

The Commercialization Framework and Marketing Strategies of League of Legends

Yuntian Li

Beijing Royal School, Beijing, China

15726699266y@gmail.com

Abstract. Esports has experienced explosive growth amidst the global wave of digitalization. League of Legends (LoL), as a key player within the esports industry, has significant implications for the industry as a whole, with its business model and marketing strategies. This study employs a case study approach, focusing on the operational practices of Riot Games and employing a SWOT framework to conduct a systematic analysis from four perspectives: strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. The study finds that LoL's core strengths lie in its comprehensive tournament system, strong community culture, and cross-sector marketing. However, its weaknesses include player behavior issues, the erosion of fairness caused by cheating and cheating, and its heavy reliance on a single vendor. Externally, LoL presents opportunities for cross-industry collaboration and city-wide tournament strategies but also faces challenges such as competition from emerging games and diverging social perceptions. The academic significance of this study lies in supplementing theoretical research on esports commercialization, while its practical significance lies in providing insights into the marketing and sustainable development of esports events.

Keywords: League of Legends; E-sports business; Cross-screen marketing; Business management; E-sports.

1. Introduction

With the booming global digital entertainment industry, E-sports has gradually transitioned from niche entertainment to mainstream culture, and its economic value and social influence cannot be ignored. As one of the most representative e-sports projects in the world, League of Legends (LoL) not only has a huge player base, but also shows great commercial potential in event operation, brand sponsorship and digital content dissemination [1]. Research shows that e-sports has gradually evolved into a new type of sports practice similar to traditional sports. Its professionalism and viewing value make it an important object of sports industry research [2]. In this context, the commercialization model of LoL not only involves the operation and promotion of events, but is also closely linked to consumer behavior habits, urban cultural construction and digital marketing strategies [3]. Therefore, this study will focus on the commercialization construction and marketing strategy of LoL, aiming to deeply analyze its business logic and industry impact.

The purpose of this study is to reveal the competitive advantages and potential challenges formed by LoL in the global e-sports ecosystem by analyzing the diversified marketing strategies adopted by LoL in the commercialization process. On the one hand, the consumption habits of e-sports players have become an important entry point for understanding the market. Research shows that the consumption of LoL players is not limited to in-game payments, but also extends to the purchase of event tickets, virtual props and peripheral products [4]. On the other hand, digital content marketing has a significant impact on the viewing rate and fan stickiness of e-sports events [5]. Therefore, this study not only helps to understand the market operation model of League of Legends, but also provides business ideas that can be used as reference for other e-sports projects. From an academic perspective, this study can enrich the research literature on the commercialization of e-sports; from a practical perspective, its research results can help optimize the marketing and sustainable development strategies of e-sports events.

In order to systematically study the commercialization construction and marketing strategy of League of Legends, this study will use a case analysis method to focus on the specific practices of

Riot Games in the operation of League of Legends. This method draws on Ferrari's research ideas on the relationship between the internal design of the game and the commercialization logic [6]. By analyzing operational data, event marketing strategies and player behavior patterns, its commercialization logic and market performance are revealed. In addition, the study will follow the analysis framework proposed by Gurl and combine SWOT to evaluate the business model of League of Legends from four dimensions: internal strengths and weaknesses, external opportunities and threats. In terms of specific methods, this study will summarize relevant academic literature and conduct comparative analysis based on empirical data and cases [7]. The research framework will be based on the "e-sports commercialization theory - LoL practice case - SWOT analysis - development suggestions" to ensure the logic and systematic nature of the research. This framework can help clarify the core driving force of LOL commercialization and provide a reference for the industry's future strategic planning.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Current Status of Global Games and E-Sports Development

E-sports (eSports), as a competitive activity based on electronic games, has become an important part of global digital culture. E-sports is a highly organized digital sports industry, emphasizing its similarities with traditional sports in organizational structure and market operation [1]. At the same time, the development of e-sports reflects the rise of new sports practices. Its competitiveness, teamwork and viewing value have gradually brought it into the mainstream society [2]. With the popularization of Internet technology and streaming platforms, the dissemination channels of e-sports events have become more diversified, forming a huge transnational audience group. E-sports is no longer just an entertainment activity, but a social phenomenon with cultural and historical significance [3]. Overall, the development of global e-sports has not only promoted the commercialization and upgrading of the game industry but also reshaped the public's leisure and consumption methods.

