

ORIGINAL ARTICLE



# The Direction of Promoting Esport Industry in Thailand

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## ABSTRACT

**Background.** Esport has become widely popular day by day, especially in Thailand. Promoting Esport by both government section and private section is the key success to drive forward the Esport in Thailand. **Objectives.** The purpose of this research was to study the expectation and the satisfaction of the stakeholders towards the promotion of the Esport industry and to study the trend and the direction of promoting the Esport industry in Thailand. **Methods.** This study utilized mixed-method research. The quantitative phase was characterized by an initial quantitative phase of data collection by the questionnaire with 1000 participants by selecting through probability sample by Multi-Stage sampling method and analyzed with the descriptive statistic. In the qualitative phase with the in-depth interview research method, 14 informant's participants who were working in the Esport industry were recruited using purposive sampling participated in semi-structured interviews. **Results.** The result of the quantitative phase showed that the expectation and the satisfaction were high correlation which can be described as the expectation ( $r = 0.755 - 0.852$ ), and the satisfaction ( $r = 0.800 - 0.870$ ). The result from the Paired Samples t-test found that there was a statistically significant difference at 0.05. **Conclusion.** The qualitative data shows the trend and the direction of promoting the Esport industry in Thailand which described supporting the Esport industry in Thailand by analyzing the 5M theory which is the successful management means making optimal and responsible use of man, money, material, marketing, and moral for the advancement of mankind as the base theory in this research, can be concluded that the effective promoting method would be concrete, and would be massively benefited for Esport industry in Thailand if both public and private section elaborate from the beginning process to the end process by considering of the benefit of the country industry come first.

**KEYWORDS:** *Esport, Esport Promoting, Sport Industry.*

## INTRODUCTION

Esport has become widely popular day by day. Those favorite games that people play in the tournament are League of Legends, DOTA 2, Counter-Strike: Global Offensive, StarCraft II, FIFA, Overwatch, Heroes of the Storm, NBA2KX, Rocket League, Call of Duty (1).

The definition of Esport is as “a form of sports where the primary aspects of the sport are

facilitated by electronic system; the input of players and teams as well as the output of the Esport system are mediated by human-computer interfaces (2).”

One of the essential factors for creating the industrial values in Esport which affects the industrial value of the country that hosts the tournament, such as “The international DOTA2

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championships” This tournament has been arranging from 2011 to present which was claimed to be the highest reward in Esport history (3).

Hosting the Esport Tournament in Thailand also affects the positive side towards the sport tourism and sport business, such as creating the rental place for hosting the tournament, drawing the tourist from all over the world to visit the country which can create the economic value to the country (4).

Nevertheless, hosting the Esport Tournament won't be successful without having a good teamwork which the Esport stakeholders are comprised of Esport association, the government section, the sponsor, the university, the tournament venue, the gaming distributor, the Esport team, and the owner of the internet service, and so on (5).

From the above statement, developing in the aspect of hosting the tournament is related to the country development (6). Promoting Esport may promote which are as follows; The relevant company to Esport has been growing, increasing the import income in the area of Esport equipment from the oversea, the private section will be more support Esport because they see the opportunity to do the marketing through sport, Thailand has experiences to host the international sport tournament, such as 2007 Southeast Asian Games, 2018 BWF World Men's Team Championships, 2018, 2019 Thailand motorcycle Grand Prix, and so on as the result of the previous study which said that Thailand is a canvas of opportunity upon which to design the quintessential pleasure dome of tourism through sports events, and the results of that study showed that the economic impact was significant for a destination by sport event tourism in Thailand (7). From the above statement, Thailand has the potential to be the host country for the global Esport event (8).

Anyway, To have the potential and to be ready are different. Although Esport in Thailand has joined the Esport federation, and was officially considered a sport in Thailand since 2017, there is still a negative perception of gaming within Thai society which cause the big barrier of the Esport career path in Thailand (9).

Therefore, the researchers believe that studying the direction of promoting Esport

industry in Thailand will be able to solve the right spots and specific problems in order to fill the gaps of all Esport personnel needs, and to drive the Esport industry for a bright and prosperous future.

