Motivations for eSport Consumption: A Road Map for Traditional Sports Online Spectating

Samuel Schmidt, University of Louisville
Megan Shreffler (advisor), University of Louisville

Thursday, October 29, 2015   **25-minute oral presentation**
3:00-3:25 PM, Tallahassee Room   **(including questions)**

Introduction

An emerging consumption practice that is becoming a dominant practice is the spectating of competitive gaming, also known as eSport. eSports, or organized competitive gaming, is an in-dustry that is modeled after traditional sport industries such as football, soccer, basketball, base-ball and hockey (Breslau, 2012). The eSport industry has grown to include professional teams with managers, sponsors, sports psychologists, salaries, world championships, endorsements, and most importantly, spectators (Segal, 2014).

In its infancy, eSport spectatorship has seen an explosion of growth in a small amount of time. In 2013, 2.4 billion hours of eSport video content was consumed by spectators, almost double the 1.3 billion hours that was consumed in 2012 (Gaudiosi, 2014). The majority of the spectating comes from the website Twitch.tv, an online streaming site for video games. Twitch.tv had 45 million unique, monthly eSports viewers in 2013 (Gaudiosi, 2014). The high viewership num-bers inspired Amazon, whose growth has been aided by the Internet, to enter into the eSports spectator industry. Amazon, in August of 2014, announced it had purchased Twitch.tv for $970 million (MacMillen & Bensinger, 2014).

eSports viewership began to surpass traditional sports such as football, baseball and basketball as over 27 million viewers tuned into the 2014 Season 4 World Championship (Gafford, 2014). To put this into perspective, the 2014 BCS national championship gained 25.5 million viewers, the 2014 NBA Finals Game 7 had 18 million viewers and the 2014 World Series had 23.5 million viewers (Volner, 2015; Dorsey, 2014). In terms of online only streaming, Twitch.tv accounts for over 43% of the live streamed video on the Internet, while ESPN and MLB.com equate to 6.3% and 7.2% of the live stream in the United States (Kim, 2014).

Theoretical Background

This study draws upon the uses and gratifications theory to provide a theoretical framework for the explanation of an individual's tendency to consume eSport. Ruggiero (2000) identified the uses and gratifications theory as an approach to examining how media can attract and hold audi-ences and the social and psychological needs that are met thorough media (as cited in Cantril, 1942). Previously, the uses and gratifications theory was applied solely to print media, but it was not until the 21st century that the theory made has re-emerged. In his study, Ruggiero (2000) ex-amined the re-emergence of the uses and gratifications theory in the 21st century as the Internet explodes in popularity. Past research, in a sport management framework, has looked at the uses and gratifications theory and applied it to motivators for consumption of traditional sport. Most notably, Trail & James (2001) provided a detailed analysis on the motivations of sports fanship. With the growth of consumption via the Internet, this study will be able to expand upon the uses and gratifications through an eSport spectator's perspective.

Purpose

ESPN recently announced that its programing will be available to be viewed without a cable sub-scription, signifying another step traditional sport is taking from television spectators, to online streaming of sports (Kang, 2015). As traditional sports move to live and pre-recorded streaming for a medium of consumption, understanding what draws individuals to an established entity, such as eSport, that shares many commonalities with traditional sport is important for marketing, promotional and sponsorship managers. The study will be driven by the following research ques-tion:

RQ1: *Is there a relationship between the chosen motives for eSport consumption (Entertainment, knowledge, permanence, social interaction, diversion, arousal and skill) and the consumption behaviors of eSport spectators?*

Method

Sample

This study will be conducted with a sample of approximately 200 active eSport spectators. The quantitative survey will be distributed via the online social media site reddit.com. The instrument will be submitted as a link through a post on the subreddit categories r/leagueoflegends, r/DotA2, r/GlobalOffensive and r/esports. Each of these domains gives the community a place to congre-gate and discuss eSport news, live events, results of tournaments and important information within the eSport community.

Instrument and Procedure

The research instrument will begin by asking the participants if they are a spectator of eSports (organized, competitive gaming) in a yes or no question. Including this qualifying question helps ensure that all participants of the study are familiar with the eSport industry and spectate eSports. If the participant answers "no" to the first question, they will be withdrawn from the survey at no penalty to them and their participation will not be counted in the study.

The second section of the research instrument is a modified version of the Lee and Schoenstedt (2011) motivational scale for playing sport video games. Respondents will be asked to report their level of agreement/disagreement with the statement provided on a seven point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 7= strongly agree). Entertainment, knowledge, permanence, social interac-tion, diversion, arousal and skill will be measured in a 21 Likert type items (three for each meas-ure). A sample statement is, "I watch eSports because it excites me". The chosen motivators were selected due to their significance among eSport spectators in a pilot study. The current study hopes to expand on a previously conducted pilot study by comparing the chosen motivators to spectating behaviors.

