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An Empirical Study on Esports Consumer Consumption Patterns, Motives and its Effect on Consumer Behavior

Dr. S. Saravana Kumar

Assistant Professor, Presidency University, Bangalore, India

Email: s.sarvankumar@gmail.com

Dr. Prathima M

Assistant Professor, MBAESG, Jain (Deemed to be) University, Bangalore, India

Email: prathima.murali@mba-esg.in

Dr Ashwini Sanmath

Assistant Professor, MBAESG, Jain (Deemed to be) University, Bangalore, India

Email: ashwini.s@mba-esg.in

Dr. Arjun Dutta

Assistant Professor, MBAESG, Jain (Deemed to be) University, Bangalore

Email: arjun.d@mba-esg.in

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Abstract

Esports (sometimes known as electronic sports) is a type of video game competition. Esports is a global phenomenon that has been growing rapidly in recent years. Esports is a form of electronic sports that are usually organized multiplayer video game events between professional players, either individually or in teams. This study looked at the relatively new phenomena of eSports gaming, focusing on both motivational and behavioral aspects of eSports consumption to see if eSports consumption is becoming more popular. Whether consumption exists alone as a unique market or if it is related to other markets. Alternatively, it can be used to supplement typical sports consumption. The extent to which intentions influence time spent on eSports was investigated using regression analysis. Previous esports research has relied on finding and collecting data in either in-person, esports-specific settings or through internet surveys aimed towards a certain demographic. Since then esports has witnessed growing popularity among Indian youth and has severely impacted their behavioral outcomes. The present study in this respect tried to understand the impact of esports on consumer behavior. In order to fulfil the purpose of study a survey has been conducted with 124 consumers of Esports in India based on close ended structured questionnaire. The results of the data showed that there is significant impact of esports on

consumer behavior. The findings of this study reveal that to successfully reach target audiences in the esports business and promote esports consumption on more material, esports-related gear, and other items.

Keywords

esports, esports consumption, Social media and games, Consumption of esports, video games.

Introduction

The term 'esports' can be interpreted as competitive video gaming at professional level (Finch et al., 2020). The advent of Esports in India can certainly be dated back to 2000s. At this time console and PC gaming options helped bring several middle-income group Indians on the digital gaming platforms. In India it is the E-Sports Federation of India that regulates esports in the country. Considering the growing popularity of esports in India, it has been witnessed that it commanded a viewership of 4mn in year 2017 however it is expected that it is likely to grow fivefold by the year 2021 (KPMG India, 2017). Although the number of esports events that are held in India are still at small number but still it expected that there will be significant increase in pace of growth along with lucrative prize pools are enticing. The major key drivers that are working in favor of esports industry in India includes young population, access to high speed bandwidth at low cost, maturing ecosystem, rising disposable income, affordable new technologies, localized games, increased smartphone penetration and digital payment user base on the rise (Narain, 2021).

Developing nations, such as India, have traditionally been hesitant to adopt new technology, but eSports in general, and Battle Royale in particular, have been a different story. Because many current games include mobile versions, and the Battle Royale genre is mostly played on mobile phones, the trend has grown as quickly as the cell phone market. The gaming community in India has long existed, but the authorities realized one fine morning that some cultural lines were being violated and outlawed a major platform in the country. However, it resulted in an unanticipated outcome, as eSports as a genre received unprecedented public attention (Sihvonen and Karhulahti, 2020).

Literature review

The advent of eSports as a business force in young culture is sometimes considered a globally significant cultural phenomenon. However, the truth reveals two distinct gaming cultures divided by eastern and western value systems (Jenny et al., 2018). The gaming market is complex and includes various categories like online and mobile games, console and PC, games delivered through internet and serious games. Hence it becomes important to understand the factors that affects the consumer behavior in this electronic age towards Esports. First factor is time flexibility since consumers mostly play when they are free and have time flexibility,

thus these games are the sort of solution about how to spend once idle time. Next factor that has been identified includes how well these games stimulate emotions through the excitement caused by prosed gaming activities (Charraud, 2019). However, evidence with respect to the Indian market is limited, which limits the potential of companies to understand how esports affects the Indian youth's buying choices. Therefore, the present study aims to assess the impact of esports on consumer behavior in the context of India.

