitively, either one-on-one or in small teams. Importantly, games usually gain acceptance as "esports" once they

have been selected for official inclusion in an international esports competition. (p. 9)

Robbins (2016) designed a general diagram that depicts the esports industry. The "esports ecosystem" (seen in Figure 1) is a brief outline that provides general examples of the many different sectors that reflect the industry seen today.

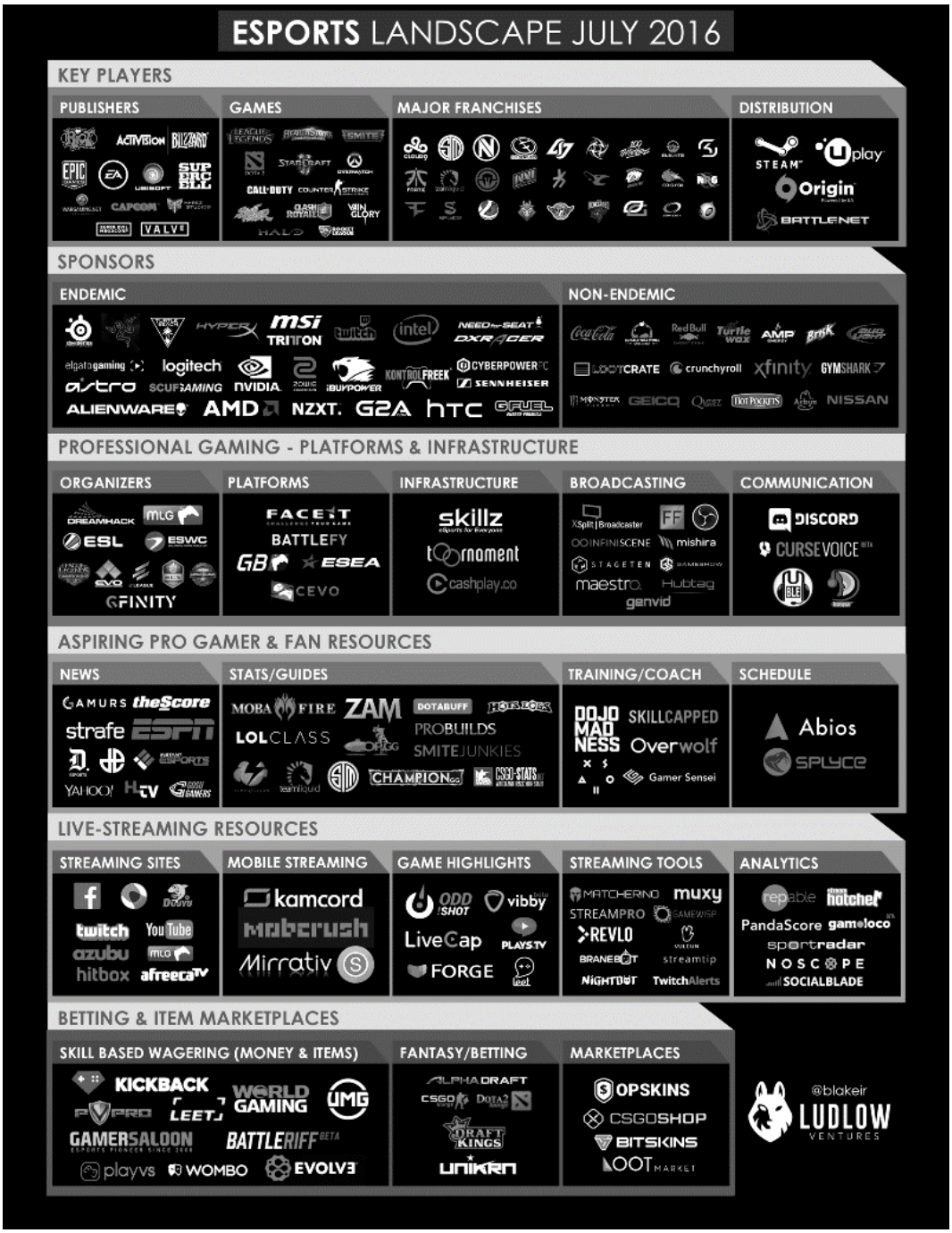

Figure 1. Esports landscape in 2016. Adapted from 'The Esports Landscape,' by B. Robbins. Retrieved from: https://medium.com/@blakeir/the-esports-landscape-july-2016-2350655dfa63.

Newzoo, a global forerunner in data analytics and market intelligence, has tracked esports in a variety of areas such as revenues, audience, and viewership numbers. In

terms of the economic size of esports, global esports revenue was estimated to be $906 million annually in 2018, with North America accounting for $345 million annually (38.1%), and China for $164 million annually (18.1%). As of 2017, the League of Legends World Championship was the most watched esports event on Twitch with 49.5 million hours watched and ticket revenues of $5.5 million. Revenue in esports comes from five diverse but related sectors: (a) sponsorships, (b) advertising, (c) media rights, (d) game publisher fees, and (e) merchandising and ticketing. The dominant revenue stream in 2018 was sponsorships, which was valued at $359.4 million annually, followed by: advertising ($173.8 million), media rights ($160.7 million), game publisher fees ($116.3 million), and merchandising and tickets ($95.5 million). In the past, endemic brands of the various esports products (i.e. Intel, Razor, Logitech, BenQ, etc.) have filled the void by an overwhelming majority. However, with the infiltration of non-endemic brands into the esports industry (i.e. Coca-Cola, Nissan, Xfinity, Hot Pockets, etc.), global investments were anticipated to reach $696 million during 2018 with the revenue figure growing to $1.4 billion by 2021 (Newzoo, 2018).

The primary method of spectatorship for esports is largely conducted by live-streaming broadcasts such as Twitch, YouTube Gaming, and Facebook LIVE. During 2017, Newzoo (2018) created a list of the "most watched videogames" on Twitch in both esports hours and non-esports hours. In the Newzoo (2018) report, non-esports hours are defined as "non-esports content including pro-players, influencers, or game shows" (p. 13). There was no definitive answer for what is to be considered esports hours in the Newzoo report, but esports hours could be any relevant content that is directly related to the esports competition that is being produced. The top five games to spectate (in esports

hours) were League of Legends (274.7 million hours), Counter-Strike: Global Offensive (232.9 million hours), Dota 2 (217.9 million hours), Hearthstone (76.9 million hours), and Overwatch (25.2 million hours) (Newzoo, 2018). Wolf (2018b) reported that viewership numbers totaled more than 400,000 viewers for Overwatch Leagues' opening day. Throughout the Overwatch Leagues' grand finals matchup that spanned over two days, the global average minute audience (described as the average number of individuals who watched a broadcast during any 60-second interval during the given broadcast), was reported to be 861,205. The U.S. average minute audience was reported to be 289,175 ("Overwatch League grand finals numbers", 2018).

Aside from online viewership, physical attendance to esports events such as League of Legends and Dota 2 have achieved record numbers. As Murray (2018) stated, "The first wave of tickets for Dota 2's *The International* 5 at the 17,000-seat Key Arena were sold out within five minutes. League of Legends famously sold out the 15,000-seat Staples Center in under an hour back in 2015" (para. 3).

