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An explorative approach that unveils further possibilities and necessary action within esports in Denmark

Esport business and ecosystem

Innovation and new business models and possibilities

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# Introduction

How can we best investigate the phenomenon of esports worldwide in the 21st century, where in theory, should we have discovered all the phenomena and all new ideas have actually turned out to be a repetition of previous cycles? The question explains why we have an explorative approach in this project with the headline: “Esports Business and Ecosystem – Innovation and new business models and possibilities.”

The starting point of this research is the growing interest in including esports in sport events and megaevents worldwide. The esports culture entails a bottom-up movement, that grows together with the digitalization phenomenon, since nowadays the new generations show a huge interest in gaming and esports activities and are not easily hooked into traditional sports or other healthy activities. This is what we read in the Danish National Strategy for Esports: “…there is a concern – particularly among parents – that some young people involved in computer games drop a healthy diet, exercise, and other communities than those aimed at esports.”[[1]](#footnote-1)

The International Olympic Committee declared in October 2018 that they are open to exploring the possibility of involving esports in future games, and at a summit in November, they stated that "esports could be considered a sporting activity but must not infringe on Olympic values ​​to be recognized as a sport.”[[2]](#footnote-2) The dilemma here is related to the fact that the Olympic Games cannot contain any game that promotes violence or discrimination, or the so-called first person shooter (FPS) or “killer games”. Those games contradict the Olympic values; however, they are considered the most popular and profitable games in the world.

Analyzing the situation of an organization such as FIFA, it is possible to state that it is less complicated for them to embrace the "new kind of sport" because it is still about football, only translated to e-football. FIFA is known as an organization that prefers to have control over all football business, but the FIFA game has another publisher; the game is developed and published by Electronic Arts Sports, a US company. What FIFA owns is the events and the rights to use the players' images. The question is, why are major sports organizations so interested in involving esports in their agendas? The short answer is that it is a phenomenon that grows really fast, creating business opportunities and making profit, and thus, they hold the best and most innovative mega events for the time being, especially now that the digital and virtual aspects are included.

In addition, we are gradually getting students who are interested in esports, and they are the future employers and employees in the market. In general, the profile of students who apply for the PBA in Sports Management is changing and evolving from the sports world to the events/leisure world. We already have esports as a theme in the program, but it may not be enough in terms of demand and interest. The students also find it difficult to academicize the topic, when, for example, writing a paper about esports and looking for literature reviews and academic sources, or when they want to find an actual esports internship place. In this way, it’s necessary to get support and guidance from teachers and guest teachers, who are active actors in this industry.

The subject may be new to academia, but gaming has been an activity for some time; its commercial birth was in the 1950s and the first esports event took place in 1972. The market is in fact saturated and therefore it is important to work with an “innovative mindset”. Moreover, the pace of the esports industry is really fast. Although there are not many academic sources as references, it is essential to update our knowledge regularly through digital media, such as NewZoo, Twitch, The Esports Observer and forums or SoMe groups.

On the commercial side, it is known that back in May 2017, the Ministry of Culture awarded DKK 1.5 million to Esport Danmark. This drew attention from businesses. In line with the growing market in esports and the business opportunities, there are several companies that need to understand the phenomenon and how to relate to it, from a commercial point of view. Furthermore, there is a growing interest among companies that already work with esports and therefore need students (and future employees) with competencies in the field.

So, is esports a sport? This discussion is truly interesting and multi-faceted. The name itself includes “sport” and maybe that is why it leads to many debates with concordances and disagreements. One of the most striking cultural and marketing facts of the development of computational technologies was the advancement of video games and game culture, the latter being understood as a “specific culture that appropriates elements that constitute part of the universe of video games and its consequences” (Neves, 2010).

Maric (2011, p. 6) defines e-sport as “an organized video game competition” and states that, like traditional sports, it is not just a question of athletes and competition, but also about audiences, fans and broadcast; the same facts are pointed out by Saraiva (2013, electronic document): “as in traditional sports, electronic sport attracts a vast community of players: players, teams, sponsors, fans and most importantly, spectators.”

And should we include it in the formation and educational systems? And at which stage? How is it developing in Denmark and why is it so popular among youngsters? Why should esports be recognized as a sport? Is it really a profitable business and how can investors understand its characteristics? Globally speaking: Should esports be included as a modality in the Olympic Games? Well, all those questions arose in our minds and motivated our exploration method and willingness to seek concrete and reliable information through research and practical experiences in the field.