Esports vs. sports

Football, basketball, hockey, and other sports that primarily use the human body are the most popular traditional sports. In contrast to esports, where a player's quality is determined by their response time. Time, game knowledge, multitasking, planning, and other mental tasks are all important considerations. Despite having only, a fraction of the market value of traditional sports in 2015, esports has already had a significant impact overtaken Major League Baseball (MLB) and the National Basketball Association (NBA) in terms of viewership the National Basketball Association (NBA) and the National Hockey League (NHL) are two professional sports leagues (NHL). Even though esports is rapidly expanding in popularity, it is still viewed as a new kind of entertainment by the public and is not commonly regarded as a sport (Lee and Schoenstedt, 2011).

Dimensions of consumer behavior affected by Esports

The basic psychological human needs forms the fundamental premise for opting for esports. In this whole process there are always certain dimensions of consumer behavior that gets affected. Some of them includes skills improvement, this means the extent to which Esports fans gets to learn new skills and thus eventually improves their own game by imitating professionals. Further considering the player itself it helps to improve their hand and eye coordination thus improving their cognitive abilities (Souza and Freitas, 2017). Next it generates vicarious sensations where consumer functions as if they are playing Esports while watching the game. Another major dimension which is affected includes socialization. Since it enables people to interact with people who have similar sort of interest and identities thus enabling the feelings of belongingness and social acceptance. Also, the involvement in these kind of games increases a sense of competitiveness among consumers which is crucial for determining the efforts put in by an individual in attaining goals set. Further some other aspects of consumer behavior that might get affected includes their skill appreciation abilities, bonding abilities and better community building (Qian et al., 2020).

Does consuming eSports replace or supplement traditional sports consumption?

The consumption of eSports is a hot topic as the number of people

participating as players or spectators is increasing worldwide. Digitalization has made this growth possible, and streaming platforms like Twitch offer a new way for people to communicate and engage. This has made eSports more accessible and people can watch professional and amateur tournaments on their devices (Pu, 2021). Streaming platforms continue to be supported by streamers, whose digital communities have grown up around them, as well as online communities. It has created a sense of community and accessibility that traditional linear media does not have, changing the way people consume media. E-sport is not considered a sport, but it has the potential to become one (Pu, 2021). In fact, sports embody the prevailing digitization trends, combining aspects of sports, business, leisure, technology and digital media. In addition, sports and its consumers represent a change in the way media content is consumed (Eleanor E Cranmer, 2021). In addition, the relationship between e-sports and traditional sports and the defining characteristics of e-sports are discussed to support the role of e-sports as a sports entertainment product. This has made eSports an interesting research topic in all academic disciplines (Eleanor E Cranmer, 2021) and created various opportunities for marketers and managers to participate in eSports (Pu, 2021).

Exploration of Esports Consumers Consumption Patterns

According to the 2008 ESA study, more than a quarter of the most regular game players paid to play online games. Other wireless devices, such as cellular phones and personal digital assistants (PDAs), are becoming increasingly popular gaming platforms, speeding the consumption of esports. Video gamers are drawn to this relatively new sports genre psychological and social motivation of gamers, such as enthusiasm, diversion/escape, social contact, competition, accomplishment application of knowledge, affinity with sports, and fantasy According to the European Space Agency's (ESA). According to a 2008 survey, approximately 60% of game users play with or against each other. The number of players has consistently climbed, from 51% in 2006 to 56% in 2007, showing that online gamers are increasingly looking for possibilities for social connection while playing video games (Seo and Jung, 2016).

Overall, while esports and sports share some similarities, there are also significant differences in terms of audience, consumption patterns, and community engagement. As esports continues to grow in popularity, it will be interesting to see how it evolves and adapts to changing consumer preferences and behaviors.