Although much of the fascination with esports consumption is based on the industry's popularity with online viewership numbers, the physical attendance aspect should not be overlooked. According to Newzoo (2018), the global esports audience, which they define as "all people who watch esports content independent of frequency" (p. 11), is at 380 million. By 2021, the esports audience is expected to grow upwards of 557 million. In anticipation of the accelerated spectator growth of esports, North America's very first set of esports-specific venues were recently built in Orange County, California (Esports Arena Orange County), Las Vegas, Nevada (Esports Arena Las Vegas, Luxor Hotel & Casino), and Oakland, California (Esports Arena Oakland). Along a similar

concept, Esports Arena Drive (ESA Drive) is North America's first traveling esports venue that will come fully-equipped with a competition stage, production area, social media zone, caster studio, and a VIP lounge ("Esports Arena locations," 2018). To revolutionize and push the direct consumption of esports, the largest esports stadium in North America, solely dedicated to esports competition, was erected in late-2018 in Arlington, Texas (Igel, 2018). The venue cost the city of Arlington $10 million to renovate and is 100,000 square feet with the ability to house 1,000 spectators (Wilson, 2018).

The economics of the esports industry in terms of revenues, audience, and viewership had a strong influence on the development of this study. The analytical data provided lead the researchers to believe that there could be meaningful data extracted from esports consumers in terms of their fandom of esports, motivations for the consumption of esports, and their consumption behaviors of esports. As esports is a rapidly evolving industry, having a clearer understanding of the predictive potential of fandom and motivations on consumption behaviors could be essential to esports leagues, game developers who create videogames that could support an esports system, esports organizations, and marketers who will potentially conduct promotional and advertising in the area of esports.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was designed to be more exploratory in nature due to the emerging nature of esports research, and the variety of results reported in prior studies. As a result, specific hypotheses were not employed to guide this investigation. This study examines esports consumers in three areas of interest: (a) their fandom of

esports, (b) their motivations for the consumption of esports, and (c) their esports consumption behaviors.

Significance of the Study

This study was designed to add to the growing body of academic literature on esports. Although the industry has experienced increasing global popularity, academic research on esports consumers is still developing. Academic research on fandom, motivations for consumption, and consumption behaviors within esports has been somewhat sparse. The minimal amount of academic research on esports could be attributed to the relative newness of the esports industry. However, as esports continues to grow, new research opportunities are expected to arise. This study aims to address the limited academic esports research by employing modified fandom and motivation measures that were originally targeted at traditional sport consumers to better explain esports consumption behaviors.

Definition of Terms

Casual gamer/gaming. an individual who plays video games for recreational fun and socializing.

Esports. video games competitions in the format of organized leagues, tournaments, and events with professional teams, or individual players, competing against each other towards a specific goal (trophy, prize money, etc.) within a defined set of rules documented in a handbook or rulebook specific to that esport.

Esports participants. a professional video game player who competes under an organization, as an individual or on a team, towards a specific goal (trophy, prize money, etc.).

Esports spectators. an individual who watches broadcasted esports competitions (online) or attends live esports competitions for leisure and entertainment.

Esports title. A videogame title that has an established professional scene and league (ex: Call of Duty, Overwatch, League of Legends, etc.).

CHAPTER II

Review of Literature

This literature review is partially composed of previous motivation and fandom research found in traditional sport settings. This is to set the foundation for the academic esports research that will be elaborated on in this section. Additionally, this study was also designed to provide greater insight into the intrinsic, motivational drivers and fandom profiles of esports consumers.

Motivations for Sport Consumption

Research in sport consumer behavior has typically been split between the early pioneers of Hebb (1955) and Deci (1971). While Hebb (1955) defines motivation as procedures that energize and direct purposeful behavior, Deci (1971) conceives that motives have the ability to encourage behaviors due to the enjoyment generated by the activities. Schiffman and Kanuk (2004) have also proposed their definition on motivation by referring to it as "the driving force within individuals that impels them to action" (p. 87). Considering the many different outlooks on motivations to consume sport, this concept is important when observing the vast amount of money and time consumers input into the sport industry. As esports continues to grow, more non-endemic consumers are exposed to the industry. Thus, having a better understanding of what drives esports consumption can lend a better perspective on esports consumers behaviors.

There have been a variety of schema established for examining the motivations that drive and induce sport consumption (Funk, Beaton, & Alexandris, 2012). Frameworks such as Maslow's (1954) Hierarchy of Needs, Deci and Ryan's (1985) Self-Determination Theory, and Funk and James' (2001) Psychological Continuum Model

(PCM) have all been adopted to identify the numerous motivations that relate to consumers' desire for sport spectatorship. Early frameworks designed for measuring motivations for sport spectatorship are the Sport Fan Motivation Scale (SFMS; Wann, 1995) and the Motivations of the Sport Consumer (MSC; Milne & McDonald, 1999). In Wann's (1995) study, eight motives associated with sport fandom were proposed: (1) eustress, (2) self-esteem, (3) escape, (4) entertainment, (5) economic, (6) aesthetic, (7) group affiliation, and (8) family ties. The SFMS has been found to be both valid and reliable across numerous sport contexts and cultures (Wann & James, 2019).

Conversely, research by Trail and James (2001) discovered that there were concerns with the MSC, which exhibited limited reliability and validity measures. They presented their refined concepts on the motivations towards sport spectatorship and offered their Motivation Scale for Sport Consumption (MSSC). Trail and James (2001) also conceptualized nine motives, some of which shared common characteristics with Wann's (1995) model: (1) vicarious achievement, (2) acquisition of knowledge, (3) aesthetics, (4) drama/eustress, (5) escape, (6) family, (7) physical attractiveness, (8) physical skills, and (9) social interaction.

Motivations for Esports Consumption

Previous research concerning the possible motives towards the consumption of esports has been minimal. Early researchers in esports have identified that competition, challenge, escapism, peer pressure, and skill development are fundamental for active esports participation (Lee & Schoenstedt, 2011; Weiss & Schiele, 2013). Seo (2013) posited that the 4E's of the experience economy (educational, escapist, esthetic, entertainment), developed by Pine and Gilmore (1998), play a significant role within the

collaborative area between both the publishers and developers of video games, and consumers of esports.

Hamari and Sjöblom (2017) investigated the motivational factors that may influence the frequency of watching esports on the internet. Their instrument consisted of a modified version of the Motivation Scale for Sport Consumption (MSSC) (Trail 2012; Trail & James, 2001), and a dependent variable to pinpoint the frequency of watching esports. Granted, it must be mentioned that no specific esports title was the primary focus for their study. Rather, esports as a singular concept/activity was used as the focal point for responses. The researchers distributed online surveys to popular gaming and esports websites and forums such as Reddit, Twitter, and Facebook. At the completion of their data collection process, they amassed a total of 888 (N = 888) usable survey responses. Their results revealed that escaping everyday life, acquisition of knowledge from esports, novelty, and enjoyment of athlete aggression were dominating drivers of increased frequency of watching esports online. The results of the drama aspect did not seem to be significantly associated with esports watching frequency. Even so, the enjoyment of the aesthetics involved in esports games was negatively associated with the frequency of watching esports online. Lastly, the researchers discovered that the perceived skill of the players and watching frequency was small and insignificant, but slightly positive for watching esports on the internet (Hamari and Sjöblom, 2017).