2.2. Introduction to League of Legends and Global Participation

League of Legends (LoL) is a multiplayer online battle arena (MOBA) game launched by Riot Games in 2009. It has quickly grown into one of the most influential e-sports projects in the world. Research emphasizes the innovation of LoL in its gameplay mechanism. It has developed standardized competition from "generative gameplay" and laid the foundation for professional competitions [6]. The LoL player base is not only large in number, but also shows diversity in consumption behavior, including the purchase of virtual props, peripherals and event content [4]. In addition, digital content marketing plays a key role in increasing audience participation in LoL events, especially through the formation of a strong fan culture through social media and video platforms [5]. Today, the LoL World Finals has become a transnational sporting event, attracting tens of millions of viewers, highlighting its core position in the global e-sports ecosystem.

3. Commercial Marketing Analysis of League of Legends under SWOT Strategy

3.1. Internal Competitive Advantages

LoL's core competitive advantages are mainly reflected in its perfect game mechanism and global event operation model. The gameplay mechanism of League of Legends is highly mature. It has evolved from the initial experimental "generative gameplay" to a structured professional competition, providing players and spectators with a stable and entertaining experience [6]. This standardization not only attracted professional teams and sponsors to join, but also promoted the formation of the event industry chain. Research emphasizes that League of Legends is no longer just an electronic

game, but also a competitive event with cultural symbolic significance. The community and fan culture built behind it further enhance user stickiness [3]. In addition, Riot Games has obvious advantages in event operation and digital content marketing. Through social media, live video and brand cooperation, League of Legends can effectively expand the scope of event dissemination and increase audience participation [8]. These internal advantages enable it to always maintain a leading position in the e-sports market.

3.2. Internal Competitive Disadvantages

Although League of Legends occupies a core position in the global e-sports industry, it still has some significant competitive disadvantages. First, the complexity of the game mechanism and content updates leads to a high entry threshold for some new players, which to a certain extent limits the continued expansion of the user base. Second, the problem of "harmful behavior" within the game is also an important factor restricting its development. The prevalence of negative gaming behaviors and malicious language in the LoL community not only affects the player experience but also weakens the public image of the game [9]. Cheating and cheating behaviors further undermine the fairness of the game, weakening player trust and the fairness of the competition [10]. In addition, LoL competitions are highly dependent on the single operating model of Riot Games, resulting in a lack of sufficient diversification in the competition ecosystem and a high concentration of risks. Furthermore, due to the fierce competition in the e-sports market, the rise of emerging games has a potential impact on the player activity and market share of LoL. If these weaknesses are not effectively addressed, they may affect its long-term competitiveness.

3.3. External Competitive Opportunities

In terms of external development opportunities, LoL has broad market potential and regional expansion space. Research emphasizes that top events such as the LoL World Championship can be closely integrated with urban culture and regional economy, becoming an important means to enhance the international image of the city [8]. This means that the support and investment of major cities in e-sports events will provide new development opportunities for LoL. In addition, with the global popularization of the Internet and the rapid development of streaming platforms, the dissemination boundaries of e-sports content have been further broadened. Digital content marketing has become the key to driving audience participation in events, which provides a good opportunity for LoL's brand expansion and commercial cooperation [5]. At the same time, cross-industry cooperation (such as collaboration with music, film, and fashion brands) has continuously enhanced LoL's cultural penetration. As e-sports is recognized as a sport in more countries, LoL's opportunities in education, tourism, and youth culture construction are becoming increasingly apparent.

3.4. External Competitive Threats

The external threats faced by LoL cannot be ignored. First, the overall uncertainty and fierce competition in the e-sports industry pose the greatest challenge. The rise of emerging games (such as Valorant or other MOBA competitors) not only diverts the player base, but also seizes audience and sponsor resources. Second, there are still differences in the social perception of e-sports. It is pointed out that although e-sports are becoming a cultural phenomenon, in some countries and social groups, e-sports still faces the question of "lack of sports value", which may limit its further development [3]. Furthermore, negative issues within the LoL community, such as player misconduct, cheating in matches, and plug-ins, often trigger social criticism and damage the brand image [9,10]. In addition, the over-commercialization of events may lead to "aesthetic fatigue" among players and spectators, weakening the long-term brand value. In summary, LoL needs to deal with external competitive threats during its expansion and find a balance to maintain its industry leadership.

4. Suggestions for the Future Development of League of Legends

4.1. Optimizing Player Experience and Community Environment

LoL needs to improve the player experience through both technology and systems. Research shows that negative behavior and malicious speech are the main problems hindering the development of e-sports [9]. Riot Games can introduce a more intelligent behavior detection system and a severe punishment mechanism, and increase positive incentives, such as community rewards and honor systems, to encourage positive interactions. At the same time, plug-in and cheating issues must be solved through both technical detection and legal constraints [10]. These measures will enhance player trust and satisfaction and lay the foundation for the healthy development of the e-sports ecosystem.