Motivations for Sport Consumption

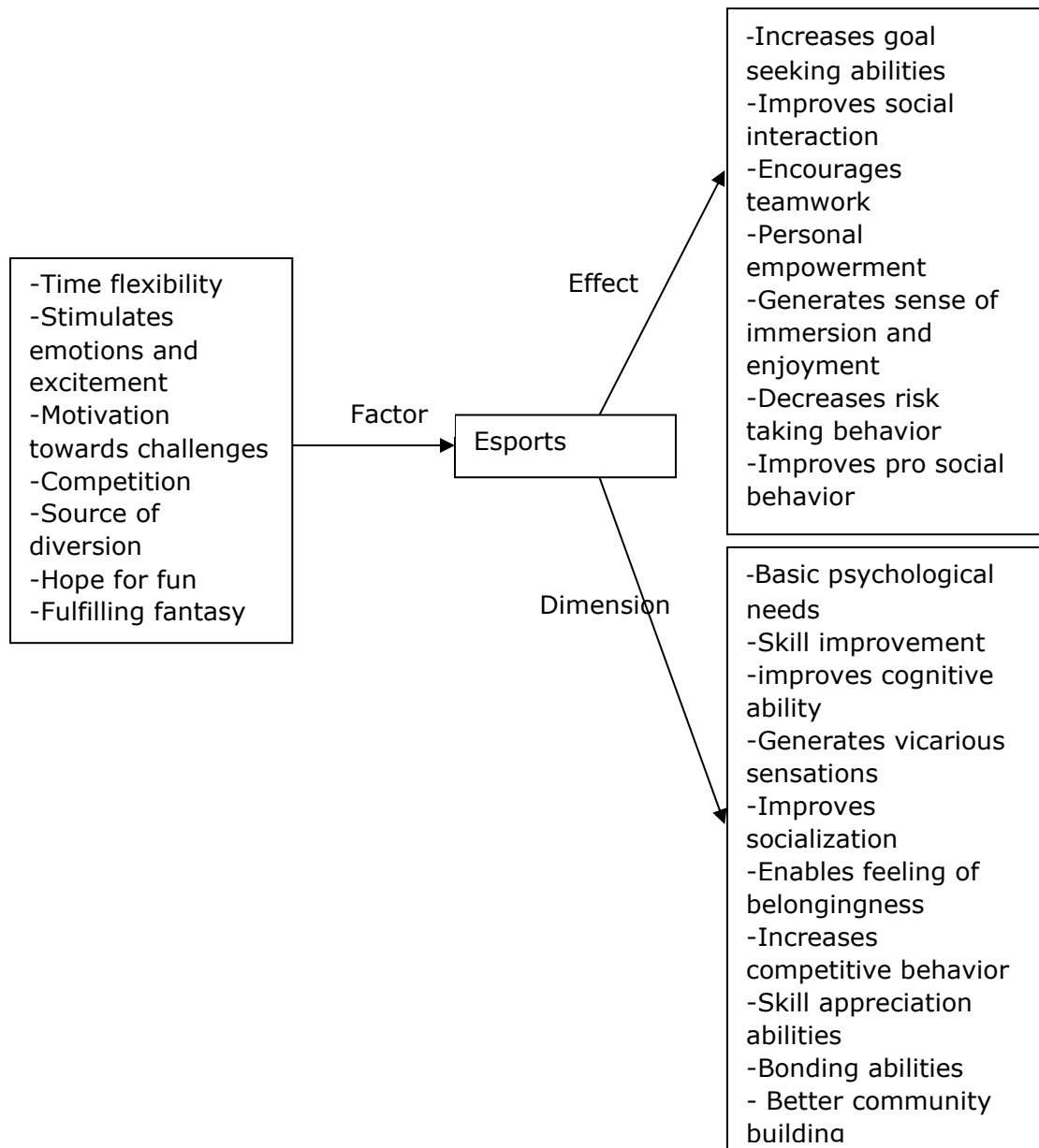
In the scientific literature, many incentive theories are employed to explain consumer behavior in diverse settings. According to scientists working on motivation theories, motivation is a powerful motivator that drives people to achieve their goals. According to Ryan and Deci (2000), motivation is a "stimulus to accomplish something." According to Roberts, Hughes, and Kertbo (2014), it