In another study of motives to consume esports, Pizzo et al. (2018) observed the similarities and contrasts that exist between traditional sport spectators' and esports spectators' consumption motives. They sought to compare spectator attendance motives, and the possible effects on attendance frequency for traditional sport events and esports

competitions. To obtain data on spectator motives, the researchers incorporated items from both the SII and the MSSC (Trail, 2012). Game attendance frequency was measured using a self-reporting technique with a single item response. In their study, they collected data in three different contexts: a Korean League soccer match, a sport-themed esports event (FIFA Online 3), and a real-time strategy esports event (StarCraft II). There was a total of 517 (N = 517) participants in their study. The results of their data concluded that traditional sport spectators and esports spectators share similar consumption motives such as interest in sport, interest in player, aesthetics, social opportunities, drama, role model, entertainment value, wholesome environment, acquisition of knowledge, skill of athletes, and enjoyment of aggression. They also discovered that there were significant differences in the other areas such as vicarious achievement, excitement, physical attractiveness, and family bonding between traditional sports and esports. Pizzo and colleagues (2018) also discovered that for interest in traditional sport, excitement, interest in player, drama, and wholesome environment were predictors of game attendance frequency for live events. Moreover, they deduced that for interest in esports, vicarious achievement, interest in player, aesthetics, role model, social opportunities, entertainment value, family bonding, and skill of the athletes were predictors of game attendance frequency for live events (Pizzo et al., 2018).

In a more recent study conducted by Cushen, Rife, and Wann (2019), they examined the differing degrees of motivations between traditional sport fans and esports fans. There were no specific esports titles or traditional sports mentioned for observation. All participants had to complete an esports familiarity assessment before starting the Sport Fandom Questionnaire (SFQ; Wann, 2002), Sport Fan Motivation Scale (SFMS;

Wann, 1995), and the Sport Spectator Identification Scale (SSIS; Wann & Branscombe, 1993). Once the surveys and questionnaires were complete for esports-related content, an identical set of questions had to be answered for traditional sports. All the surveys and questionnaires were conducted online, with a total of 200 (N = 200) participants responding to the survey. In their findings, it was indicated that there are motivational similarities (i.e. escape, self-esteem, group affiliation, and stress relief) and differences (i.e. entertainment, learning, and family) between fans of traditional sports and esports fans.

Curley, Nausha, Slocom, and Lombardi (2017) incorporated a unique approach to their study by adopting the MSSC to examine the motivational factors involved with fans and players of competitive Overwatch. The dependent variable of "how many hours of Overwatch esports content per week" was used in their study. The researchers distributed online surveys to websites such as Reddit, Twitter, and Facebook, and the survey received a total of 1,120 (N = 1,120) viable responses. Their results concluded that fans of Overwatch esports strongly agreed with the statements that were related to factors such as aesthetics, acquisition of knowledge, skill of the professional players, and the drama associated with competitive play. Inversely, fans of Overwatch esports were strongly unmotivated by displays of aggression by the players and slightly unmotivated by vicarious achievement associated with their teams.

Sport Fandom

Fandom in Traditional Sports. As individuals age and progress through life, they tend to adopt additional group identities (Heere, James, Yoshida, & Scremin, 2011). Fink, Trail, and Anderson (2002) define identification, with reference to sport

consumption, as "orientation of the self in regard to other objects (the team) that results in feelings or sentiments of close attachment" (p. 198). Related to fandom, team identification in sport should be viewed as a form of group identification and is often treated as a multidimensional construct. This could include an individual's self-concept and how they subjectively view themselves, their membership towards their affiliated group, their knowledge, as well as any emotions attached to their group (James & Trail, 2008). Traditional sport consumers tend to discover and latch onto their favorite team or player and will continue to identify with them throughout their lifetime due to their strongly associated feelings for that team or player.

Within team identification, prior research in traditional sport has discussed the necessity for differentiating between fans and spectators. The distinction between the two should be considered important since the level of identification can have varying behavioral responses that affect financial and time commitments, attendance numbers, and even attributional patterns for game-outcomes (Wann & Branscombe, 1993).

Funk and James' (2001) Psychological Continuum Model (PCM) portrays the key differences between fans and spectators with a pyramidal format starting with the awareness stage, and transcending to the stages of attraction, attachment, and allegiance. The hierarchy begins at the bottom with *awareness*, where the individual is aware and can realize that the sport or team exists. The next level is *attraction*, and this is where the individual is capable of acknowledging the team or sport and is willing to seek out opportunities to satisfy their desire. In the next level, *attachment*, the individuals' psychological connection to the team or sport is strengthened and supported. In the last

stage of the PCM, *allegiance* is the highest level and the individual is then referred to as "durable", and the team or sport plays a significant role in their psychological framework.

This information supports the idea and understanding that fans and spectators are not synonymous and should be viewed as separate and distinct (Trail, Robinson, Dick, & Gillentine, 2003). Wann & Branscombe (1993) stated "it is expected that highly allegiant fans will become more willing to invest greater amounts of time and money in order to see their team perform (p. 4)." As esports develops, academic research may have to address the potential importance of converting general esports spectators to esports fans which would allow esports consumers to elevate their fan membership.

According to Robinson and Trail (2005), researchers have primarily focused on attachment to a team and have neglected the other possibilities such as the player, coach, university, community, sport, and the level of sport. Neglecting the other points of attachment could result in lost opportunities for key players in the sport industry who plan to maximize the consumer's experience. It has also been suggested by Robinson and Trail (2005) that "individuals may be oriented to other parts of the experience, not necessarily just a team" (p. 60).

An additional area of research within identification studies known as sports fandom will be particularly important for this thesis project. Work on this subject has been led by Wann (2001), as he is credited for developing the first instrument for measuring a sport fan's level of identification with their favorite sport. Wann developed the Sport Fandom Questionnaire (SFQ; 2001) as "a measure of one's identification with his or her role as a sports fan" (p. 104). It must be noted that there is a clear distinction between team identification and sport fandom identification. As Wann (2002) explained,

"team identification involves one's psychological connection to a team or player while sport fandom identification involves one's self-perceptions as a sport fan (p. 104). The original instrument contains five questions: (1) I consider myself to be a sports fan, (2) My friends see me as a sport fan, (3) I believe that following sport is the most enjoyable form of entertainment, (4) My life would be less enjoyable if I were not allowed to follow sports, and (5) Being a sport fan is very important to me.

Fandom in Esports. Esports fandom research has been minimal and researchers suggest that there is still much to be learned about esports fans. When focusing on esports, Cushen et al. (2019) observed the differences of team or player identification between traditional sports and esports. Their findings revealed that individuals who exhibit high levels of traditional sport fandom also exhibit high levels of esports fandom. Additionally, the results of their study shed light on the occurrence that average identification for traditional sports teams and players was higher than esports teams and player identification (Cushen et al., 2019).

Given the strong esports presence in their study, the turnout can attest to the realization of the universal magnitude of traditional sports and how solidified they are in our society. In a sport management context, acquiring supportive information that focuses on consumer identification, motivation, and consumption behaviors within esports could help stakeholders in the industry better understand which aspect of the product consumers align with. This is important to note for marketing strategies and other tactics such as segmentation, which will help divide the heterogeneous esports consumer base when pushing marketing initiatives.

