

Introduction

eSports or electronic sports is an organized and competitive gaming with a specific goal at the end of a game where single players or teams compete against each other (Khromov et al. 2018)

eSports have rapidly grown and exploded into mainstream in recent years, the competitive gaming's biggest event of the year, the League of Legends World Championship sell out full stadiums and drew nearly 100 million unique online viewers in late 2018 surpassed the Super Bowl with the viewership of 98 million and surpassed other well-known professional leagues including MLB, NBA and NHL.

Compared to traditional sports, the eSports audience has increased by 60% since 2017, fueling the rapid growth of this fastest growing industry. The global audience is expected to grow to 276 million by 2022 (Cunningham et al. 2018). Moreover, the growth of eSports will be even more surging with the major event in which esports shall be included in Asian Games 2022 that could pave the way for full Olympic status. Therefore, with great viewership and promising growth come a great amount of money in the game, the traditional sports does not forgo this emerging industry, nor see it as a threat but consequently, several league of traditional sports started to take this into account and acquired eSports teams, franchises or individual athletes to form eSports teams of their own in order to secure their place and their viewers in this fast-paced trend.

Following these large streams of investment in the eSports industry and the alternation in the lifestyle of the youth, pursuing a career in eSports can be portrayed as a dream job for the upcoming generation (The strait Times, 2015). Even though, sitting in front of a computer and playing video games is not the image that comes to mind when a person thinks of an athlete.

Conversely, now, countries have begun to recognize professional gamers as athletes (Kane and Spradley. 2017). As a matter of fact, In this research we will define an athlete as a professional player with a work contract with a professional eSports team while “a player” will be referred to a person without the eSports contract while having relevant game skills or status (Khromov et al. 2018) and despite the inconclusive on whether or not we should recognize eSports as a sports(Kane et al, 2017), the growth of the eSport economy still continue to expand along with the popularity that still continuingly to surge that came with the attractive prize pool over US\$34 million in which the value exceed the several traditional sports with the example of the top eSports athlete who have earned more than 6.8 million USD of prize money in addition to their salaries and sponsorship rewards (eSports Earnings, 2019).

Despite the hype, it is still difficult for eSports athletes to make a career out of it and as similar to the traditional sport athletes, there are only a small number of pro players who become successful and be able to gain recognition among this extremely competitive industry. There are numerous drawbacks and an extremely high risk in this career path.

Aside from its small likelihood of success, its rewards also deem to be unproportionate to the risk in which the athletes have to endure. Thus being an eSport athlete would not be suitable for people who seek certainty. In addition, most eSport athletes spend time for 5.5 to 10 hours per day, 7 days per week practising while their career only lasts until they reach their mid-20s(iQ Intel,2016).

For this research, the goal is to look for the factors at which can influence the likelihood of the individual who deciding to pursue a risky career of becoming an eSports athlete.

Literature Review

Due to the explosive popularity in the eSports industry, there is numerous research covering many aspects of the industry while there exists only a few of the research in which are recognized as the empirical research that is not just the observations of one of the authors with first-hand experience in this area. The lack of empirical research in this field plays an essential part in motivating the current call for research in this paper. The studies in which the scope of the review will emphasize on are the psychology factors in becoming an eSports athlete determining by both internal or characteristics of eSport players (personality traits, motivational patterns, etc.), and external factors (peer pressure, family status, support, etc.) with the criteria of research being empirical study and the data that up to date.

Banyai et al (2018) filter numerous researches in finding the empirical research with recent data on the psychological perspective in eSports that published between 2000 and 2017. The total of eight empirical studies met inclusion requirements, these eight researches comprise with three main topics but to the scope of our research, only two of which will be considered. The two main topics that will be considered are the process of becoming eSport athlete and the characteristics of eSport athlete.

By analyzing the factors influencing the players to be motivated and invest their time duration in the eSport gaming, in the research of Lee & Schoenstedt (2011) have shown interesting data which discuss the overall 14 influential factors. Thus, the three most significant results behind the motivation were found: “competitive spirit”, “skill learning” and “peer pressure”. While another source also found a similar finding, the other important influential factors in becoming an eSport athlete are “discipline” and “support”. On average, eSport athletes spend on actual playing is 5.5 to 10 hours daily. Fifteen percent reported 3 hours or more of sitting and playing without standing to take a break (Donoghue et al. 2019). Some other

source does also state about 12 to 14 daily hours taken up by esports activities, the additional hours seem to really come from time spent in esports related activities such as participation in team meetings, video / recording based game tactics analysis, strategic discussions, sponsored events and so on (Kari et al. 2019). Consequently, similar to traditional sport athlete with all these training regimen and motivation, the athletes will yield higher performance and by analysing recorded Counter Strike tournaments games, Kadan et al. (2018) concluded common factors indicating victory in this game where the higher features values will lead to higher winning potential which finally translate into the closer step in becoming eSport athlete.

