

Pathways into betting on e-sports: An explorative interview study

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Background

- E-sports betting is a fairly new phenomenon. Betting mainly on the outcome of matches
- A survey found that 4.1% gambled on e-sports in a representative sample of 2 000 individuals. Of the 4.1%, 26.8% could be labelled as problem gamblers (Lelonek-Kuleta, Rafał, Bartczuk, Wiechetek, Chwaszcz, and Niewiadomska, 2020)
- Watching e-sports and gambling were linked to increased e-sports betting (Macey, Abarbanel, & Hamari, 2021)

Background

- Recent esports betting was linked to other activities: playing, watching e-sports, and gambling (Hing, Lole, Russell, Rockloff, King, Browne, & Greer, 2022)
- Younger, male, lower frequency of video game play, watching e-sports, and more likely to watch e-sports in a social setting were linked to betting on e-sports (Abarbanel, Macey, Hamari, & Melton, 2020)
- Several activities are linked to e-sport betting. Is there temporal sequence? More information about the process of becoming an e-sport bettor is needed

Aim of the study

- The aim of the study is to explore the process of starting to bet on e-sports and other forms of gambling
- Not an addiction focus. More of an explorative study. Understanding the process!

Methods

- Sample recruited from a survey on e-sports sent to Unibet customers that gambled on sports betting
- Signed up to do a interview
- Interviews via telephone
- Semi-structured interview guide (three pilot interviews)

Methods

- Interviews were analyzed using grounded theory (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007)
- Process oriented analysis
- Used Nvivo to carry out the analysis

Participants

- 19 men recruited from a survey on e-sports
- Mean age around 25 years. One outlier who was over 50 years of age
- Many of the participants were university students

Results

- All of the participants started out playing video games on different units/consoles
- Started playing because it was fun and exciting
- The way the participants play change when they start playing competitive games, e.g., Counterstrike – first transition

Results

- Two pathways in the model: recreational players and pre pro-players
- Recreational players play a lot, but not as focused as the pre pro-players
- Both groups watch streamed videos to learn strategies – information hoarding

Results

- After playing for a few years many stop. Up or out for pre pros and transitions in life for recreational players
- **When the players stops playing the video game they start to gamble - a transition among all participants**
- Replacing the excitement from playing with gambling
- They also bet on sport but in a social context. They bet on e-sport in a non-social context

Results

- The participants talk about their e-sports betting in the same way as they talk about the game, e.g., strategy
- In the beginning the bettors beat gambling companies. Intellectual capital was transformed to economic capital (Bourdieu, 1992)
- Still watches e-sport, but almost only in a passive way, e.g., while preparing food

Results – overall

- Pros are more hardcore. Attitudes regarding loot boxes. Gamer identity!
- Did not talk about the negative sides of gaming and gambling
- The participants talk when the game will lose its lustre due to updates

Discussion

- Results converge with previous research
- Just a stage in their gambling/gaming life? Sports betting will continue? Will they move on casino type games?
- When a player loses interest will sports betting continue, but e-sports betting seize. Future research should examine this
- Will they have another transition?

Discussion

- Information hoarding to be competitive
- E-sports betting is partly dependent on new games. Soccer does not change
- Consequences for responsible gambling! Increased risk and a being online 24-7. Is there need a for different strategies? Gamification of RG

Thank you!