may be used to predict a person's conduct. According to Ryan and Deci (2000), a person who does not have a need or desire to accomplish anything is not motivated, but a person involved and active in pursuing a certain goal is motivated. According to general definitions of motivations, individuals have specific wants that go unmet, and these unmet wants to become a driving force for future activities. Maslow's key work on need hierarchy theory, published in 1943, stated five hierarchical phases of human needs that operate as motivators for varied behaviors. Physiological needs, safety needs, love needs, esteem requirements, and self-actualization requirements are among the needs that range from low to high. To put it another way, the lower level of requirements must be met before moving on to the higher levels of demand. In more recent ideas, various incentives represent different psychological, societal, structural, and game-related elements that allow people to fulfill unmet needs by participating in eSports games. Another theoretical framework that helps explain an individual's propensity to participate in eSports activities is the uses and gratifications thesis. Individuals must actively participate in selecting and integrating media to meet requirements such as amusement, relaxation, distraction, escape, information gain, interaction, self-esteem, and social acceptability (Schmidt and Shreffler, 2015).

Consumer Motivation

Computer games are regarded as an interesting leisure activity that piques the attention of players and may even lead to addiction. They may be linked to traits like stronger long-term and short-term memory, rapid pattern recognition, qualitative thinking, principled decision-making, and self-observation that are associated with experts. Video and internet gaming has become the most popular leisure activities during the previous few decades. Gaming is a multifunction leisure information system that satisfies our hedonistic wants and is something we like doing and is thought to have functionality that might benefit the future. There has been a considerable growth in eSports watchers since 2016 - both casual viewers and enthusiasts, or those who watch it regularly. Year over year, there was a 12.3 percent growth from 2018 to 2019. The overall audience in 2019 was 443 million, including 245 million casual watchers and 198 million enthusiasts. The Sports Fan Motivation Scale and the Motives of the Sport Consumer are two early frameworks for assessing sport spectatorship motivations (Brown et al., 2018).

Consumer involvement is widely acknowledged as a crucial notion for explaining game-playing characteristics and reflecting task-oriented consumer behavior in the game environment. According to Javornik and Mandelli (2013), consumer involvement has a long history in numerous academic disciplines, demonstrating its importance to social sciences and, as a result, to the situation under consideration in this article. These items were aimed at a variety of broad categories of consuming patterns, which were then divided into three subscales. (1) Attendance and Viewership, (2) Spending, and (3) Social Media Usage were the subscales defined.



Conceptual framework

The diagram shown below represents the conceptual framework on which present study is based. As shown, factors that tends to affect the consumer behavior in electronic age towards the esports include time flexibility, stimulates emotions and excitement, motivation towards accepting challenges etc. Esports affect the consumer behavior by affecting aspects such as increasing goal seeking ability, improving their social interaction, encouraging teamwork etc. The different dimensions of consumer behavior which are affected by esports include their psychological needs, cognitive ability, vicarious sensations etc.

Research methodology

For the purpose of present study quantitative primary data has been

collected. The data has been collected from 124 consumers of Esports in India using a close ended structured questionnaire. The questionnaires so designed was administered online to the respondent using the Google forms. The respondents were first explained the purpose of study through mail and post their confirmation on being part of study Google forms were forwarded to them. Further considering the sampling plan used, purposive sampling method has been used, which is a non-probability sampling method where respondents were selected based on judgment of researcher. The respondent were based on the following criteria.

1. Should be above 18 years of age
2. Should be the consumer of Esports

Further considering the data analysis procedure. For analysis of the data, the researcher employed appropriate analysis tools and software for answering the research questions. The tools for analysis used in this study included SPSS for survey. The analysis for survey comprised of frequency analysis, correlation, regression and ANOVA. The quantitative data collected from the respondents was in raw form, and required to be processed and analysed to draw conclusions and generalizations. The data was coded and fed into SPSS, statistical software package, to perform the descriptive and inferential analysis.