In order to understand the industry it is important to understand the whole esports ecosystem, and in our case, we concentrate mainly on the commercial aspects and educational or institutional structures in order to produce an output, where the dynamics among these actors may create environments for debates, evolution and a broader understanding of how to add value and benefit from each other’s knowledge, networks and dynamics.

According to Newzoo, an analytics company within gaming and esports, it is crucial to understand the esports economy and its components, and therefore they present a model with the following components: channels, publishers, leagues, events and teams. In this model, some companies may take on more than one role in the system, and variations may occur according to countries and cultures.

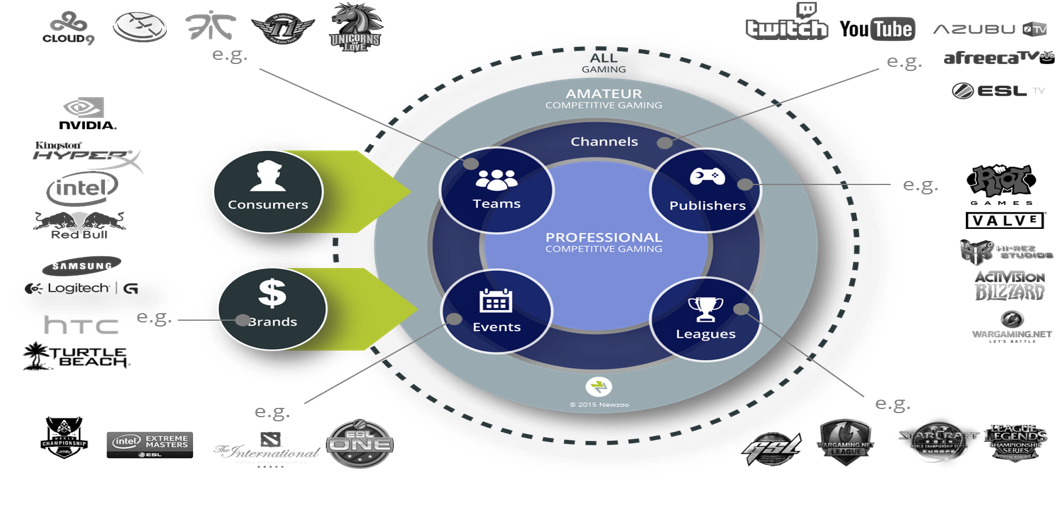


Figure 1: NewZoo Global Growth of Esport Economy[[3]](#footnote-3)

The esports industry includes various backgrounds, including marketing, game design, interactive media technology, event management, broadcasting, online communities, the fashion industry, the music industry, entertainment e-sports, etc. There are many stakeholders in the system. And we often draw parallels with the existing and traditional sports world, to discuss whether esports is a form of sport or not and to understand the developments in the industry that are changing rapidly and significantly with the digitization of entertainment for the new generations. We also look at the need for education and its future, and will develop an esports elective in spring 2019; we will probably include the theme as a compulsory part of the sports management education in Cphbusiness.

The first phase of the project consisted of making quantitative surveys to examine the target groups’ behavior during two great esport events in Denmark in autumn 2018: Blast Pro Series in Royal Arena Copenhagen[[4]](#footnote-4), in collaboration with RFRSH Entertainment and ESL Pro League[[5]](#footnote-5) in Odense, in collaboration with Odense Municipality and Burson-Marsteller Sport. In addition, we started to explore the market configuration and needs through the qualitative data collection via two interviews with representatives from the commercial area, one international one national.

# Methodology

The esports industry grows in line with the digital world, which in turn is becoming more and more boundless. Therefore, there is an increasing need to explore and find best practices both in smaller and larger sport organizations and events, as well as in other related sales activities. In order to be specific and relevant to the interested parties, we focus on the Danish market, culture and economy.

The explorative research clarifies the research question and gives a better understanding of the problem area instead of offering final conclusions. Since the esport industry is so dynamic and changeable, this approach best suited the way the project was conducted: an investigation into how esports affects business models and creates further possibilities.

The following graphic facilitation figure represents our explorative approach and was used many times as a presentation tool during qualitative interviews and knowledge sharing events. By using the graphic facilitation drawing, we were able to visualize our research starting points, processes and goals, and at the same time we had a determined frame for the explorative investigation.