The purpose of this research was to study the expectation and the satisfaction of the stakeholder towards the promotion of Esport industry, and to study the trend and the direction of promoting the Esport industry in Thailand.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study utilized a mixed method research by using the quantitative research for studying the satisfaction and the expectation of the stakeholder towards the promotion of Esport industry, the qualitative research for studying the trend and the direction of promoting the Esport industry in Thailand.

**Quantitative Study. Participants.** One thousand people completed the quantitative survey. The sample was comprised of 200 people from the Northern part of Thailand, 200 people from the Southern part of Thailand, 200 people from the Northeast part of Thailand, 200 people from the Central part of Thailand, and 200 people from Bangkok metropolitan region. All were selected through probability sampling by Multi-stage sampling by having two step which were as follows;

Dividing into clusters by separating the samples into 5 regions (Northern part, Southern part, Northeastern part, Central part, and Bangkok) as the criterion of Sport Authority of Thailand (10).

The 5 provinces were selected by the criterion of Sport City and hosting the Esport event. The researchers can be concluded as follows; Krabi province was the representative of the Southern part, Buriram province was the representative of the Northeastern part, Suphanburi was the representative of the Central part (11), Chiang Rai province was the representative of the Northern part, and Bangkok.(12) The non-random selective base on convenience was used to easily collect the data.

Non-probability sampling by Quota methods was used for defining the sample size which was 200 samples per a region as shown in the Table 1.

**Instrument.** The researchers developed a questionnaire based on the previous literature. The survey consisted of the satisfaction and the expectation of the stakeholders towards the promotion of Esport industry. The final survey

comprised 37 items. The content validity of this survey was determined through Item – Objective Congruence (IOC) (13). Furthermore, the reliability of the expectation was .952, and the satisfaction was

.964. (Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient) which was shown as the table below. Questionnaires including 5 points of satisfaction and expectation which starts from the highest and the least.

**Table 1. The Demographic Characteristics of Quantitative Research (13)**

Region	Nort Hern	Sout Hern	North Eastern	Cen Tral	Bang Kok
Population (Million)	11.6	9.4	21.8	16.9	5.5
Samples	200	200	200	200	200

**Table 2. Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients for Each Variable**

Expectation	Satisfaction
<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>	<b>0.952</b>
<b>Man</b>	0.847
<b>Money</b>	0.843
<b>Mat</b>	0.897
<b>Market</b>	0.876
<b>Moral</b>	0.880

**Table 3. Example of Interview Coding**

I = Interviewer, P=Participant	Unique Codes
<b>I</b> How many important factors for promoting the Esport industry in Thailand?	
<b>P</b> The first importance factor is the personnel, people who are working in this field in Thailand now need to fulfill their knowledge in Esport areas. The second priority was the budget, most of the budget for hosting the Esport event come from the private section, and also needs the budget for supporting the Esport athlete for developing in all areas in order to be equivalent to the international level. Furthermore, the marketing aspect also counts to be one of the primary tools for acknowledge people to know this Esport more since Esport industry in Thailand is still not well-known yet compares to any other traditional sports.	7
<b>I</b> Scoping just the personnel, which concrete problems do you think need to be solved as soon as possible?	
<b>P</b> Nowadays, there are 27.8 million people who are interested in playing Esport in Thailand from the whole citizen (69.3 million people). For that numbers, it needs to be rushed for developing the personnel for supporting the growth of Esport industry in Thailand. The concrete problem was the lack of professional Esport Coach, such as there were only two coach for DOTA as the national team coach. This issue is very importance if Thailand was set the target to be one of best team in Asia.	11

**Table 4. The Result of Correlation between Expectation and Satisfaction Variable**

Expectation	1	2	3	4	5
<b>1.Man</b>	1				
<b>2.Money</b>	0.799**	1			
<b>3.Material</b>	0.785**	0.788**	1		
<b>4.Market</b>	0.778**	0.761**	0.862**	1	
<b>5.Moral</b>	0.775**	0.783**	0.852**	0.827**	1
<b>Satisfaction</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>1.Man</b>	1				
<b>2.Money</b>	0.842**	1			
<b>3.Material</b>	0.833**	0.867**	1		
<b>4.Market</b>	0.804**	0.848**	0.869**	1	
<b>5.Moral</b>	0.800**	0.842**	0.870**	0.864**	1

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

**Analysis.** The quantitative data was analyzed through descriptive statistics including frequency, mean, standard deviation, and paired sample t-test.