How does the time spent on eSports vary by demographic?

Demographic analysis

The following section will represent the demographic profile of participants based on their gender, age, education, professional background, marital status and monthly income.

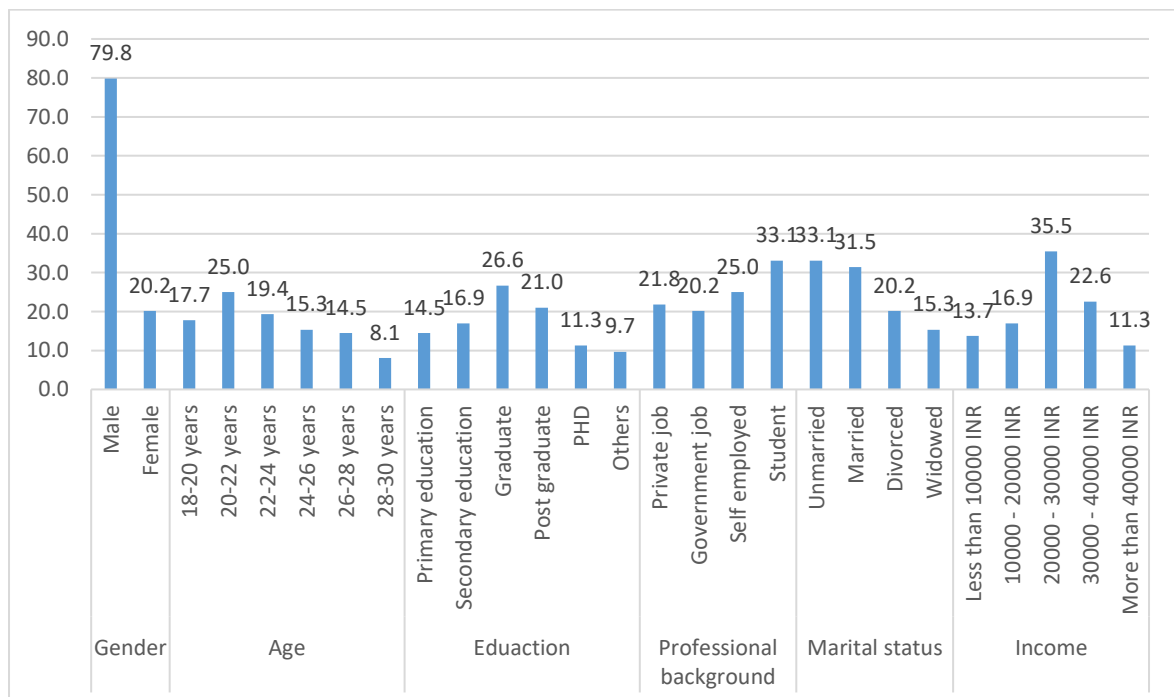


Figure 1: Demographic analysis

As per the demographic analysis of respondent it was found that majority of people who participated in study were male (79.8%). Considering the age distribution of respondents. The highest number of respondents were from the age group of 20-22 years (25%), second highest were from 22-24 years age group (19.4%), 17.7% were from 18-20 years age group and least number of respondent were from the age group of 28-30 years (8.1%). Next the researcher considered the educational background of respondent. It was found that majority of them were graduates (26.6%), 21% of them were post graduates, while 11.3 were PHD degree holders. Further considering the professional background of respondent, majority of them were students 33.1%, 25% were self-employed, 21.8% were working in private sector while 20.2% were government sector employees. Moreover it was found that majority of respondents who took part in study were unmarried (33.1%) and majority of them had monthly income between 20000-30000 INR.