Et billede, der indeholder tekst, whiteboard

Automatisk genereret beskrivelse

Figure 2: The esport business & Ecosystem – En eksplorativ tilgang. Drawing by Associate Professor Grith Kemnitz

To achieve the desired results, through primary data collection, we worked with two different phases. The first phase had more focus on the quantitative research, thus the qualitative through a couple interviews that clarified hypothesis for the second phase. In the second phase we focused just in the qualitative research through interviews with chosen stakeholders in the esports Danish ecosystem.

## Phase 1:

The project had both a qualitative and a quantitative research practice of the empirical field.

### The qualitative part

This part consisted of interviews with stakeholders to gain an in-depth understanding of the industry's ecosystem and to uncover the need for education and skills development in esports. At this point we gathered information both domestically and from abroad, specifically from a commercial partner of the Staffordshire University in the United Kingdom that offers a full esports bachelor program. In the Danish context, we conducted an interview with the Director of Product for the Blast Pro Series at RFRSH Entertainment, an esports media production company.

**First interview and main points:**

In October 2018 we visited Staffordshire University, in England, during their Taster Day at the Stroke-on-Trent Campus. The goal was to investigate the first esports bachelor program in Europe, their reasons for implementing the education, the structure and content of the program and to get the opportunity to conduct an interview with stakeholders from the business or the educational area. We managed to get a contact from the commercial side who was willing to participate, but not from the institutional side, as teachers were not allowed to share information due to the potential competition we could represent.

They have a commercial partner, Leon Dale, the founder and CEO of RGE (Raise Your Game Esports). He is an advisor for educational establishments around the world regarding esports education. The purpose of this interview with Mr. Dale was to get a better understanding of the development of the esports job market and about specific competencies needed to work with esport events.

According to Mr Dale, through his job he aims to unify stakeholders, as he can see that there is a gap among those and that it would make the industry stronger and even more profitable. He said that Asia and the US are far more developed in terms of esports education and that Europe must follow their examples and prepare the next generations for a prominent market with many possibilities. He believes that specific esport undergraduate educations, focused on the business side, are crucial for the balance and development of the ecosystem.

He also thinks that precise information in this industry comes mainly from sources as New Zoo (reports) and The Esports Observer (business). Otherwise it is fundamental to contact the community through forums and to network, as this is the principle of gaming and how it all started.

About specific competences in esports, he believes that it is not necessary to be a practitioner gamer to be in the industry and that everything overlaps from sports to esports. About the differentiation in esports events, he explains that those are distinctively engaging, including the community interaction and the viewership - people want to be part of it. In addition, esports is born online and competitive gaming has been around long before esports mega events. From the very beginning, they had forums to interact with each other. Finally, he states that inclusiveness is truly the best side of esports: despite disabilities and other minorities’ challenges it is possible to play and interact, and to become a professional player.

**Second interview and main points:**

In October 2018 we also conducted an interview with Nicolas Estrup - Director of Product for the Blast Pro Series at RFRSH Entertainment, in order to understand the company’s and his own point of view as a professional.

In addition to the Blast Pro Series events, he develops the event experiences on a daily basis and its strategy, including the customer journey regarding interaction with the brand and all touch points at the product level.

According to Nicolas Estrup, the development within esports events has been extreme and what has driven esports to explode is the team spirit and culture. Everyone can make an event, but the teams must be able to deliver a performance, such as the Danish Astralis, for example. The normal tournaments lasts from 1 to 2 weeks and ends with an arena event. Then, RFRSH had a new concept for the event: instead of two weeks, two days—a Friday and a Saturday where the most exciting games take place. They have a huge scene with 6 teams participating and playing at the same time. Whenever a person buys a ticket, it is guaranteed that he/she will see his/her favorite team play. In general, esports tournaments have developed because RFRSH has innovated the way it is held. They are able to attract 12.000 people in Royal Arena and therefore are not depending on other sports organizations and their tournaments. They offer 9 hours of entertainment, not just game after game, match after match.

There is both an Arena experience and a Broadcast experience and they are vastly different. Watching matches at home (broadcasting) entails a different pace and mentality, as the audio is satisfactory and there are commentators and cozy surroundings at home. When the spectator is at the Arena for 9 hours, other exciting activities need to happen, especially fan activation and engagement, so they really are willing to try new ideas. The spotlight is on the customers/fans, as without them there isn’t a show. Nicolas Estrup states that China and the US are benchmarks considering the way esports events are conceptualized and settled, where the experience economy is very well explored.