In summary, based on the background literature supporting esports, it is clear that there is a gap in esports consumption research. At the time of this writing, there is limited research that specifically addresses the predictive capabilities of both fandom and motivations on certain consumption behaviors, such as attendance and viewership, social media usage, and spending on esports-related merchandise. This study will attempt to examine the predictive capability of esports fandom and motivational factors on esports consumers' consumption behaviors.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

Introduction

As previously mentioned, the purpose of this study was determined to be more exploratory in nature and thus did not test specific hypotheses. Thus, a further examination of esports consumers in the areas regarding their fandom of esports, their motivations for the consumption of esports, and their consumption behaviors of esports is a useful approach for the current study. The findings will have the intended use of providing the researchers and practitioners with a better understanding of esports consumers, thus better guiding future marketing practices targeted at this unique group of consumers.

Participants

Prior to the implementation of the study, the researchers sought approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB). After IRB approval, a convenience sample of 611 (N = 611) participants was recruited for the study. Most of the sampling of participants included students from a core class offered at a large state university located in the southern region of the United States. The sample chosen was meant to represent a portion of the general population that may or may not contain esports consumers. Preexisting studies within esports have resorted to locating and gathering data in either in-person, esports-specific settings, or via online surveys targeted at a specific group. The sample used for the present study will have the benefit of exploring and gathering accurate data that mirrors the general population. It should be noted that due to the nature of the esports industry, the expected age range for esports consumption aligned with previous esports

studies that also observe the consumption of esports (i.e., Curley, Nausha, Slocom, & Lombardi, 2017; Hamari & Sjöblom, 2017; Pizzo et al., 2018; Cushen, Rife, & Wann, 2019).

Procedure

After receiving approval from the class instructor, the primary researcher physically visited classrooms and verbally announced the purpose and procedures of the study. Participants were provided the opportunity to complete the survey on an available electronic device such as a mobile device, laptop, or tablet. Paper survey packages were also available for participants should they experience technical difficulties or not have access to a compatible device. The estimated completion time for the survey package was 10 - 15 minutes. An informed consent form was presented at the beginning of each survey package informing participants of the study, its intent, and their rights regarding their voluntary participation in the study. No personally identifying information was collected throughout any portion of the survey. Once the students voluntarily agreed to participate, the primary researcher provided a link to the survey website (offered via Qualtrics). Once all surveys were completed and submitted, the participants were thanked for their participation and the primary researcher then exited the classroom. The data collection process for this study took place in April 2019 and lasted for three weeks.

Instrumentation

At the time of this writing, there were a limited number of instruments that have been developed specifically for esports consumers to measure their fandom or motivations. Therefore, previously validated fandom and motivation scales used in traditional sports were modified to provide a general basis of understanding of esports

consumers. The survey was comprised of a series of brief questionnaires to gather general demographic information while further examining esports consumers in terms of: (a) esports fandom and fandom tied to their favorite esports titles; (b) intrinsic motivators that drive their esports consumption; and (c) consumption behaviors in the forms of attendance and viewership, social media usage, and spending towards esports-related merchandise.

The survey began with gathering general descriptive statistics on age, race/ethnicity, and academic classifications of the participants. Next, the researchers wanted to determine exactly which esports title the participants reported the most frequently. To obtain this data, and to pinpoint specific behavioral responses, the researchers comprised a brief list of the top esports titles across all platforms and genres. If participants were not able to locate their favorite esports title from the list provided, they were given the opportunity to write-in their favorite esports title, and answer the questions based off their entry. If participants selected that they were unaware of "esports", the participants concluded their participation in the survey and did not complete the remaining instruments.

In order to measure esports fandom, Wann's (2002) Sport Fandom Questionnaire (SFQ) was used to observe the fandom profiles of (a) general esports consumers and (b) their fandom towards their favorite esports title. The researcher chose to present two slightly modified versions of the SFQ, with each version numbering five questions. The instrument is designed to collect with Likert scale response options ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). As an example, the modified SFQ that was used to measure general esports fandom contained the questions: *(1) I consider myself to be an*

esports fan, *(2) My friends see me as an esports fan*, *(3) I believe that following esports is the most enjoyable form of entertainment*, *(4) My life would be less enjoyable if I were not able to follow esports*, and *(5) Being an esports fan is very important to me*.

The other version of the SFQ used to measure the participants fandom towards their favorite esports title was similar in structure to the previous SFQ version: *(1) I consider myself to be fan of [insert favorite esports title]*, *(2) My friends see me as a fan of [insert favorite esports title]*, *(3) I believe that following [insert favorite esports title] is the most enjoyable form of entertainment*, *(4) My life would be less enjoyable if I were not able to follow [insert favorite esports title]*, and *(5) Being an esports fan is very important to me*. Prior studies conducted in traditional sports settings that incorporated the SFQ revealed that the instrument is a sound assessment tool, and is normally distributed, internally consistent, reliable, and valid (Wann & James, 2019).

The Motivation Scale for Sport Consumption (MSSC) (Trail, 2012; Trail & James, 2001) was selected and modified to analyze spectator motives for consuming esports. The original MSSC possessed 31 items, but there have been revisions in subsequent iterations. As a result, the family subscale was removed, and the escape subscale was reworded. Following the suggestions of Trail (2012), the researcher also added the "novelty" and "enjoyment of aggression" subscales. Additionally, the item regarding "athleticism" was eliminated because it does not fit the context of the current study.

For the purposes of this study, the MSSC was comprised of 30 items along ten constructs. Participants responded to statements via a seven-point Likert scale from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". The ten constructs chosen were slightly modified

to fit an esports context and are as follows: *vicarious achievement*, *aesthetics*, *drama*, *escapism*, *acquisition of knowledge*, *skill of the players*, *social interaction, personality of the players*, *novelty*, and *enjoyment of aggression.* The MSSC has shown good internal consistency (α = .72 to .89) across multiple studies (Trail, 2012). The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values have also been determined to be good, as values have ranged from .51 to .82 (Trail and James, 2001).

Finally, nine items evaluating esports consumption behaviors over the past six months were included in the survey. These items were targeted toward several different broad categories of consumption behaviors, which were subsequently organized into three subscales. Namely, those subscales were defined as (1) Attendance and Viewership, (2) Spending, and (3) Social Media Usage. The three subscales and the consumption items comprising those subscales are provided in Table 1.

Table 1

Consumption Subscales and Associated Items

Subscale
Attendance and Viewership (4 items; α = .750)
• In the past six months, how often would you say you attended live esports competitions (i.e. large international competitions, smaller regional competitions, community LAN's (Local Area Network), etc.)?
• In the past six months, how often per week would you say you watch esports competitions on a mobile device (i.e. personal phone, iPad, tablet, laptop, etc.)?
• In the past six months, how often per week would you say you watch esports on cable/television?
• In the past six months, both virtually and/or in-person, how many "watch parties" have you attended to spectate esports competitions (i.e. large national/international competitions, smaller regional competitions, community LAN's (Local Area Network), etc.)?
Spending (3 items; α = .849)
• In the past six months, how much money have you spent on esports-related apparel?
• In the past six months, how much money have you spent on tickets to a live esports competition (i.e. large international competitions, smaller regional competitions, community LAN's (Local Area Network), etc.)?
• In the past six months, how much money have you spent on "additional" content towards a specific streaming platform (i.e. Twitch, YouTube, Patreon, etc.) that involves your favorite gaming and/or esports title/competitor/personality?
Social Media Usage (2 items; α = .752)
• In the past six months, how many new social media accounts have you followed that are esports-related (Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, Reddit, small community forums, etc.)?
• In the past six months, how often per week would you say you post, share, and/or engage with others about esports content on social media (Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, Reddit, small community forums, etc.)?