In addition to these empirical research, there are still some limitations in which researchers have paid very limited attention to investigate the psychological profile of eSport athletes. Compared to the previous study in this field, most of which only cover some part of the internal factors while overlook the relevant external factors. In short, there are still a number of relevant factors that are neglected by the researchers both internal and external factors that could have an impact on the decision in pursuing eSport athlete as a career.

As a contribution, this paper aims to take further observation towards understanding of the eSport athlete's initiation along with the ability to carry out a better understanding in pursuing eSport as a career path while also open up the possibilities for the future research in order to improve the eSports industry.

Methodology

The purpose of the research on “Influential factors in becoming an eSport athlete” is to understand the reason behind the decision dilemma and initiation stage (Salo. 2017) of individual in pursuing a career in this highly competitive industry regard to both internal and external factors. Game Theory is used to explain the behavior of the decision making toward the eSport career path from the primary and secondary data collected. The data will be analyzed including both descriptive and inferential analysis where in process of inferential analysis will be executed using Regression Analysis method to determine which factors have the largest impact on the decision.

1. Data

Data were collected by an observation via player profile and statistics websites for both eSport athletes and eSport players with the self-report questionnaire conducted in addition to eSport players. The population of this study are eSport athletes and eSport players which combine to 200 samples, the information will be gathered from the various sources available both online and offline (questionnaire). An online platform will include the player’s personal information, game statistics and the interview such as dotabuff.com, hltv.org, liquipedia.com, valve official youtube channel and etc. In order to avoid bias, the sample will be splitted into 100 from eSport athletes and 100 from eSport players.

2. Variables

The focus of this study is on whether or not the individual decides to pursue a career as an eSport athlete in which this will be dependent variable(y). For independent variables(x), internal and external factors that have the potential to be valuable to the analysis and have an impact on the decision.

The independent variables will be divided into 2 parts: as an “Internal factors” which is an individual personal trait will be “Social interaction or Fame seeking behavior” which can be determined using activeness or an engagement of individual’s social media (social media followers) as an indicator, “Discipline and Dedication” using time spend on daily training regimen, “Competitiveness” using the frequency in participating in a local competition and with a limited training facility and only few emerging colleges and universities who offer varsity esports programs causing many eSport athletes to dropout of school/ university “School dropout”.

“External factors” are “age of exposure to competitive gaming”, role model or a peer pressure coming from having “family member” or “friend” who play competitive gaming, “family support” in pursuing a career in eSport and a “family status” determine the financial support.

Table 1. Shows the variables of each factor used in the equation.

Factor	Variable	Definition
Dependent variable		
eSport Athlete	ATHL	Being an eSport athlete (yes = 1)
Independent variables		
Social Interaction	SOCIAL	Social media follower (Follower)
Discipline	DISC	Average daily training regimen (Hour)
Competitiveness	COMP	Frequency in participating in a local competition(Times)
School dropout	SCHOOL	Dropout of school (yes = 1)

Exposed age	AGE	Age of exposure to competitive gaming (Year)
Family influence	FAM	Having family member play competitive gaming (yes = 1)
Peer pressure	FRIEND	Being in a group of friend who play competitive gaming (yes = 1)
Family support	FSUPPORT	Family being supportive if pursuing career in eSport (yes = 1)
Family status	FSTATUS	Average family income (THB)

3. Statistical treatment of data

The data collected will be classified to use in a regression analysis on STATA. Binomial Logistic or Probit regression.

The regression model is developed as follow:

$$\widehat{ATH} = \beta_0 + \gamma_1(\text{SCHOOL}) + \gamma_2(\text{FAM}) + \gamma_3(\text{FRIEND}) + \gamma_4(\text{FSUPPORT}) + \beta_1(\text{SOCIAL}) + \beta_2(\text{DISC}) + \beta_3(\text{COMP}) + \beta_4(\text{AGE}) + \beta_5(\text{FSTATUS}) + \varepsilon$$

Where γ represent dummy variable and β represent either discrete or continuous variable.