About the participation of the municipality: They have support, especially from Wonderful Copenhagen. The municipality of Copenhagen is interested in recruiting high skilled professionals through esports events, e.g. coders from Brazil. The strategy is to attract young people to travel to Copenhagen or to live in the city, when they are interesting professionals. By hosting the event, comes the recognition as a city for esports events with a positive impact, before, during and after the event (legacy).

About the engagement and activation of brands: when they fill an Arena, they consequently attract an audience with high purchase power and the companies are interested in this target group. However, it is important that the core esports community perceives the brands as positive (i.e.: Audi).

Customers and fans are represented by the core community, by esports and entertainment interested people. RFRSH ultimate goal is to reach the entertainment enthusiasts in their events (the outer ring) - because it will make a difference in terms of recognition and viewership, and in that way, their event might become mainstream.

They also wish that there were further engagement and explanation from the media side (ex: DR) - about what their events are about, so that their viewers could be able to join the event.

About sponsorship differences between esports and sports: there is not a huge difference, but there is an “esport community stamp” (hereby behavior, needs, expectations) that should not be underestimated whenever sponsorship matches for the events are made.

They do not believe that it is imperative to have specific knowledge or experience of esports to work in the industry, as esports aficionados might become "blind" when working with esports. They believe in diversity and that there must be a new outlook on their business. So, he believes that no specific esports education is needed, in this case.

He thinks it is very important that actors such as FCK and FIFA get involved in esports. He hopes other actors will use their own brand for esports teams. He also believes that the city could embrace esports events even more and legitimize esports in DK. Somehow, there is already a positive flow going on regarding the perception of esports and esports athletes in DK. But he believes that the municipalities have more potential to educate the citizens about it and to create value for the industry. Finally, he highlighted that a good internet connection means good opportunities for esports practitioners; therefore, Denmark is one of the best in the world.

### The quantitative part

This part of the study consisted of data collection (surveys) where the aim was to get demographic data on spectators during two major esports events in Denmark. The focus was on data such as age, nationality, behavior, income and education.

In fall 2018 we collected data through surveys at two major esports events in Copenhagen and in Odense. The collected data was shared with the companies involved, namely RFRSH Entertainment and Burson-Marstellis Sports.

The quantitative survey of customer behavior should be useful in relation to the commercial partners’ target audience profiling in the future. We hypothesized that the audience for these events is generally made up of young men from 17-35 years of age and that they are mostly gamers. The hypothesis was based on esports sources such as NewZoo and Danish news on the subject. The first objective was to confirm or disprove that information by conducting a primary investigation.

In that way, the aim of the study was to collect demographic and psychographic data on the audience. The selection of respondents took the form of a cluster selection in which groups and individuals from various areas of the arenas were invited to participate. The respondents were given a tablet on which they could answer the questions independently. When understanding issues arose, they could ask the interviewer for clarification. It was possible to answer the questions in Danish or English.

The Blast Pro Series event was held on November 3, 2018. For esports events, the capacity in the arena is up to 12,000 spectators and tickets were sold out for the final. We made an estimate of how many respondents we would need to achieve the desired result. We received 221 replies; however, the format of the event prevented us from gathering more as there was a limited number of breaks. Nevertheless, the level of uncertainty in the results did not cause concern (approximately 6%) regarding the validity and reliability of the data collected.

The ESL Pro League was held at Sparekasse Fyn Arena and Odense Congress Center from 7-9 December. We were gathering answers throughout the two first days and managed to gather 600 answers. There were 5000 spectators in the finals.

Odense was hosting ESL/ODINCON for the second time. Odense Sport & Event organized the sports festival, which offered a lot of different activities such as a LAN tournament and exhibitions with all the latest in gaming equipment. ODINCON is a concept with exposition and live happenings, and is meant to entertain the audience beyond the tournament, creating sales at stands, unforgettable experiences and even potential recruitment of skilled labor that get interested in the local environment. The event guests were more diversified than in Copenhagen and we got answers from people attending both the tournament and the exposition.