Statistical Analysis

Descriptive statistics on age, gender, race/ethnicity, and academic classification were analyzed. A breakdown of the participants chosen favorite esports title, or written in title, was also gathered. As it is a unitary measure of fandom, the scores of both versions of the SFQ (i.e. general esports fandom and esports fandom with a specific title) were summed to form an index for each focal point. Additionally, the scores for each of the MSSC constructs were summed to form scores as recommended by Trail (2012). The average scores from the MSSC and the two SFQ scales were then utilized in a One-Way ANOVA analysis to uncover any group differences. Three stepwise regression analyses were also employed to examine the predictive capabilities of esports fandom and esports motivations on esports consumption variables such as attendance and viewership, social media usage, and spending on esports-related merchandise. All data obtained from Qualtrics was further analyzed in SPSS (version 22). Statistical significance was set at $p < .05$.

CHAPTER IV

Results

There were a total 611 (N = 611) participants included in this study. Most of the participants were in the traditional college student age range of 18 - 24. The mean age of the participants in this study was 20.46 years of age with a standard deviation of ±2.808. Regarding gender representation of the participants, females reported over half of the ratio of females/male with an *n* of 376 (61.5%). An overwhelming majority of the race/ethnicity represented in this study derived from African Americans/Blacks and Caucasians/Whites with a combined *n* of 478 (79.1%). In terms of academic standing at the university used to sample this study, sophomores were the most reported classification with *n* of 229 (37.4%). A further breakdown of the descriptive statistics is shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Demographics of Participants

	n		***n***
Age		***University Education***	
18-24	583	Freshman	
25-34	25	Sophomore	166
35 and over	3	Junior	229
Mean	20.46	Senior	150
		Post-Baccalaureate	65
			1
Gender		***Race/Ethnicity***	
Female	376	African American/Black	133
Male	234	American Indian and Alaskan Native	20
Preferred not to self-describe	1	Asian	15
		Hispanic (Latino/Latina)	73
		Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander	3
		White	345
		Preferred Not to Report	10
		Other (Biracial, Arab/Mediterranean, etc.)	5

While observing which esports titles the respondents selected as their favorite to spectate, the results were stratified across a variety of different esports titles and associated communities. These titles included (ranked in order of the number of reported responses): (1) Call of Duty, (2) Super Smash Bros, (3) Fortnite, (4) Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six: Siege, (5) Pokémon, (6) Rocket League, (7) Street Fighter, (8) League of Legends, (9) Counter-Strike: GO, (10) Overwatch, (11) Hearthstone, and (12) Dota 2, among others. Participants who did not locate their favorite esports titles from the list that was provided by the primary researcher were given the opportunity to type in their own response. There were 34 different responses across a variety of esports titles such NBA

2K, Madden, Tekken, Mortal Kombat, FIFA, Injustice, Halo, and Apex Legends. The response totals for each esports title selected, as well as the number of participants who selected that they were completely unfamiliar "esports" or "competitive gaming" can be found in Table 3.

Table 3

Favorite Esports Titles to Spectate

Esports Titles	***n***
Call of Duty (CoD)	114
Super Smash Bros	95
Fortnite	63
Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six: Siege	22
(R6S)	18
NBA 2K	15
Pokémon	14
Rocket League	12
Street Fighter	11
League of Legends (LoL)	9
Counter-Strike: GO	8
Overwatch	7
Hearthstone	3
Dota 2	3
Madden	3
Mortal Kombat	3
Halo	3
Apex Legends	2
FIFA	1
Tekken	1
Injustice	177
Completely unfamiliar with esports	27
Game titles selected that are not esports	

A one-sample *t* test was conducted on the SFQ scores to evaluate whether there was a significant difference between general fandom of esports and fandom for a specific esports title. The sample mean for fandom of general esports consumers 17.23 (SD = 7.04), $t(422) = 50.31$, $p = .000$ was significantly different from fandom towards a specific

esports title, 20.64 (SD = 6.80), $t(415) = 61.91$, $p = .000$. The 95% confidence interval for the SFQ mean ranged from 17.23 to 20.64. These results suggest that general esports fandom is significantly ($p < .001$) lower than fandom with a specific esports title.

A one-way between subjects analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to evaluate the relationship between general esports fandom and the different esports titles. The independent variable included the esports title that the participant reported as being their favorite. The dependent variable was the score of the Sport Fandom Questionnaire (SFQ) which assessed an individual's level of fandom towards esports in general. The results revealed that there was a significant difference in general esports fandom between the different esports titles at the $p < .05$ level, $F(12, 410) = 5.264$, $p < .001$.

A one-way between subjects analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to evaluate the relationship between esports specific title fandom and the different esports titles. The independent variable was the different esports titles that were presented to the participant and they were instructed to select or write-in their favorite title. The dependent variable of esports specific title fandom consisted of the SFQ that was directed at their favorite title as opposed to their general esports fandom. The results revealed that there was a significant difference between the different esports titles and the esports title specific fandom at the $p < .05$ level, $F(12, 403) = 6.735$, $p < .001$.

Originally, there were nine questions created to measure the consumption behaviors of esports consumers. To provide a clearer and detailed analysis of the data, three subscales were formed by the sum of the participants' responses and then categorizing into the predominant consumption behaviors of attendance and viewership trends, social media usage, and spending on esports-related merchandise. The

‘Attendance and Viewership’ subscale consisted of four items (Cronbach’s α = .750), the ‘Social Media’ subscale included three items (Cronbach’s α = .752), and the ‘Spending’ subscale was comprised of two items (Cronbach’s α = .849). Please see Table 1 for a description of the subscales and their associated items.

Three stepwise multiple regression analyses were conducted to evaluate how well the independent variables of the SFQ – general esports fandom, SFQ – specific esports title, and the 10 subscales of the MSSC predicted the different consumption behaviors related to attendance and viewership, social media, and spending. ‘Attendance and Viewership’ of esports content ranged from attending live esports events, watching online, watching via cable or television, and attending virtual and in-person watch parties. The ‘Social Media’ consumption behavior was labeled by how many new social media accounts the participants have recently followed, and how often do they share, post, or engage with others about esports content. The last consumption behavior, ‘Spending’, consisted of questions asking how much money the participants have spent over the past six months on additional content, esports-related apparel, and tickets to attend live esports events.

The first stepwise regression analysis used to predict ‘Attendance and Viewership’ was significant, $F(5, 369) = 50.246$, $p < .001$. For the attendance and viewership consumption behavior, there were five statistically significant ($p < .01$) predictors related to this behavior. Four of the predictors were positively weighted (social interaction, general esports fandom, vicarious achievement, and skill of the athletes), while one of the predictors was negatively weighted (drama). However, it is important to note that social interaction accounted for most of the variance in the model, with 31.7%

explained variance with regards to attendance and viewership consumption of esports. Presented in Table 4 is the stepwise regression analysis employing the different predictors on attendance and viewership consumption behaviors of esports consumers.