**Qualitative Study. Participants.** The 14 participants included one game producer, one

tournament director, one Esport association representative, one Esport club representative, one game streamer, one TV station representative, one sponsor, one Esport athlete, one game distributor, one Esport ticket sales company, one

Esport fan club, one Esport game copy right owner, one Esport tournament owner, and one internet connection sponsor. Participants were again recruited using purposive sampling.

**Procedures.** The researchers discussed the findings from the quantitative process with 14 participants, then question the informants regarding the questions which the researcher has shown few examples of the interviews conducted, with the code specified for each as shown in the table above with A semi-structured interview protocol guided the interview. Then, the inductive content analysis was used in the process of analyzing the qualitative data.

## RESULTS

**Quantitative Finding.** Analyzing the expectation and the satisfaction of the stakeholder towards the promotion of Esport industry by using frequency, mean, standard deviation, and paired sample t-test.

The comparison between the expectation and the satisfaction of the stakeholder towards the Esport promotion

$H_0$  was the expectation and the satisfaction of the stakeholder towards the Esport promotion were not different.

$H_1$  was the expectation and the satisfaction of the stakeholder towards the Esport promotion were different.

**Table 5. The Result of Comparing Between the Expectation and the Satisfaction of the Stakeholder Towards the Esport Promotion**

5M Aspect	N	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	r	t	Sig
<b>Man</b>						
The expectation	1000	4.55	0.551	0.797	4.271	0.000*
The satisfaction	1000	4.51	0.588			
<b>Money</b>						
The expectation	1000	4.51	0.620	0.785	5.084	0.000*
The satisfaction	1000	4.44	0.666			
<b>Material</b>						
The expectation	1000	4.56	0.575	0.798	6.096	0.000*
The satisfaction	1000	4.50	0.608			
<b>Marketing</b>						
The expectation	1000	4.54	0.578	0.762	4.757	0.000*
The satisfaction	1000	4.47	0.655			
<b>Moral</b>						
The expectation	1000	4.55	0.587	0.805	5.274	0.000*
The satisfaction	1000	4.49	0.626			

Table 4 found that the expectation and the satisfaction were high correlation which can be described as the expectation ( $r = 0.755 - 0.852$ ), and the satisfaction ( $r = 0.800 - 0.870$ ). The result from the Paired Samples t-test found that there were statistically significant difference at 0.05 which the significant level was less than 0.05 (0.000). Therefore,  $H_1$  was accepted, and  $H_0$  was denied as was shown in the Table 5.

**Qualitative Finding.** The qualitative finding the trend and the direction of promoting the Esport industry in Thailand, and it can be concluded into 5 issues which were as follows;

**1. The Current Situation of Esport Industry in Thailand.** It found that Esport in Thailand has been growing at 20% per year in average. In addition, the government section supports this sport to become the professional sport in Thailand which make Esport to be more famous in Thailand. This also helps to create the new career, such as game streamers, the tournament

director as two informants who remarked “Esport in Thailand has been growing at 20 per year in average.” and also “Esport has been approved by the association and it can be professional.”

**2. Creating the Revolving Financial in the Economic System and Tourism in Thailand.** The relevant organizations (Both private sections and private sections) which supported the Esport tournament in Thailand invited the international event as the statements from one key informant “Hosting the big event makes tourist to know us more.”

**3. The Income Channel of the Esport Player.** It found that the average income was from 1000 Baht to 100,000 Baht. They were both the amateur and professional level. Most income were from the salary, the sponsor, the tournament award, the streaming, and the advertising as the statement from one key informant “The main income for Esport players are from the salary, the sponsor, the tournament award, the streaming, the advertising, and so on.”

