

INTEGRATING SOCIETAL CULTURE IN ESPORTS EDUCATION: ENHANCING COURSE QUALITY THROUGH UNDERSTANDING ESPORTS DEMAND

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ABSTRACT

This research explores the evolving academic landscape of Esports education, with a particular focus on the rationale and necessity for incorporating Esports courses into college curricula. The study aims to comprehensively analyze the key factors driving the development of Esports courses, shifting the conversation from the predominantly business-oriented view of Esports to the less examined academic perspective. Using a quantitative, descriptive approach, data was collected through questionnaires distributed to Esports companies and academic institutions. The findings reveal that both market and industry demand significantly influence the establishment of Esports and management courses in colleges. Moreover, the research highlights the critical role of societal culture in shaping the structure and content of these courses. Ultimately, this study provides a deeper understanding of the determinants that affect the creation and quality of Esports education. It offers valuable insights for academic institutions considering the introduction of Esports programs, emphasizing the need to align these courses with market demands and cultural considerations to enhance educational outcomes.

Keywords: Demand, Culture, Education, Quality

INTRODUCTION

Esports has emerged as one of the fastest-growing sectors globally, often referred to as "ornamental sports" due to its unique blend of entertainment and competition (Salinas, 2013). By 2024, the global Esports industry is projected to generate over USD 1.6 billion in revenue, making it one of the most lucrative industries if the current growth trend continues (Tidrow, 2020). China, in particular, has seen rapid development in its Esports sector, with significant increases in market revenue and user base. In 2017, China's Esports market generated 35.99 billion yuan in sales, marking a 43.2% year-on-year increase (Dong, 2020). Recognizing this growth, the Chinese government invested over 700 million dollars to support Esports venues and professional players (Ho, 2021).

The contemporary Esports industry encompasses various sectors, including competitive gaming, video game development, and live broadcasting, all contributing to the industry's expanding ecosystem. Despite this growth, the Esports sector faces a significant talent gap, particularly in management and operational roles (Bi, Guo, and Lin, 2020).

Addressing this talent gap is crucial for the industry's sustainability. As a result, Esports was introduced as a course titled "Esports and Management" in Chinese colleges in 2016 (Wang, Xia, and Zhao, 2018).

Given China's focus on vocational education, the establishment and growth of Esports and Management courses in colleges present a challenge. This challenge is particularly evident in the integration of interactive technologies to foster innovative and high-quality educational programs, aligning with the Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) to "ensure inclusive and equitable development for all" (United Nations, 2015, Target 4.1).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Esports differs fundamentally from traditional gaming. The Esports and Management course is designed not to train professional players but to develop skilled professionals in Esports management, game planning, execution, and media (Zheng, Xiao, and Yu, 2021). Sheng and Chang (2015) highlighted the close relationship between Esports, social

industry, and economic development, arguing for the integration of Esports into college physical education. The title "Esports and Management" signifies a dual focus on sports and management, reflecting a trend toward specialization and marketization in the Esports industry (Guo, 2021; Lu and Zhou, 2021). Promoting the development of related industries, enhancing the industrial structure, and emphasizing product research and development are essential for the growth of the Esports sector (Xu and Wang, 2022).

The Esports industry's rapid development necessitates an increase in professional expertise and calls for greater public understanding of the sector (Jiang, Sun, and Xiong, 2022). Despite this growth, China reportedly faces a shortage of up to 500,000 Esports professionals (Lu and Zhou, 2021). In response, American universities have been proactive in promoting Esports, offering scholarships, and even building dedicated Esports facilities (Yu et al., 2020). The curriculum in these institutions aligns closely with industry needs, focusing on Esports management, event operation, brokerage, and club management (Zheng et al., 2021).

The Esports industry's success is also driven by public enthusiasm and support. For instance, the 2016 League of Legends Finals attracted over 14.7 million concurrent online viewers for the ultimate match between SKT T1 and SSG (Zheng et al., 2021). The promising career opportunities in Esports attract students, prompting educational institutions to include vocational courses in their curricula (Kangas, 2021).

Societal culture plays a crucial role in shaping educational offerings. According to Hofstede (1984), societal culture influences what is considered reasonable, thus affecting behavior and outcomes. This cultural influence is essential in the context of school operations (Bush, 1986; 2015) and provides a theoretical basis for establishing Esports and Management courses in Chinese colleges (Perec, 2022).