Viewership

The eSports business has witnessed remarkable growth in terms of viewership and income over the years. It's not simply because those viewers are earning income that increased viewing has led to revenue growth. Seeing the possibility of reaching a big and engaged audience, corporations are investing in eSports marketing directly and indirectly. This has led to the industry's rapid financial development, which has only been hampered by COVID's restrictions on major public eSports events. eSports has grown in a variety of different ways as well, with many of them being intertwined in some manner. Since 2016, there has been a huge growth in eSports watchers, both casual and avid, that is, those who watch it on a regular basis. Year over year, there was a 12.3 percent growth from 2018 to 2019. The overall audience in 2019 was 443 million, including 245 million casual watchers and 198 million enthusiasts. As a result, the overall audience climbed to 496 million, or over half a billion eSports fans. Twitch and YouTube, for example, have experienced an increase in their user base. Another factor contributing to the growth of the eSports audience is viewership.

Social media usage

Gaming is already inextricably linked to communication technology and applications in general. In-game communication is available via chat, VoIP, and applications such as Team Speak, Discord, and others. People use Twitch and YouTube Gaming sites to watch other people play games, and they use YouTube, Twitter, and other social media outlets to follow their favorite players or teams. Staying up to speed on esports and in touch with other fans and teams may be done both synchronously and asynchronously through social media. The beauty of social media is that it ignores time zones, such as games played in different time zones, and becomes a focus for esports activity and discussion. It's also very

unusual for fans to watch live broadcasts and competitions while also interacting with each other.

What is the relationship between intentions and time spent on eSports?

The results of the study indicate a need for further research into the relationship between intentions and time spent on eSports. The research model developed explains triggers resulting from esports gameplay intention, which is causally linked to esports gameplay and media consumption behavior. The study examined the effect of prior esports gameplay experience and gameplay time on the relationship between esports gameplay intention's antecedents and consequences (Jang W, 2021). The study conducted a median split to divide the clusters into high and low frequency groups based on gameplay time (Jang W, 2021). This revealed two distinct patterns that emerged; the group with lower esports gameplay time was distinguished from the group with higher esports gameplay time depending upon their gameplay time. The two groups showed different patterns based upon the frequency of their prior gameplay experience. Prior esports gameplay experience had an effect on the relationship between esports gameplay intention's antecedents and consequences (Jang W, 2021). The gameplay time, which is measured as actual esports gameplay time per week, is an important factor in this relationship. Highly experienced esports consumers may engage in gameplay for pleasure and habit, while those with less esports gameplay experience may prioritize price value along with habit and joy of gameplay. Additionally, individuals with little esports gameplay experience may consider price value for their gameplay (Jang W, 2021). This is likely due to the "Freemium" business model, which is based on the idea of offering an initial product for free and then charging for additional features. Gameplay intention predicted engagement in live esports streaming content successfully in the group who played infrequently, while esports gameplay had no effect on engagement in live esports streaming content for consumers who played esports games frequently. These findings suggest that prior experience, measured by the amount of gameplay time, is considered a significant factor in consumers' intention and behavior in esports gameplay engagement (Jang W, 2021). Future researchers may focus on in-game item purchasing consumption in the esports context, as in-game items such as "boost" items attract gameplay consumers because they save time and effort in reaching in-game achievements.

Inferential analysis

Impact of Esports on consumer behavior

The following section will focus on understanding the impact of Esports on consumer behavior. In order to prove this, first the correlation analysis will be

conducted which will help to test the strength of relationship between the independent and dependent variable. Esports represent the independent variable while consumer behaviour will depict the dependent variable. The correlation results are shown below in table -1.