**The answers gave us the following key takeaways:**

|  |
| --- |
| An insight into which segment participates in e-sport events (demographics, frequency) |
| Reasons to why they participate and gain from participating in the events |
| Segment Behavior: What services / experiences do they consume during the event? |

**Main important information compiled from the survey extraction, combining both events:**

|  |
| --- |
| 92% were male |
| 96% lived in Denmark |
| 89% were Astralis fans |
| 82% remembered Power (energy drink) as a sponsor of the event |
| 65% had an average monthly income of 35.000 DKK |
| 62% had a full-time job |
| 52% have made a bet for as esport match |
| 49% uses 1-5 hours a day watching esports through streaming or TV |
| 45% were aware of the event via Facebook |
| 30% had a business education |

**The extraction leads to the following key points:**

|  |
| --- |
| The majority of the audience is male and lives in Denmark |
| The majority of the audience are the so-called "millennials" - known as Generation Y or "Generation Me", they are characterized by being born between about 1980 and up to 2000, and are about 17-36 years |
| The majority of spectators are well educated - also a hallmark of millennials. |
| The majority of spectators have high purchase power - also a hallmark of millennials. |
| The majority of spectators spend a great deal of time playing (an average of 4 hours per day), being digitized and tech-savvy - also a hallmark of millennials. |

### Stakeholder analysis

Finally, we made a stakeholder analysis of the two events, in order to understand their dynamics and interests. The analysis can be revisited whenever quantitative research using surveys that investigate the segment behavior are made during the two major events are held in Denmark again. In that way, it will be possible to measure the level of importance and influence that the actors have had in the development of the events and whether their interrelations have had any changes from one year to another and how this may affect the Danish esports ecosystem.

**Stakeholder Analysis Blast Pro Series specifics:**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Stakeholder** | **What interest has the stakeholder in the event?** | **The influence of the stakeholder on the event** | **Relevance of the stakeholder for the further development of the project** |
| RFRSH | Great interest as they are behind the concept and would like to spread the Blast Pro Series concept as well as expose Astralis. | Crucial, as RFRSH has created the concept and thereby determines the format and which teams can participate | Relevant to involve RFRSH in the qualitative part of the study |
| Copenhagen Municipality, Ministry of Business and Visit Denmark | The event increases the focus on DK/Copenhagen as a tourist destination and gives revenue to the hotel and restaurant industry. It can also contribute to jobs | Great influence on whether the tournament becomes a matter, as public funds are sought, but not on the format itself | If the focus should be on the value of esport contributing in relation to brand Copenhagen, then these stakeholders are relevant. How does such an event contribute in the form of tourism revenues? |
| Sponsors | Great interest as it is supposed to be a loyal audience which can be hard to reach.  At the Copenhagen 18 event, there was also an example of Mac Donald’s connecting their campaign with CS:GO without having a partnership with either Valve or Pro Blast | Relatively large influence as there are great opportunities for exposure and sponsor activation    Local sponsors for Blast Pro: Fullrate, Dr. Oetker, OK Gasoline, eOddset, Jack & Jones  International: Pinnacle, Turtle Beach, Epics, Sixt, Maika'I and Noble | Interesting to explore how companies and brands get into this ecosystem – one of the most obvious options is through sponsorship or partnership |
| Fans | Great interest – all 12,000 tickets sold out in a short time. Fans come from all over the world to the event. The 2017 event was streamed by 5 million viewers and broadcast live in 76 countries | The many offline fans have an impact on the atmosphere of the event and both offline and online fans have an impact on how attractive it is for sponsors | Participation, interaction, unforgettable experiences, networking. |
| Team (CS:GO) | Great interest as it is a prestigious tournament with prize pool of 1,625,000 kroner | No impact on participation as it is an invitation tournament. However, the Danish team Astralis has great influence on the popularity of the event, as it is one of the most winning teams and therefore makes the tournament more attractive to the audience. | Great interest, as it is when the team grows in popularity and interacts with the audience offline. |

**Stakeholder analysis ESL specifics:**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Stakeholder** | **What interest has the stakeholder in the event?** | **The influence of the stakeholder on the event** | **Relevance of the stakeholder for the further development of the project** |
| ESL | Great interest as ESL is behind the ESL Pro League event | Great influence as it is ESL that decides which cities are interesting to hold pro league in. | If we want to make comparisons on results of data collection |
| Valve (game developer) | Great interest as they have developed CS:GO and therefore also profit from the tournament. Would like to have the game spread to even more | The game developer decides over the rules and more of the game and therefore influences the length of matches etc. | Media rights exclusivity |
| Odense Municipality | Great interest as it is part of the municipality's recruitment strategy "The Road To Odense", where it wants to attract qualified workers in especially robotics | Crucial. A large part of the money comes from the municipality's pool for growth initiatives. | Decisive. The municipality is the mentor of the event. |
| Sponsors | Great interest as it is supposed to be a loyal audience which can be hard to reach | Relatively large influence as there are great opportunities for exposure and sponsor activation | Interesting to explore how companies and brands get into this ecosystem – one of the most obvious options is through sponsorship or partnership |
| Fans | Great interest. The event was sold out both Saturday and Sunday and Friday there were 400 tickets left. Spectators come from all over the world. | The many offline fans have an impact on the atmosphere of the event and both offline and online fans have an impact on how attractive it is for sponsors | Participation, interaction, unforgettable experiences, networking. |
| Hold (CS:GO) | Great interest when a cash prize of DKK 6.5 million is being played | Qualifier. Popular teams, such as The New York Times, made an important performance at the event. The Astralis team makes the tournament more attractive. | Great interest, as it is when the team grows in popularity and interacts with the audience offline. |