**4. The Esport Tournament Administrative in Thailand.** From the in-depth interview with the stake holders who operated the Esport tournament administrative in Thailand, and the issues can be divided into 5 issues which were as follows;

**Man.** The result found that Thailand is one of the countries where was capable of developing Esport game, and was accepted from foreigners. Anyway, the ability of hosting the international tournament level was still need to be improved as the statements from one key informant “Thailand need to be improved in term of getting the supporting from the sport scientist.”

**Money.** It can be concluded into two parts in this issue which were the budget that has been supported from the Sport authority of Thailand is for the Thai national team and the budget that has been supported from the private section can be divided into 3 types. Salary, sponsor in equipment, and budget as the statements from one key informant “The sponsor that we receive from the private section is very little if compares to the oversea rate.”

**Material.** It found that the fundamental equipment for hosting the tournament was ready for any type of the competition as the statements from one key informant “Thailand is ready for the competition at all levels, we have hall, area as provided for the international level.”

**Marketing.** It found that the public relation was launched through social media as the statements from one key informant “Presenting the Idol in Sport is a good method for convincing people to join Esport.”

**Moral.** It found that cheating problems can be seen in some tournament during the pandemic of Covid 19 as the statements from one key informant “Some team sent the stand in player for playing in their team in the online competition during the pandemic of Covid 19.”

**5. The Direction of Promoting Esport in Thailand.** It can be divided into 3 parts which were as follows;

**The Esport Association Operation.** In the present days, Esport is considered and approved from the Sport authority of Thailand to registration for setting the sport association as Sports Authority of Thailand Act, B.E. 2558 (2015). The Esport associations also have set up in 8 provinces which are as follows; Khonkaen, Surin, Nakornpathom, Mahasarakham, Phuket, Phitsanulok, Sukhothai, and Chiangmai. Here is the category of game that have been used in the

tournament Sport game (FIFA Pro Evolution Soccer NBK2K PGA Tour WWE Boxing Racing: Assesto Cosar Ecycling: Onelap) Planning game (League of Legends Dota 2 StarCraft II AOV Mobile Legend Marvel Super War), Fighting game (Tekken 7 Street Fighter), and Card game (Hearthstone Legend of Runeterra).

**Education Aspect.** Some universities in Thailand provide Esport course for the student in order to support the future growth of Esport industry in Thailand.

**Supporting from the Stakeholders.** Not only getting supported from the sport authority of Thailand, but also the private section who always support in many areas, such as being the main sponsor of the Esport tournament, salary for athletes, and so on.

## DISCUSSION

In the quantitative section for finding the expectation and the satisfaction of the stakeholder towards the Esport promotion found that the expectation and the satisfaction were high correlation, and there were statistically significant difference at 0.05 which relates to the work of Min Xiao in the title of Factors influencing eSports viewership: An approach based on the theory of reasoned action which the result found three behavioral beliefs related factors (aesthetics, drama, and escapism) and subjective norms were positively related to attitude toward watching eSports (14). Also relates to another work of Lee, Ji-Young that his title is Factors affecting eSports audience satisfaction - the case of League of legends, and found that the relationship between such viewing motivation and satisfaction (15).

In the qualitative section for studying the trend and the direction of promoting the Esport industry in Thailand by using the 5M theory based, which were as follows;

In the “Man” aspect, and the finding was to have the personnel that have the ability to host the event which related one of the informants who presented that “Those personnel should be the person who have the knowledge in hosting the Esport event, such as the draw arranging, the tournament equipment, and so on.” It also relates to one of the Esport venues research articles which described personnel requirements needed for hosting eSports events (16). This finding was also supported from the previous study which concluded with a discussion about the uniqueness of the Esport industry by enhancing the understanding of Esport (17).