Table 4

Summary of Stepwise Regression Analysis for Esports Fandom and Motivation Variables Predicting Attendance and Viewership Consumption (N = 374)

	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4			Model 5		
Variable	*B*	*SE B*	*β*	*B*	*SE B*	*β*	*B*	*SE B*	*β*	*B*	*SE B*	*β*	*B*	*SE B*	*β*
Social Interaction	.343	.026	.564	.222	.034	.365	.117	.044	.193	.125	.043	.205	.125	.043	.205
General Esports Fandom				.115	.022	.295	.095	.023	.243	.085	.023	.216	.090	.023	.230
Vicarious Achievement							.113	.038	.181	.109	.037	.175	.112	.037	.180
Skill of Esports Athletes										.119	.052	.140	.257	.067	.303
Drama													-.128	.041	-.223
Constant	2.168	.325		1.577	.333		1.515	.331		1.190	.357		1.557	.372	
R^2		.317			.362			.376			.383			.397	
F for change in R^2		174.265**			107.156**			75.967***			58.975***			50.246***	

Note: *$p < .05$. **$p < .001$. Table 4 shows both the beta (B) and standardized (β) weight predictions. There were 33 partially completed survey packages, which would account for the missing *n* of the total amount of surveys collected.

The next stepwise regression analysis used to predict ‘Social Media’ usage was significant, $F(4, 370) = 50.393$, $p < .001$. When observing the social media consumption behavior, there were four statistically significant ($p < .01$) predictors associated with this behavior. Three of the predictors were positively weighted (general esports fandom, vicarious achievement, and skill of the athletes), while one of the predictors was negatively weighted (physical attraction). It is important to note that general esports fandom accounted for most of the variance in the model, with 28.1% explained variance in predicting social media usage. Presented in Table 5 is the stepwise regression analysis employing the different predictors on social media usage.

Table 5

Summary of Stepwise Regression Analysis for Esports Fandom and Motivation Variables Predicting Social Media Usage Consumption (N = 374)

	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4		
Variable	*B*	*SE B*	*β*	*B*	*SE B*	*β*	*B*	*SE B*	*β*	*B*	*SE B*	*β*
General Esports Fandom	.123	.010	.532	.083	.013	.360	.068	.014	.294	.065	.014	.279
Vicarious Achievement				.100	.020	.272	.082	.021	.222	.111	.024	.301
Skill of Esports Athletes							.081	.028	.162	.077	.028	.153
Physical Attractiveness										-.047	.020	-.120
Constant	.948	.190		.687	.192							
R^2		.281			.324			.337			.346	
F for change in R^2		147.309**			90.565**			64.470***			50.393***	

Note: *$p < .05$. **$p < .001$. Table 5 shows both the beta (B) and standardized (β) weight predictions. There were 33 partially completed survey packages, which would account for the missing *n* of the total amount of surveys collected.

The final stepwise regression equation used to predict 'Spending' was significant, $F(2, 372) = 45.914$, $p < .001$. When observing the spending consumption behavior, there were two statistically significant ($p < .01$) predictors associated with this behavior. Both predictors were positively weighted (vicarious achievement and social interaction), with vicarious achievement accounting for much of the variance in the model (17.0% explained variance). Presented in Table 6 is the stepwise regression analysis employing the different predictors on spending consumption behaviors of esports consumers.

Table 6

Summary of Stepwise Regression Analysis for Esports Fandom and Motivation Variables Predicting Esports Spending (N = 374)

	Model 1			Model 2		
Variable	*B*	*SE B*	*β*	*B*	*SE B*	*β*
Vicarious Achievement	.170	.019	.415	.105	.027	.256
Social Interaction				.090	.026	.225
Constant	1.656	.236		1.656	.236	
R^2		.170			.194	
F for change in R^2		77.728**			45.914**	

Note: *$p < .05$. **$p < .001$. Table 6 shows both the beta (B) and standardized (β) weight predictions. There were 33 partially completed survey packages, which would account for the missing *n* of the total amount of surveys collected.

CHAPTER V

Discussion

To begin, there were two unique demographical results that caused this study to differ from other esports-related studies that observed esports consumption. The first was the gender breakdown of the sample participants. The sample employed in the current study represents a higher female-to-male ratio of participants than the majority of other esports-related studies that were reviewed. This finding could certainly derive from the fact that the academic institution used for the data collection sample generally has a higher proportion of females enrolled.

The second demographical result that is unique to the present study was the number of participants who reported their academic classification. In recent years, esports has begun making its transition into both interscholastic and intercollegiate settings. As the esports industry expects to grow and gain popularity, junior varsity and varsity esports programs have also been on the rise. Esports programs at the high school level could provide an extracurricular activity, or a viable varsity esports opportunity, for the students enrolled (i.e., Crook, 2018). The results from the current study indicate that undergraduates are indeed interested in esports and esports consumption, and thus could represent an important touchpoint for marketers and university esports products.

As a result, universities that are interested in methods to increase student enrollment or are considering the possibilities of adding a club or varsity-level esports team could capitalize on the opportunity to attract esports consumers and boost overall enrollment. This is a tactic that has worked in traditional sport settings (i.e., Perez, 2012). As revealed from this study, if universities decided to embrace esports programs, a useful

strategy could be to focus on undergraduate students to increase the engagement of the students who consume esports. Future research should investigate the undergraduate recruiting capability of esports for a university.

The results from the *t* test concluded that general esports fandom was reported to be much lower for esports consumers as compared to their fandom towards their favorite esports title. For example, this result suggests that if an esports consumer's favorite esports title is NBA 2K, their fandom for the video game will be higher as opposed to fandom with the broader landscape of esports. This would make sense due to the esports industry transitioning video games that have already been established in their respective gaming communities into a spectator phenomenon where esports consumers watch their favorite team or player battle against their opponent. If an individual has never consumed esports, presenting various esports titles for them to experience could allow the individual to develop fandom for these titles, subsequently resulting in several different types of esports consumption. This is contrary to the idea of simply exposing an individual to a single esports title, which would likely limit their esports consumption. A tactic that could be used to broaden a consumer's fandom across many titles could involve marketing and promotional efforts directed at a variety of esports genres, thus making the consumer a more complete fan of esports.

Enjoyment of aggression was not a significant predictor of any of the three consumption variables in this study. Conversely, Hamari & Sjöblom (2017) and Pizzo et al. (2018) discovered that enjoyment of aggression had an influence on the consumption behavior of esports. It is important to note that both of those studies examined attendance and viewership in virtual and/or live environments. Given previous research findings

examining the enjoyment of aggression motive in esports contexts, the lack of significance for this predictor is rather surprising, especially since the majority of esports titles reported have an aggressive element present (see Table 3). Thus, the current study extends research on the role that enjoyment of aggression plays on a broader range of esports consumption behaviors. It will be important for future research to further examine the predictive role that enjoyment of aggression has upon esports consumption, especially as it relates to specific titles.

In the present study, the interaction of the vicarious achievement predictor with attendance and viewership could be due to esports consumers experiencing a heightened sense of pride and appreciation for their favorite team or player whenever they perform well. Pizzo et al.'s (2018) study partially supports this finding from the present study as they used two esports titles as a basis for observation. They found that vicarious achievement had a negative effect on the consumption of one esports title, while the other had a positive effect. On the other hand, Curley et al. (2017) found that Overwatch fans are slightly unmotivated by vicarious achievement.