4.2. Expand Cross-Industry Cooperation and Global Layout

Riot Games should further deepen cross-industry cooperation and launch cultural products that integrate music, film and television, and fashion, thereby expanding the cultural boundaries of e-sports [5]. At the event operation level, it can combine the city event strategy and cooperate with local governments and enterprises to build the LoL World Championship into a city brand event to promote tourism and regional economic development [8]. At the same time, Riot Games can increase investment in emerging markets, increase the penetration rate of LoL in Southeast Asia, South America and other regions, and achieve the expansion of the global e-sports map.

4.3. Balance Commercialization and Event Viewing

The operation of LoL events need to strike a balance between commercialization and viewing. Over-reliance on advertising and sponsorship may cause audience "interest fatigue" [3]. Riot Games should optimize the game schedule design, improve the quality of commentary, and enhance the interactive aspects of the event, such as real-time data visualization and audience voting mechanism. By improving the viewing experience and the depth of the event narrative, LoL can maintain commercial revenue while enhancing the cultural value and long-term appeal of the event.

4.4. Strengthen the Coordinated Development of PC Games and Mobile Games

With the rapid growth of the mobile game market, the mobile version of League of Legends has brought it new commercial opportunities. Research shows that mobile games have stronger user penetration and monetization capabilities [11]. Riot Games should promote the linkage between PC games and mobile games, such as launching cross-platform events, shared account reward systems, etc., so that the two platforms can complement each other. Mobile games can attract young groups and light players, while PC games can maintain deep players and professional ecology. The coordinated development of the two will further expand the user base and improve the overall profitability.

5. Conclusion

This study explores the commercialization construction and marketing strategy of League of Legends through case analysis and SWOT framework. The study points out that its core advantages lie in the perfect event system and cross-border cooperation, but there are also player behavior problems and competitive pressure. Overall, the business model of League of Legends is representative and has reference significance for the development of the e-sports industry.

Since the research is mainly based on literature and case analysis, the lack of in-depth investigation of primary data may lead to certain limitations in the conclusions. At the same time, the e-sports market itself changes rapidly, and some analyses may lose their applicability due to time factors. Therefore, the results need to be examined in the context of a dynamic market environment.

Future research could further examine the differential impact of League of Legends (LoL) commercialization models on different regional cultures and markets and conduct in-depth investigations into the long-term consumption behaviors of player groups. Furthermore, research could explore the integration of esports with other fields, such as education, tourism, and social identity, to broaden the academic and practical value of esports commercialization.

References

- [1] Scholz, Tobias Mile. "Deciphering the World of eSports." *International Journal on Media Management*, vol. 22, no. 1, 2020, pp. 1-12.
- [2] Rosell Llorens, Mariona. "eSport Gaming: The Rise of a New Sports Practice." *Sport, Ethics and Philosophy*, vol. 11, no. 4, 2017, pp. 464-476.
- [3] Howard, Matthew Jungsuk. *Esport: Professional League of Legends as a Cultural History*. University of Houston, 2018. Master's thesis.
- [4] Bujňáková, Ema. "Consumer Behavior of League of Legends Players." *Satakunta University of Applied Sciences*, 2023. Bachelor's thesis.
- [5] Lord, Joshua J. *How Digital Content Marketing Affects Viewership and Engagement of Multiplayer Online Battle Arena Esport Events: An Examination of League of Legends*. Georgia Southern University, 2023. Master's thesis.
- [6] Ferrari, Simon. "From Generative to Conventional Play: MOBA and League of Legends." *Proceedings of DiGRA 2013: DeFragging Game Studies*, edited by C. Pearce et al., DiGRA, 2013, pp. 1-17. doi:10.26503/dl.v2013i1.664.
- [7] Gurel, Emet, and Merba Tat. "SWOT Analysis: A Theoretical Review." *The Journal of International Social Research*, vol. 10, no. 51, 2017, pp. 994-1006. doi:10.17719/jisr.2017.1832.
- [8] Jarrett, Josh, and David Murphy. "The Digital Imaginary of Esports: A League of Legends Worlds Case Study." *Abstract Proceedings of DiGRA 2025: Games at the Crossroads*, DiGRA, June 2025, Tampere.
- [9] Kou, Yubo. "Toxic Behaviors in Team-Based Competitive Gaming: The Case of League of Legends." *Proceedings of the Annual Symposium on Computer-Human Interaction in Play*, 2020, pp. 81-92.
- [10] Webb, Steven Daniel, and Sieteng Soh. "Cheating in Networked Computer Games: A Review." *Proceedings of the International Conference on Digital Interactive Media in Entertainment and Arts*, 2007, pp. 105-112.
- [11] Wang, Shiyun. "The Growth and Monetization of PC Games and Mobile Games." *Advances in Economics, Management and Political Sciences*, vol. 30, 2023, pp. 192-198.