In the “Money” aspect the finding was there are two types of the budgets (The public and the private section) which can be separated into three part (Salary, sponsor, and the budget), similar to that of the comment from one of the informant which said that “The budget allocation for hosting the Esport event come from the public and the private section.” Hence supporting from the best practice in Malaysia which showed that the Malaysian government allocated RM 15M (\$3.6M USD) for the development of Esports, as part of its annual budget (18). There was a support from the previous research which showed the Esports was developed incorporating industry expertise (19).

In the “Material” aspect the finding was Thailand was ready to host the international event. This finding is supported by one of the informants who explained that “Even Thailand is strong for hosting any level of Esport tournament, but in order to be more efficient, the tournament directors should use the tournament equipment and provide facilities as the international standard.” It is also relevant to another study from the best practice from an article which describes the development of Esports as well as discusses the current trends in Esports spectator consumption. Moreover, current and future Esports

venues, highlighting potential licensing, equipment, and personnel requirements needed for hosting Esports events (20). Furthermore, it is also relevant to another study which found that all electronic equipment are important for the structure of performance and training in Esports (21).

In the “Marketing” aspect the finding was using the event communication through social media channel which is concerned with the statement from one of the informants which said that “The most effective way for increasing the Esport’s public relation is the social media channel.” This statement was supported by the best practice study from one research article, and the result was the most threatening elements are disreputable behavior, negative media influence, the industry’s infancy, the videogame’s short lifespan, long-term investments, poor performance, and the low visibility outside Twitch and YouTube. As such, brands must be in sync with the audience, punish disreputable behavior, promote gaming’s acceptance, study the market, and commit to long-term investments (22). This was related to the result from the

previous research, and the result was concept of Esport consumption in marketing by developing the experiential perspective of competitive gaming (23).

In the “Moral” aspect the finding was can be seen from the online tournament in the aspect of cheating which relates to an opinion from one of the informants which was said that “There are some situation that it can be found about the cheating problem such as the doping, but this problem can be solved by increasing the level of the penalty of the rule and the regulation alongside with using the method of regulating in communication among the team during the tournament.” Moreover, from the best practice that the researcher found that, it said that the performance enhancing drugs were rife in Esports, and that Adderall was being used by players to boost their awareness and responsiveness. In response to the report, the Electronic Sports League (ESL) started drug testing players before tournaments (24). This relates to the study Atish which his work about the ethics in Esport, and this article show the method to fix the ethics problem by understanding the difference between the Esport context and the traditional context (25).

## CONCLUSION

The research result can be answered the two objectives, which were as follows; in the issue of the study the expectation and the satisfaction of the stakeholder towards the promotion of Esport industry finding found that both expectation and the satisfaction of the stakeholders wish the Esport to be promoted in Thailand in high level, and issue of studying the trend and the direction of promoting the Esport industry in Thailand can be found, which were as follows, “Man”, the government and the private sections should try to educate people from the young generation to the university level in term of the digital media and engineering in order to create the concrete career part. “Money”, the government should see the importance of Esport industry and being as the main conductor for supporting the Esport tournament by allocating more budget as the sport policy. “Material”, the government should support more in term of the financial budget for providing all necessary facilities as the priority task in order to drive the Esport industry to the best, and “Moral”, the government should strict more for the Esport regulation in any aspects, and any person who breaks the rule and regulation shall be punished as the international standard regulation. The limitation

of this research was the gathering sources. The limitation of this research was the limitation in the issue of reviewing process that means most of the best practice data retrieved from the secondary sources. Therefore, those researchers who need to bring this research to adapt shall have to aware of this limitation issue as well.

### APPLICABLE REMARKS

- This research is very high-impact research for the Esport industry in the Thailand context because of its empirical foundations.
- Collecting the data with a number of the real key informants makes the data more useful and applicable.

- The promoting method in this research is concrete, and it would massively benefit for Esport industry in Thailand.
- Considering this research result by the public section as the database in terms of how to promote the Esport industry before announcing and enforcing any rules and regulations which might affect the Esport industry in Thailand.
- Allocating & funding the budget from the public and private sections, and coordinating among both sections with the times' frame will be the best way for promoting the Esport industry in Thailand.

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