The results from the current study suggest that when the team or player succeeds, esports consumers are more likely to attend live esports events or watch them compete via livestream. As the results from this study conclude, esports consumers who feel a strong sense of vicarious achievement may also use their social media as a method of expressing their support and excitement to their following because of how well their team competed or placed in an event or tournament. The results of this study also suggest that if an esports consumer's favorite team or player being successful, they seem to be more willing to spend their money on esports-related content (such as donating to their favorite

players stream) and merchandise (their favorite team or players jersey). This behavior could be used as a method of showing their fan loyalty and openly pledging their allegiance to their favorite team or player. Thus, esports marketers would be well advised to highlight vicarious achievement throughout their marketing efforts.

Based on this study, we found that social interaction is an important part of predicting attendance and viewership (i.e., attending live events, watch parties, or participating in live-stream chats whenever their favorite team or player is competing), which relates to Cushen et al.'s (2019) study as they also speak to the importance of the socialization process. Similarly, Hilvert-Bruce, Neill, Sjöblom, and Hamari (2018) discovered that the social interaction variable explained the amount of time viewers were engaged during a Twitch livestream. By doing so, findings from this study propose that esports consumers can discuss amongst others that share the same hobby, passion, or appreciation for esports-related content. Thus, these activities could give them the opportunity to feel as if they are part of a larger group of like-minded individuals. On the contrary, Pizzo et al. (2018) shared that social opportunities were a negative predictor for esports consumption.

In terms of the spending consumption behavior, the results from this study allude to the possibility that esports consumers are more likely to donate to their favorite player's stream, which can afford them additional benefits such as conversing with either the streamer or the chat room. In turn, this could allow the esports consumer to feel that sense of group socialization with others that share the same camaraderie for that team or player. Additionally, the results from this study suggest that esports consumers engage in purchasing merchandise so that they can represent their favorite team or player in various

public settings, which is also an important consumption behavior for traditional sport consumers (Wann & James, 2019).

The present study, along with Curley et al. (2017) and Pizzo et al. (2018), corroborate the finding that the skill of professional esport players can be a positive predictor of esports consumption. Therefore, it can be inferred from the present study that esports consumers who appreciate, admire, and respect the high level of skill involved in competition are more likely to attend a live esports event or tune into the stream that involves their favorite esports team or player.

When an esports consumer's favorite team or player displays their exceptional skill and strategies against an opponent, the results of this study suggest that esports consumers are interested in sharing their thoughts through social media platforms. Esports player skill may play a role in social media usage, though the amount of variance accounted for by the model was rather small. Thus, the role that esports player skill has on social media usage should be examined in greater depth future studies.

The current study denotes that esports consumers who label themselves as general fans of the industry (meaning that they do not have fandom or loyalty tied to a specific esports title, team, or player) are more likely to attend live esports events and watch esports matches via streaming platforms. The results from this study indicate that esports consumers' attendance and viewership behavior is not determined by their favoritism, but instead, general esports consumers simply enjoy opportunities to watch esports.

Whether or not general esports consumers will eventually attach to a specific team or player, thus fostering their specific title fandom, is up for debate. To that extent, considering the wide range of esports titles and the unique fan communities that are

associated with them, the industry may be able to benefit by developing the general esports consumer. The present study may imply that general esports consumers could be more receptive to a wider variety of esports products and services, which could lead to more opportunities for diversifying attendance and viewership behaviors. Furthermore, the results from this study reveal that general esports consumers are more likely to use social media and engage with others for the simple fact that they would like to interact with other esports fans.

The results from this study concluded that esports consumers do not find physical attractiveness of their preferred esports team or player a significant predictor of social media usage. This finding could be considered interesting, although Pizzo et al. (2018) and Hamari & Sjöblom (2017) discovered that physical attractiveness had a similarly negative influence on esports consumption. It is important to note, however, that the female-male sample breakdown for the current study was abnormal when compared to other esports-related studies that focus on esports consumption. The higher ratio of reported female-to-male participants in this study could lend to the differing results of the physical attractiveness predictor, though confirmation of that finding is necessary. The supplementary aspects of esports broadcasts such as the hosts, commentators, analysts, or any additional on-air talent were not considered for this scope of this study.

The results derived from the drama predictor suggest that esports consumers do not prefer close or tight matches involving their favorite esports player or team. Curley et al. (2017) revealed that the results from their study differed significantly from the current study, as well as Hamari & Sjöblom's (2017) study, by reporting that Overwatch fans positively associated with the drama aspect of competition. Pizzo et al. (2018) also

produced results that agree with the drama aspect found in Curley et al. (2017). For this study, it would seem as if esports consumers would rather attend or spectate a live esports event where the match is a clear victory for their team and/or player, with their favorites displaying a dominating performance. Esports marketers would likely want to highlight that factor when teams and/or players are expected to have a victory in their contest. This is quite different from traditional sports, which often thrive on the drama motivation as being an important component of the experience (Wann & James, 2019).

Practical Implications

The data concluded from this study suggest that there is a key takeaway for sport marketers, in-house marketing teams for esports organizations, and both endemic and non-endemic brands who choose to venture into esports. Fandom and motivational profiles of esports consumers are essential for successfully reaching target markets in the esports industry. When ignored, misaligned marketing ploys can disrupt esports consumers causing negative backlash and feedback. Brands that choose to go into esports and do not take the necessary precautions can severely damage their opportunity of capitalizing on the esports consumer (i.e., Cushen et al., 2019; Hamari & Sjöblom, 2017; Pizzo et al., 2018).

When brainstorming creative ideas to be released for advertisements or any promotional activity, the target audience should not be conceived as a monolithic group of esports consumers that will identify and enjoy any content that is released to them. As the data from this study reveals, esports consumers can have their general esports fandom, as well as their fandom towards their specific esports title, which could also include differing degrees of strength based on the esports title. Instead, the intended

message for each group of individuals that associate with their favorite esports title should be uniquely directed to their interest with that specific game. As an example, an esports organization may actively have esports teams in Call of Duty, Super Smash Bros., and League of Legends, but the marketing ploys delivered to the fans of their organization should not be a "one size fits all" concept. Instead, each subset of fans that demonstrate fandom with their favorite esports title should be carefully considered so they may be catered to accordingly.

As the results from this study suggest, esports consumers have varying levels of fandom and this could provide unique opportunities for sponsorships in the esports industry. Due to the many different esports titles, players, and communities that are associated with them, it is possible that the idea of niche marketing within esports could lead to a multitude of benefits for the individual esports player, the sponsor, and the esports consumer. Unique personalities within the esports scene are diverse and prominent and therefore allow brands to pick and choose who they wish to sponsor. If a brand sponsorship is properly aligned, then the esports consumers of that particular esports player are more likely to embrace the associated brand, which can maximize the sponsor's reach. The brand will be introduced to a new market, the esports player diversifies their revenue streams, and the esports consumer is allowed to receive discounted merchandise, products, or services assuming that they buy into the brand.