**Overlapping stakeholder analysis results for both events:**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Stakeholder** | **What interest has the stakeholder in the event?** | **The influence of the stakeholder on the event** | **Relevance of the stakeholder for the further development of the project** |
| Valve (game developer) | Great interest as they have developed CS:GO and therefore also profit from the tournament. They want to spread the game to more people. | The game developer decides over the rules and more of the game and therefore influences the length of matches, etc. | Media rights exclusivity |
| Streaming platform | Great interest as the events are streamed by millions of viewers. | The platforms have no influence on how the event itself is executed | To enhance the viewership |
| Streamers | Great as tournaments are streamed by many millions and this is where the streamers earn their money | Can help promote the events to followers. Can also live stream and comment on the events. | To enhance the viewership |
| The hospitality industry | Great interest as the tournament attracts an audience from both DK and abroad and they can count on money expenditure in the industry | If there are deals with the event owner | Offers that will keep attracting the audience |
| Anti-doping Danmark | Generally growing interest, as doping, match-fixing etc. also exist in esports. | None, as no agreements have yet been reached on how to regulate this | Not defined yet, but might be decisive in the future |
| Betting companies | High interest as turnover in esports betting has more than quadrupled since 2016 and for CS:GO there has been a sevenfold increase(<http://www.mynewsdesk.com/dk/danske-spil/pressreleases/spil-paa-e-sport-boomer-fortsat-2789173>) | None | Research shows growing interest in esports gambling, therefore betting companies might become more relevant, as long as consumers are well educated.[[6]](#footnote-6) |

In conclusion, we can see that there are many overlapping aspects when we analyze the different events; the specific interrelations are linked to municipalities’ interests and strategy according to deals with sponsors, event owners, local communities and esports communities. By approaching valuable stakeholders for collaboration early in your project, you can leverage the knowledge and wisdom of these key players to help guide the project to a successful outcome. Enlisting these players early has also increased the chance of earning their support for the project, and understand whether it is necessary to keep this stakeholder matrix as a base of the project or whether we needed to move on with other possibilities. In our case, as we strived for an explorative research, we used this analysis to understand the importance of these specific actors and decided to approach other stakeholders in the next phase, in order to investigate other points of view. However, we used the first phase results as foundation and reference to continue the project.

## Phase 2:

In this phase, in 2019, we focused on qualitative data collection and conducted interviews with business-stakeholders in the Danish market. The key takeaways from both phases led to a pattern which we discovered is a common problem field throughout the research: **“The lack of unity across stakeholders”**.

### Hypothesis

* Esports startups should define their products in the market, as it is an ever “new” market
* There are both online and offline products in the esports world
* Unless a company can differentiate itself in the market, the likelihood of success is not high
* Visibility and marketing through digital channels and platforms is a crucial aspect for esports companies, since most gamers/esports customers are digital born.
* The esports target audience is changing
* Network relations are fundamental to the esports ecosystem, such as keeping abreast of knowledge as the "pace" of the esports market is faster than in other markets.
* Customer/fan relationships are based on business / customer interaction. And if you do not interact with customers, you lose them.
* Sponsorships and merchandise are important for esports companies and it also works as in the sports world.

In order to test these hypothesis, we elaborated upon questions about the company’s products or services, their marketing mix, network relations, fan/costumer engagement, sponsoring and merchandising.

### Key takeaways from the qualitative interviews

1. **DIF – Anne Pøhl - Development Manager responsible for esports**

DIF is the official Danish Sports Association and is a unifying organization for both elite and amateur sports or sports at the association level in Denmark.

