

eSports Events, the Good, the Bad and the Ugly, from a Parent's Perspective

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Abstract: eSports events in the form of tournaments are a relatively new occurrence in South Africa. Therefore, it is vital to understand this form of entertainment, the events hosted, and the perspectives of participants and spectators. A pilot qualitative study was undertaken at a local school that hosted an interschool eSports tournament event. The study focused on the parents of minor eSports participants to gauge their perspective of the eSports events hosted, the advantages and disadvantages of participating in these events, and their actual experience of the hosted event. Out of a population of 20 parents who attended the event, six parents consented to be interviewed. Findings have been made on topics such as the addiction of minors to eSports gaming, why minors participate in eSports, the advantages and disadvantages of eSports gaming, and what parents want from eSports events. The findings of this study will direct eSports stakeholders on how to improve on offered eSports events, and inform them of the views of stakeholders. The tourism industry should take note of this newly emerging type of event, which could be a catalyst for South African events as the hub for Africa eSports events.

Keywords: eSports Events, Parents, Perceptions, Motivations, South Africa

1 Background

Jenny, Keiper, Taylor, Williams and Gawrysiak (2018) and Neus (2019) describe eSports events as a global phenomenon with competitions currently hosted worldwide, especially in the United States, Europe and Asia. According to Jenny *et al.* (2018), eSports is classified as a non-traditional form of sports that utilises technology and removes the participant from the direct action. The recent advances in information technologies, internet networks that have improved and expanded, and more people having access to a computer or smartphone, have accelerated the transition from traditional games to digital media (Çavuş, 2020). Pu, Xiao and Kota (2022) mention that eSports is hailed as the “21st-century spectator sport” with a massive global fan base, and as an event type, is developing rapidly to be more professional and commercialised. Jenny *et al.* (2018) mention that most venues where eSports events are currently held were originally constructed to host other events, sports or entertainment. With the challenging times the events industry has faced in recent years, especially due to COVID-19, event facilities are challenged to host and attract popular financially beneficial events (Jenny *et al.* 2018). Leon, Hinojosa-Ramos, León-Lopez, Belli, López-Raventós and Florez (2022) describe eSports as an alternative for tourism and as a diversified event offering that can be facilitated at destinations.

Spectators form the backbone of an event by, creating the atmosphere, rooting for participants and supporting exhibitors during the course of the event. Therefore, an understanding of spectators' views of an event is vital to ensure that their needs are met and their motivations are catered for. eSports gaming is highly prevalent among the younger generation (Chung, Sum, Chan, Lai & Cheng, 2019), which then brings in the role of parents as the caregivers of minors who participate in eSports events.

2 Introduction

2.1 eSports

eSports, which can also be described as organised competitive video gaming, is on a growing curve, with an increasing need for spectators to view these events either online or in person (Jenny *et al.* 2018). The tourism industry, and especially the South African tourism industry, has started to give eSports events some attention due to the unique opportunities to be found in this sector. There has been a steady growth in eSports events in South Africa over the past few years. This is supported by developments such as the most prominent eSports arena of its kind being built at a high school in Johannesburg (Centennial Schools 2023), a total of R750 000 in eSports scholarships being made available to students (Meikie 2023) and a famous media house (Broad Media)

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