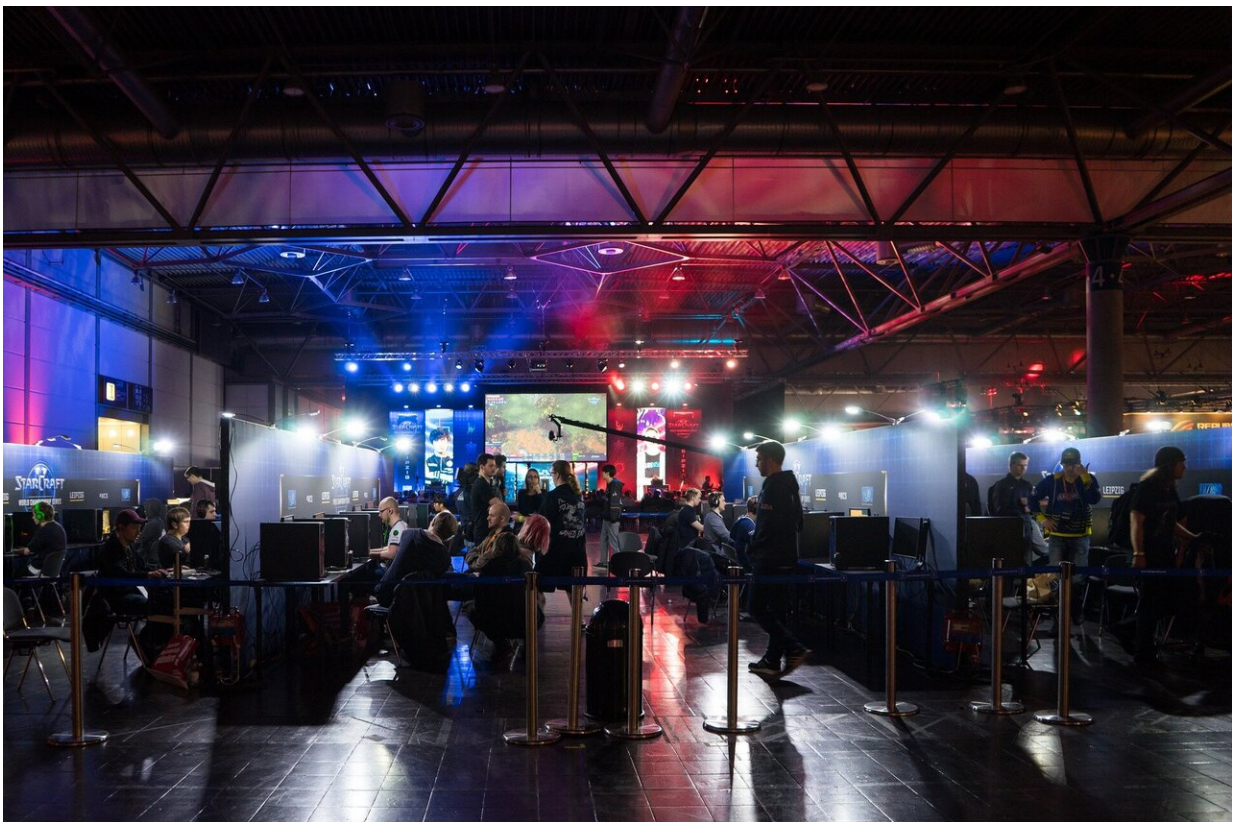


Gamers want more chances to connect with star players and developers at physical esports events

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Professor Babak Taheri from the Marketing and Consumer Studies Research Centre at Nottingham Business School (NBS) surveyed 549

League of Legends spectators, interviewed 13 World of War Craft players and immersed himself in the culture of the game by playing and interacting with gamers over the course of 12 months.

Along with co-authors Dr. Jamie Thompson, lecturer in Marketing at Edinburgh Napier University, and Florian Scheuring, Assistant Professor of Business Management at Heriot-Watt University, he explored the role that player fandom can play in encouraging gamers to attend in-person events. Fandom is a participatory and [social experience](#) with fans traveling to [live events](#) in order to cheer for their favorite team and players, as well as to interact with fellow fans who share their self-identity.

The lure of star players and well-known [game developers](#) was a significant motivational factor for players to attend events. This suggests that organizers of esports events should be looking to market any star players who may be competing, as well as reaching out to developers and other key stakeholders who are "idolized" within the community so that attendees have the chance to meet these celebrities of the gaming world.

Recommendations also include partnerships between host cities and esports providers to create experiences to encourage attendance, such as "can't miss" special events for dedicated fans of particular teams.

The findings also showed that player's friendships and a sense of belonging positively influenced them to attend physical esports events. This was generated from their interactions and long-term memberships of guilds, and the sense of community they have constructed through years of playing online.

However, the research revealed that while they were keen to meet up with online friends, they had concerns over undertaking costly international travel to meet online players as opposed to close family or

friends. Geographical distance was often seen as a restraint, particularly among European players who felt that too many events were held in the U.S. and wanted to see an increase in smaller, local esports events they could engage with.

The report suggests that local event providers could offer official forums, chat areas, and Discord channels promoted by the esports organization prior to events. This would promote friendship and enthusiasm in the build-up and make fans feel more comfortable about traveling, while also giving attendees a chance to seek advice on where to stay and what to do when in the host city.

"The consistent message of a sense of belonging and feeling connected among those questioned in the study suggests that events should be organized in such a way that attendees feel connected with the image of the event and what it represents. This could include encouraging cosplay or personalized guild or team t-shirts, which the research participants said helped their sense of belonging and comfort at events," says Professor Taheri.

The paper, "Developing esports tourism through fandom experience at in-person events," has been published in the journal *Tourism Management*.

More information: Jamie Thompson et al, Developing esports tourism through fandom experience at in-person events, *Tourism Management* (2022). [DOI: 10.1016/j.tourman.2022.104531](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2022.104531)

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