In the third section of the instrument, the participants will identify their level of sport fandom. The instrument is a modified version of the Sport Fandom Questionnaire, developed by Wann (2002) to measure the level of eSport fandom for eSport spectators. There will be five statements on a seven point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 7= strongly agree) regarding their fandom of eSports. An example of an item from the modified Sport Fandom Questionnaire is, "I consider myself to be an eSport fan". This construct creates an opportunity to better understand the demo-graphics of eSport spectators. Finally, the behavior of eSports consumers will be measured through four items (likelihood of attending an eSports event, the likelihood of talking about eSports with others, the likelihood of consuming eSports news, and the number of hours spent per week consuming eSports).

Data Analysis
The data will be entered in the program SPSS 21.0 for analysis. Descriptive statistics will be used to summarize the data collected and develop a profile for the participants of the study. To ensure internal reliability, Cronbach's alpha will be used. A minimum acceptable level of .70 for the Cronbach's alpha test will be used to confirm the instrument is reliable (Nunnally & Berstein, 1994).

Multiple regression will be used to analyze the research question. Multiple regression analysis will be used to examine the degree to which the five chosen factors (social interaction, arousal, permanence, diversion and to pass the time) influence the amount of eSports consumed.

Result/Major Findings, Limitations, and Future Research

The results/major findings, limitations and future research will be reported in detail at the 2015 Sport Marketing Association conference. The survey will be distributed in May 2015, with data collection and analysis being performed in June and July 2015. The results of this study should be beneficial to marketers as traditional sport spectatorship moves to a new medium.

References

Breslau, R. (2012, October 4). Riot VP of eSports: 'Haters gonna hate'. Gamespot. Retrieved from http://www.gamespot.com/articles/riot-vp-of-esports-haters-gonna-hate/1100-6397683/.

Gafford, T. (2014, December 1). League of Legends 2014 World Championship viewer num-bers. Ongamers.net. Retrieved from http://www.ongamers.com/articles/league-of-leg-ends-2014-world-championship-viewer-n/1100-2365/.

Gaudiosi, J. (2014, June 4). Esports viewership rivals traditional TV. Chicago Tribune. Retrieved from http://www.chicagotribune.com/entertainment/sns-201406041200--tms--in videogctnzs-b20140604-20140604-story.html.

Dorsey, P. (2014, December 3). 'League of Legends' ratings top NBA finals, World Series clinchers. ESPN.com. Retrieved from http://espn.go.com/espn/story/_/page/instantawe some-leagueoflegends-141201/league-legends-championships-watched-more-people-nba-finals-world-series-clinchers.

Kang, J. (2015, January 5). ESPN will be available through a stream service, no cable required. The Washington Post. Retrieved from http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/business/wp/2015/01/05/espn-goes-streaming-through-dishs-sling-tv-no-cable-required/?hpid=z1.

Kim, E. (2014, August 25). Amazon buys Twitch For $970 million In cash. Retrieved from http://www.businessinsider.com/amazon-buys-twitch-2014-8.

Lee, D. and Schoenstedt, L. (2011). Comparison of eSports and traditional sports consumption motives. Journal of Research, 6(2). Retrieved from http://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ954495.

MacMillen, D., & Bensinger, G. (2014, August 24). Amazon to buy video site Twitch for $970 million. The Wall Street Journal. Retrieved from http://www.wsj.com/articles/amazon-to-buy-video-site-twitch-for-more-than-1-billion-1408988885.

Nunnally, J., & Bernstein, I. (1994). Psychometric theory (3rd ed.). New York, NY: McGraw Hill.

Segal, D. (2014, October 11). Behind League of Legends, E-Sports's main attraction. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/12/technology/riot-games-league-of-legends-main-attraction-esports.html?smid=tw-nytimes.

Ruggiero, T.E. (2000). Uses and gratifications theory in the 21st century. Mass Communication and Society, 3(1), 3-37. Retrieved from http://www4.ncsu.edu/~amgutsch/Ruggiero.pdf.

Trail, G.T. & James, J.D. (2001). The motivation scale for sport consumption: Assessment of the scale's psychometric properties. Journal of Sport Behavior, 24, 108-127.

Volner, D. (2015, January 13). College football playoff National Championship ESPN delivers largest audience in cable history: ESPN streaming record for non-World Cup programming. ESPNMediaZone.com. Retrieved from http://espnmediazone.com/us/press-releases/2015/01/college-football-playoff-national-championship-espn/.

Wann, D. (2002). Preliminary validation of a measure for assessing identification as a sport fan: The sport fandom questionnaire. International Journal of Sport Management, 3, 103-115.