In the investigation, we assumed that there are three factors that will affect the setting of college Esports and management course, and another factor is important to the setting of this course. However, through data collection and analysis, there are two significant related factors, namely, market demand factor and industry demand factor. Societal culture factor is of great

METHODOLOGY:

This study focuses on students enrolled in Esports and Management courses in China and professionals working in the Esports industry. A questionnaire was designed to collect data from these groups. The collected data was analyzed using SPSS 24.0, with descriptive statistics used to assess data reliability and validity. Correlation analysis was conducted to examine relationships between variables, and multiple regression analysis was employed to explore the influence of independent variables (market demand, industry demand, personal needs, and societal culture) on the dependent variable (Esports and Management course offerings).

RESULTS

A total of 250 questionnaires were distributed, with 210 valid responses collected, resulting in an 84% response rate. Factor analysis was conducted using the KMO and Bartlett tests. The KMO value of 0.857, above the recommended threshold of 0.7, indicated that the data was suitable for factor analysis. A significant result in the Bartlett test (p -value < 0.05) confirmed correlations among the variables, a prerequisite for factor analysis. Coefficient analysis was used to examine the relationships between market demand, industry demand, personal needs, societal culture, and the development of Esports and Management courses.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the significant impact of market demand, industry demand, personal needs, and societal culture on the establishment and development of Esports and Management courses in colleges. The findings offer valuable insights for educational institutions considering the implementation of such programs, emphasizing the importance of aligning these courses with industry needs and cultural factors to enhance educational quality and relevance.

significance to the setting of Esports and management course. However, personal needs have no effect on the setting of Esports and management course in colleges.

RO1: *To discover whether the market demand effect on setting up Esports and management course in colleges.*

Through the data analysis, it is found that market demand significantly affects the setting of Esports and

management course in colleges. Market demand consists of four items, namely, the willingness to pay, the salary, the degree of liking for events and the expanding market size, and their correlations are 0.717, 0.740,

0.595 and 0.667 respectively. The correlation coefficient between e-sports and management setting and market demand is 0.390, and $p < 0.05$, indicating a significant correlation between the two. In Regression Coefficient analysis, $\beta = 0.171$, $p < 0.05$. Therefore, H1 is supported by data.

R02: *To discover whether the industry demand effect on setting up Esports and management course in colleges.*

Industry demand also consists of four items, which are job vacancy, industry integration and development, job requirements and industry development direction, and their correlations are 0.725, 0.806, 0.646 and 0.776 respectively.

The data gives an obvious result. The personal needs will significantly affect the setting of Esports and management course in colleges. Personal needs include Esports liking, engaging desire, knowledge mastery and enthusiasm for watching games, and the correlation is 0.679, 0.690, 0.738 and 0.804 respectively. All items in this group are significantly related. Furthermore, the correlation coefficient of Esports and Management Settings with Personal needs is 0.205 and is significant ($p < 0.05$). But the relationship between personal needs and Esports and management course: $\beta = 0.026$, $p > 0.05$. This shows that personal needs are not an important factor affecting the course of Esports and management in colleges. Therefore, H3 is rejected by the data.

R04: *To discover the importance of societal culture in Esports and management course setting in colleges.*

Through data analysis, it is found that societal culture is of great significance to the setting of Esports and management course in colleges. Societal culture consists of three items, namely, school-enterprise cooperation mode, professional sports learning and vocational and technical education. The correlation is 0.814, 0.735 and 0.725, respectively. Obviously, the correlation is significant. On the other hand, the correlation coefficient of Esports and Management Settings with Societal culture is 0.399 and is significant ($p < 0.05$). In Regression Coefficient analysis, $\beta = 0.174$, $p < 0.05$. Therefore, H4 is supported by data.

DISCUSSION

The research demonstrates that market demand plays a crucial role in the establishment of Esports and management courses in colleges. Market

consumption, a key component of demand, influences not only higher education institutions but also the broader society, ultimately shaping the future workforce (Longoria et al., 2021). In China's societal and cultural context, the primary focus of college education is preparing students for employment. Ideally, industries and trades associated with colleges should represent a robust and effective market, providing external support for the development and implementation of courses (Xie, 2012). This research not only highlights the impact of market demand on course development but also underscores its significance in the creation of Esports and management programs, offering strong justification for these courses in higher education.