Table-1: Correlation analysis

0	Codes/Variables	Pearson coefficient	Significance
	Dependent	1	
Basic psychological needs	A1	0.862	.000
Skill improvement	A2	0.818	.000
Improves cognitive ability	A3	0.885	.000
Generates vicarious sensations	A4	0.890	.000
Improves socialization	A5	0.918	.000
Enables feeling of belongingness	A6	0.906	.000
Increases competitive behavior	A7	0.912	.000
Skill appreciation abilities	A8	0.854	.000
Bonding abilities	A9	0.809	.000
Better community building	A10	0.840	.000

As shown in the table above, the significance value for all the variables is 0.05 which is less than the significance level of study, i.e. $0.00 < 0.05$. The following significance level indicate that there is the possibility of linkage between the Esports and consumer behaviour. Next the table also depicts the Pearson coefficient value for each of the variable. The following depicts the coefficient value which is required to have moderate linkage the dependent and independent variables (i.e. A1 - 0.862, A2 - 0.818, A3 - 0.885, A4 - 0.890, A5 - 0.918, A6 - 0.906, A7 - 0.912, A8 - 0.854, A9 - 0.809, A10 - 0.840). Hence the Correlation results show that there is significant linkage between Esports and consumer behaviour.

Further the hypothesis that will be considered for analysing the impact of Esports on consumer behaviour is shown below.

H01: there is no significant impact of Esports on consumer behaviour.

HA1: there is significant impact of Esports on consumer behaviour.

The next step in process is regression analysis, which is used to estimate the relationship between dependent and independent variables. The results of regression analysis is shown in table - 2 below.

Table-2: Regression analysis

CL	Coefficient	T-Statistics	P-Value	R ²	Adjusted R ²	F Ratio
Constant	-.110	-1.461	.147	0.959	0.955	262.249
A1	.327	8.059	.000			
A2	-.048	-1.158	.249			
A3	.206	3.001	.003			
A4	-.067	-1.056	.293			
A5	-.069	-.884	.379			
A6	.365	5.710	.000			
A7	.189	3.498	.001			
A8	.649	10.204	.000			
A9	-.696	-9.460	.000			
A10	.180	3.492	.001			

As shown in table above the value of R² and adjusted R² is 0.959 and 0.955 respectively. The value of R² shows that model appropriately represents the impact of Esports on consumer behaviour. Further the value of adjusted R² which is 0.955 shows that 95.5% of variation in independent variable is represented by dependent variable. Moreover the F-value which is 262.249 is greater than the required value of 1. Considering the P-value, it was found that variables such as A1- Basic psychological needs, A3- Improves cognitive ability, A6- Enables feeling of belongingness, A7- Increases competitive behavior, A8- Skill appreciation abilities, A9- Bonding abilities and A10- Better community building. The P-value for all these variables was less than the significance level of the study which is 0.05. This indicates that Esports will going to impact consumer behaviour. Thus the null hypothesis that there is no significant impact of Esports on consumer behaviour is rejected.

Conclusions

The term "competitive gaming" is widely used to describe esports. Esports contests are often structured leagues, tournaments, and events in which professional teams or individual players compete against one another for a specified purpose (trophies, prize money, and so on). Motivation to play games is explained by the theory of self-determination, which states that personal motivation is a multifaceted construct, according to the present degree of research of consumer motivation as an antecedent of a certain activity. Extrinsic motivation, experiential motivation, and intrinsic motivation are thought to be the three categories of motivation that define typical consumer motivation to play video games.

The most important aspect of esports is social media since elite teams' matches live on sites like YouTube Gaming, Twitch, and Facebook. As a result, getting people aware of the broadcast schedule via social media is critical to an event's success. Furthermore, esports is a popular area among young people, and today's youth is quite active on social media. So, to reach out to potential event

attendees and spectators, one must rely on social media and digital marketing. MSSC forecasted several consuming behaviors such as attendance and watching, social media use, and expenditure. Considering this increased penetration of Esports in Indian market it becomes important to analyze its impact on consumer behavior which have been the focus of present study. The study thus employed the correlation and regression technique and reached to the results that it does have impact on consumer behavior by affecting factors such as their basic psychological needs, by improving their cognitive ability, enabling feeling of belongingness among them etc. are some of the dimensions of human behavior that are affected by Esports. The findings of this study reveal that to successfully reach target audiences in the esports business and promote esports consumption, it is necessary to understand the various fandom and motivational characteristics of esports consumers.

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