Limitations

The retrieval of data from a single large state university located in the southern region of the United States is a limiting factor for this study. The inclusion of more participants from different universities could help diversify the responses within the data

set. Another limiting factor for this study could be the implementation and modification of already existing fandom and motivation instruments that were originally designed for traditional sports. As mentioned previously, at the time of this writing, there have been limited fandom and/or motivation instruments developed to precisely fit the esports context. Therefore, the responses from participants could possibly differ if there were instruments designed exclusively for the esports consumer.

Suggestions for Future Research

Future studies should try and replicate the present study to reaffirm or challenge the reliability and validity of the present study. Motivational and fandom measurement tools that can specifically target esports consumers would be a more effective and proficient method for obtaining relevant future data on esports consumers. Addressing the role fandom plays for fandom towards a specific esports title, as well as fandom towards esports in general, would provide critical information on esports consumers. This study had the opportunity to focus on three different consumption behaviors of esports consumers (attendance and viewership, social media, and spending), and future studies should aim to further explore the various methods esports consumers are navigating to consume their content. Diversifying participants by adding a broader sample size would also benefit future studies by providing a heterogenous data set that can be analyzed to help provide better generalizability of the results.

The present study did not observe and seek esports consumption data from esports or general gaming participants. Rather, the intent was to gather esports consumption data from both fans and spectators of the esports industry. An interesting twist to the current

study would be to analyze esports participants who either actively compete or possess ownership of a gaming platform and observe their consumption of esports.

Due to the data collection process for this study, the reported female-male gender ratio should certainly open the discussion of female esports consumers and their consumption behaviors. The researchers suggest that the unique female presence in this study affected how fandom and motivations influence the consumption of esports. Considering this is the one of the few esports consumption-related studies involving a high proportion of female respondents, future researchers should focus more specifically on this important group of esports consumers.

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APPENDIX

Re: Request for consent to use figure in graduate thesis.

Blake Robbins <blake@ludlowventures.com>

Thu 11/7/2019 6:37 PM

To:Anderson, Devin <dja010@SHSU.EDU>;

Cc:Zapalac, Ryan <RKZ001@SHSU.EDU>;

Hey --

Please feel free to use my figure!

Agreed to: Use figure **Name & Title**: Blake Robbins, Partner
Company/Affiliation: Ludlow Ventures **Date**: 11/7/2019

On Thu, Nov 7, 2019 at 3:29 PM Anderson, Devin <dja010@shsu.edu> wrote:

> Good Day Mr. Robbins --
>
> I am in the process of creating a graduate thesis, and I would like your permission to include the following material in this project:
>
> - Figure 1. Esports landscape in 2016. Adapted from 'The Esports Landscape,' by B. Robbins. Retrieved from: https://medium.com/@blakeir/the-esports-landscape-july-2016-2350655dfa63.
>
> In *Investigating Fandom, Motives, and Consumption Patterns of Esports Consumers*, the figure will be used to illustrate the various sectors of business that reflects the esports industry seen today. It will be available to the public through Sam Houston State University's Institutional Repository. Also, in the near future, I plan to publish my document in external journals.
>
> If you do not control the copyright on all of the above-mentioned material, I would appreciate any contact information you can provide regarding the proper rights holder(s), including current address(es). Otherwise, your permission confirms that you hold the right to grant the permission requested here.
>
> Permission includes non-exclusive world rights in all languages to use the material and will not limit any future publications-including future editions and revisions-by you or others authorized by you. The material will be attributed to you in the thesis and a copy of the given permission will be included in the Appendix.
>
> I would greatly appreciate your consent to my request. If you require any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me. I can be reached at: dja010@shsu.edu

VITA

Devin Justice-Francois Anderson

EDUCATION

- Sam Houston State University, Huntsville, TX

  Bachelor of Science in Kinesiology *Graduation*, August 2017
  Master of Science in Sport Management *Graduation*, December 2019

INTERNSHIP & VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

- Sam Houston State University Color Run, Huntsville, TX

  Graduate Student Volunteer**,** April 2019

  - ❖ Aided the College of Health Sciences in their first annual color run to raise awareness and donate the proceeds to the Texas Children's Hospital
- The Risher Companies, Houston, TX

  Undergraduate Intern, June 2017 – August 2017

  - ❖ Played a role in the in-depth process of providing quality fitness services, equipment and solutions in a corporate health/wellness setting
- Sam Houston State University Athletics, Huntsville, TX

  Undergraduate Strength and Conditioning Intern, August 2015 – September 2016

  - ❖ Trained and supervised all 17 Bearkat intercollegiate athletic teams
- Memorial Hermann Ironman Sports Medicine Institute, Houston, TX

  Undergraduate Volunteer Assistant, July 2015 – August 2015

  - ❖ Observed and evaluated a multitude of different patients and athletes from around the world during their rehabilitation

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

- AndTech Solutions, LLC

  Business Support Analyst, June 2019 – Present

  - ❖ Performed daily analytical processes to assess requirements for various Healthcare-related businesses. Configured necessary documents (forms, assessments, etc.) for the nurses and clinicians to utilize in their daily operations
- Sam Houston State University, Huntsville, TX

  Graduate Research Assistant, January 2018 – May 2019

  - ❖ Provided aid to the Kinesiology department professors for all research related projects and inquiries

  Graduate Teaching Assistant*,* August 2017 – December 2017

  - ❖ Designed a curriculum and instructed four activity classes related to Weight Training & Physical Conditioning for the Fall semester

24 Hour Fitness SuperSport, Richmond, TX

Overnight Service Representative**,** June 2015 – August 2015*,* June 2014 – August 2014

- ❖ Performed and managed all nightly tasks in preparation for daily operations and activities

- Dollar General, Wallis, TX

Stocker/Cashier, June 2013 – August 2013

- ❖ Managed all store product (food, chemical, cosmetic, etc.) for proper store organization and presentation

PROFESSIONAL PRESENTATIONS

- American Council of Sports Medicine (ACSM) Annual Meeting, Denver, CO

Assistant Presenter (w/Dr. Mary Williams), June 2017

- ❖ *Title: "The Relationship of Speed, Power, and Hamstrings/Quadriceps Isokinetic Strength in Collegiate Sprinting Athletes"*

- Sam Houston State University Annual Undergraduate Research Symposium (URS), Huntsville, TX

Presenter, April 2017

- ❖ *Title: "The Relationship of Speed, Power, and Hamstrings/Quadriceps Isokinetic Strength in Collegiate Sprinting Athletes"*

ACCOMPLISHMENTS & AWARDS

- Master's Thesis Project: "Investigating Fandom, Motives, and Consumption Patterns of Esports Consumers"

Primary Researcher, August 2018 – November 2019

- The Annual Lagardère Sports-Esports Rising Conference

Graduate Student Attendee, November 2018

- Student Travel Award for Professional Presentation (STAPP) Grant, Huntsville, TX

Grant Recipient, *February 2017*

- Enhancing Undergraduate Research and Creative Activities (EURECA) Program, Huntsville, TX

Award Recipient, June 2016 – August 2016

- Sam Houston State University College of Health Sciences, Huntsville, TX

Undergraduate Researcher, June 2016 – December 2016

- ❖ *Title: "The Relationship of Speed, Power, and Hamstrings/Quadriceps Isokinetic Strength in Collegiate Sprinting Athletes"*

- Sam Houston State University, Huntsville, TX

President's List: Spring 2014, Spring 2017
Dean's List: Spring 2014, Fall 2015, Fall 2016