Main points from the interview:

* DIF defines esports in two tracks: one related to sports and one related to cultural associations. The organisation thinks that it is a good idea if their associations include esports in their system, when it makes sense. They are aware that esports is not 100% transferable the sports world, but DBU is a good example with the efootball (FIFA game). At DBU, they believe that the children who play FIFA have a better technical understanding of what is important when playing on a football field. Another example is the motorsport: They can extend their season, considering weather conditions, if they incorporate esports
* Esport is a huge part of the youth culture and DIF needs to make considerations about it: It's not about shooting, playing football or sailing, it's about the cultural phenomenon, because DIF is the largest children's and youth’s organization in Denmark, therefore they must consider that esports fill so much in the youth culture and that sports associations might include esports as an activity in line with everything else they offer.
* DIF recognises that it's remarkable that Denmark is one of the best in the world in CSGO. On the other hand, they affirm that challenges in esports can be gender balance, proper language and communication, inclusiveness.
* DIF believes that sport unions should include esports: In this way, they can offer physical activities, structure and frameworks, and ethical solutions for gamers. On the other hand, esports can add value to the Unions with a new work mindset. The associations get different perspectives through esports than they get through the traditional associations.
* Currently, DIF has no plans to recognize and include a pure esports association in its system. They mean that the world of esports is equivalent to an entire winter sports federation, for example. There are lots of esports games: CSGO, LOL, DOTA, FIFA, etc. And when you are a true gamer, you play just one of those.
* In Denmark, sports associations must have general meetings, statutes, members who pay memberships: Those are technical details and DIF do not think that this discussion is particularly interesting now. Instead, they see esports as a phenomenon that is truly big and significant in the youth culture in Denmark.
* DIF does not work business oriented, however, the organisation support communities and in this case the esports community, so that it is possible to unify sports and esports and to provide a win-win situation for both sides. When the discussion about esports being sports or not arises, they also know that maybe in ten years those will be obsolete discussions, just as previous cases with other sports that were not considered sport in the beginning, such as table tennis, dart, chess, etc.
* Anne thinks that esport and sports have different motivational factors from the very beginning. Esports were invented, in the first place, because people wanted to make money, which is not the case of other traditional sports, where people wanted to have fun in the first place, then business came in the second place.
* DIF believes that the main difference between esports and traditional sports is ownership. Esport is owned by commercial players, who own the game, own the rules and who can change it from day to day. Whenever there is a football game or handball game and there’s an element DIF do not approve, as they own it, they can change the rules – this is the premise they work with and it is not possible to work in this way with esports. An example could be CSGO - a game that is about killing people - Do they want it in sports? Basically not. And their shooting union is not going to include CSGO as an activity either, they have a different approach where they work to qualify and practice shooting at the right time, etc. It is all about the association’s values, about what they want as an association.
* There are around 4,000 members in Esport Denmark 5,500 in DBU, which is great, but in an association world they are still figuring out what it really means. Esports Denmark have too many stakeholders and work in different places to organize themselves and want to create a secretariat that can support their work. They have a dialogue with them about what we can offer in relation to the professional field.
* The interesting aspect now is why esports want to be recognized: Who are we talking about when we talk esports? Who is it? If we ask the game developers, they say they're not esports. Who is it then? That is a good question for the academia: In order to work with any area, it is crucial to analyse the system and the stakeholders. No one owns esports. Someone owns the various games and there is Esport Denmark. So, who are esports? DIF know who sports are.
* Anne gave the example of the municipality of Aarhus, which is in dialogue with sports federations that can connect to esports modalities, such as the motor federation and the cycling union. A maximum of 5-10% of esports modalities are sports games, the rest is based on shooting and strategy. The municipalities are strong players in the system because they support with money and can provide physical premises. They see it as a support to the local youth culture and a way to improve their digital initiatives.
* Anne believes that there is a lack of data explaining what esports means in general. A lot of it is allegation, so who claims it and who has an interest in it? Regarding education it is important to discuss whether it is a business area or a technical area. An event oriented education in esports is a very interesting idea: We can definitely learn from esports, from the way they organize their events. They have a digital and innovative DNA, they focus on experience economy. It is also Important to include the ethical dimension in the education, such as addiction: The games are designed with constantly rewarding, then people want to keep on playing.
* DIF has been working with the esports subject esports in DIF for 1,5 years in order to find out what phenomenon esports. They have an organizational structure that allows them to work with what they don't know that much about - and that's how they work with esports. Anne hopes that that will continue to have an open mind and curiosity about esports, because it is a youth culture with a youth mindset. And she hopes that DIF’s members will do the same.

