

Esports dynamics and sustainability: a multi-perspective study of esports stakeholders

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Project description:

Competitive gaming, also known as Esports (Hallmann & Giel, 2018), is a fast-growing industry which has arisen from the amalgamation of three industries – sports, media and entertainment. Multinational corporations including Tencent, Walt Disney, Amazon, and Alphabet are investing into esports. Sponsors, meanwhile, are flocking to support esports teams and tournaments with a dramatic tenfold increase in investment from 2015 to 2019 (Meng-Lewis & Wong, 2019). From a technological perspective, mobile esports is growing at an exponential rate. The development of AR, VR and 5G and their application in esports also opens enormous commercial opportunities for businesses looking to build up their brand images and global presence.

There is increasing official recognition of the significance of esports by governments, international events organisers and sports policy makers. Esports were featured at the 2018 Asian Games as a demonstration sport and Paris Olympic Games organisers are ‘in deep talks’ about including esports as a demonstration sport. In spite of its economic and social importance, academic research on the theorising of esports is still lacking (Cunningham et al., 2018). The complex and dynamic characteristics of this emerging industry requires more empirical studies (Taylor, 2012).

Sustainability has become a ubiquitous issue in sports development policy and practice (Lindsey, 2008). The concept and scope of sustainability in sports, however, has not been clarified. A small number of studies within general sports management has explored the sustained usage of the resources provided through particular sport programmes or event facilities (e.g., Dowda et al, 2005), and the environmental sustainability in particular events (eg., Dingle, 2009). There is no research yet to investigate how this concept could be considered or addressed within the esports context at various levels including, for example, at the individual, community, organisational and institutional levels (Sarriot et al., 2004).

This study is designed to contribute to the general literature on sustainable development of organisations and industry by investigating the perceptions and responses of stakeholders towards the changes and challenges within the esports industry. We welcome research proposals which fit into this broad topic, with particular interests in the following areas:

1. Business and communication models of esports events;
2. Sustainable development of esports clubs and professionals;
3. Innovative marketing and branding strategies through esports and their effectiveness;
4. Organisational culture of esports clubs and employee well-being;

5. The impact of AR, VR and 5G on esports and its audiences.

This study will involve multiple sources of data collection including both qualitative and quantitative data. A mixed-methods approach through, for example, face-to-face interviews, focus groups, archival research, ethnographic, questionnaire survey and experiments, are encouraged. The candidates are also expected to have knowledge and experience in quantitative data processing and statistical modelling.

About the supervisors:

Dr Yue Meng-Lewis is Senior Lecturer in Digital Marketing at the Open University Business School. Her research areas focus on international communication strategies, corporate sustainability, sponsorship and endorsement, organisational behaviour and human resource management practices.

Prof. Gordon Liu is Professor of Marketing Strategy at the Open University Business School. His work situated at the intersection of marketing, strategy and entrepreneurship with particular interesting in topics revolving around cause-related marketing, product innovation/new product development, strategic orientation/capabilities, and networks/strategic alliance.

References / readings:

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