The study also finds that industry demand significantly influences the development of Esports and management courses in colleges. As Pan (2017) noted, educational reforms in higher education are aimed at producing qualified professionals to meet the needs of students, parents, businesses, and society. The growth of any industry is heavily reliant on the availability of skilled talent, highlighting the critical importance of education (Xin, Meng, and Gao, 2021). Thus, professional education should be centered on industry needs. The results of this study confirm that industry demand is a key factor in the establishment of Esports and management courses. Colleges, influenced by the demands of the Esports industry and the vocational education culture, decide whether to offer these courses. Moreover, to effectively train Esports management professionals, educational institutions should align their curricula with the needs of the industry (Ren and Yan, 2021). Contrary to some previous studies, this research reveals that personal needs do not have a significant impact on the establishment of Esports and management courses in colleges. Zhang (2010) argued that high-quality education should cater to individual needs and characteristics, supporting personal development and self-improvement. Tan et al. (2022) explored how learner quality, learning environment, and content quality impact student employability, concluding that enhancing learning environments and materials can improve student engagement and employability. However, the findings of this research align with Zhang's (2015) study on vocational education in China, which suggests that the diminishing influence of personal needs on vocational education is a result of historical development. This trend is particularly evident in

Esports and management courses, where the primary focus remains on spiritual entertainment rather than individual educational needs.

The analysis also highlights the significant role of societal culture in shaping the development of Esports and management courses. Qin, He, and Ouyang (2019) pointed out that societal culture subtly influences individuals' behaviors and decisions. In China, vocational education, including Esports and management, is largely shaped by societal cultural norms. The integration of professional sports culture into Esports education is also evident. Parental support for Esports education is growing, with many parents encouraging their children to pursue careers in the industry through specialized knowledge and training. Therefore, societal culture is a critical factor in course development, and colleges must recognize its importance. The research, combined with literature review and data analysis, shows that while market and industry demand significantly impact the establishment of Esports and management courses, personal needs play a minimal role. Nevertheless, societal culture remains a crucial consideration.

In China, government policy support and the cultural context of professional sports have created favorable conditions for the introduction of Esports and management courses in colleges (Semrau, Ambos, and Kraus, 2016). Kowang et al. (2020) emphasized the need for higher education institutions to enhance competencies in areas such as Organizational Learning, Continuous Improvement, ICT, Environment, and Innovative Management, all of which are relevant to the development of Esports education. Therefore, colleges must stay attuned to the demands of the Esports market and industry, while also understanding how societal culture influences these trends.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This research focuses on the students, graduates, and practitioners of Esports and management courses, examining the factors that influence the establishment of such programs in colleges. The study considers four key factors: market demand, industry demand, personal needs, and societal culture. The findings reveal that while market and industry demand significantly impact the development of Esports and management courses, personal needs do not. Societal culture, however, plays a crucial role in shaping these educational programs. These insights

provide guidance for colleges in China as they consider whether to offer Esports and management courses.

The expanding Esports industry is driving an increased demand for talent, leading to a rise in job opportunities. Based on the research findings, the following three recommendations are made to assist colleges in deciding whether to introduce Esports and management courses:

1. **Monitor Market Trends:** Colleges should continuously track changes in the Esports market at both local and national levels. Market fluctuations provide valuable insights for curriculum development.

2. **Embrace Vocational Education Culture:** Colleges should adopt a school-enterprise cooperation model, learning from industry partners to understand the actual needs of the Esports sector. This approach ensures that the curriculum aligns with industry demands.

3. **Consider Personal Needs:** Although personal needs currently have limited impact on course development, the preferences of Esports enthusiasts should not be ignored. Understanding these needs can provide direction for both the Esports market and the scientific development of Esports and management courses.

Rasli et al. (2022) emphasized the importance of universities addressing global economic, social, and environmental challenges. This includes adopting sustainable practices, fostering innovation, and developing relevant skills. These principles should be integrated into the development of Esports and management courses to ensure they contribute positively to the broader educational and social landscape.

LIMITATIONS OF RESEARCH

This research was conducted in China and did not include foreign students or practitioners involved in Esports-related courses, which is a limitation. Additionally, the study focused on the effects of market research, industry demand, and personal needs on the establishment of Esports and management courses, as well as the importance of societal culture. Future research could explore other variables such as the diversity of respondents, the

strength of the colleges, the development of faculty teams, and the impact of policy incentives.

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