1. **DBU – Rebecca Steele – Efootball Project Manager**

The Danish FA (abbreviated DBU) is the supreme governing body for organized football in Denmark. DBU's purpose is to promote and develop Danish football both nationally and internationally.

Main points from the interview:

* The organisation decided, after a knowledge sharing meeting with the Danish esports community, to call their esport activity for efootball. There are three main lines in their esports initiatives: The national team, the football schools and the e-amateur tournament. Currently they prioritize the elite, namely the national team. Their strategic goal is for all three lines to run independently after 2020, and to evolve efootball from a development project to a permanent department in DBU.
* In the efootball world, FIFA, their head organization and EA games are partners - EA games owns the game and FIFA controls member organizations and all national federations. FIFA has players rights in the games as well.
* They received an invitation from FIFA to participate in the enation cup in 2019, the first event that gathered all nations. Previously, the FIFA e-tournaments were during the World Cup, with individual players and clubs competing against each other. The enation cup involves 20 nations and they do not yet know, how often it will take place.
* Besides FIFA, Konami is the other provider of efootball. FIFA owns 98% of the market and Konami has Pro revolution soccer (PES). Almost no one plays PES in Denmark, but Euro 2020 has signed Konami as an official partner. As Konami and FIFA are two different stakeholders, DBU has two different national teams. It has been decided that they are going to join Euro 2020, Denmark is the host nation and DBU has a chairman in the UEFA committee so, they need to recruit a new national team for the Konami game.
* About job competencies: DBU is currently recruiting an employee to work with their esports project team. They need someone who knows a lot about esports, not necessarily someone who plays at home. They need someone who has knowledge about the environment, the synergy among football clubs and esport events.
* DBU has received financial support from the Danish Commerce Chamber to work on national team camps. In the long term, efootball will get bigger in the organisation and then there will be a full-time employee working with esports in DBU, someone who understands the political game and can formulate fundraising applications.
* DBU has acknowledge that the esports community is very strong. They started from scratch, they are experts and they are also trully sensitive when others know nothing about esports. The most challenging part within the esports business so far is the balance among personal interests – there are no experts who do not have personal and financial interests. The esports community also have clear hierarchies in their structure. The community knows that DBU is helping to lift the efootball, especially in the business part. DBU wants the community to see the organisation as a collaborator, not as a competitor.
* DBU would like to transfer the entire football concept to efootball: Rights, merchandise, etc., except the commercial part. Their commercial department is very skilled, but esports is still new to them, so they need to be creative and think of business and commercial opportunities into esports which is not a copy of how they do it in football.
* The goal for DBU is always to attract more members to football clubs, to get more people to play football. When it comes to esports, it is about getting new audiences, moving from the rooms to the clubs. There is also an idea that gamers have to play football too, and of course they need to include physical activities, but it is not true that everyone who plays computer games will also play football. So, how is it possible to link football and efootball? In esports there is a lot of mental coaching and learning on how to optimize one's performance, that might be a starting point, an intersection between the two.
* Rebecca thinks that they still lack knowledge about the esport target group. They lack evaluations at tournaments or on what happens at clubs, both socially and according to the club's structure. Does including esports in clubs change anything? What are the challenges? What are the barriers? What should be done exactly? That’s in regards to amateur esports. In regards to football schools, they would like to know more about concepts and businesses, it is not difficult to make a school, but how do they match values with sponsors? How to think creatively and innovative? Their communications department is also being challenged when it comes to esports specifically: “What is the value we need to create for the business part? It could be interesting to have more perspectives. How can we think about the commercial part, both in terms of football schools and the amateur level, and all three parties in reality? It is necessary to make profit out of this business, as right now esports is still a deficit business, so the whole business case must be coherent”.
* DBU has a report from an external consultant, which shows that there is not that much potential in the commercial part of efootball because it looks like the real sport form in reality. Whilst CSGO creates a reality that is not existent in the real world. However, Rebecca believes that now it is possible to successfully promote e-football. She also believes that what matters is the game content, the community, the star status, the social media, and everything around it.
* In terms of education, Rebecca thinks that it is important to focus on understanding and communicating with the esports environment: “At least that's what we're missing here, we need to understand the actors, interests, ecosystem stakeholders. Both at an individual level and at a stakeholder level”.

1. **Bucks Vipers – Mathias Sloth CEO & Co Owner, Malthe Hindberg Sports Director & Co Owner.**

Bucks Vipers is a Copenhagen-based esports-organization. The main focus of the organization is the League of Legends (LOL) team. Furthermore the organization wants to expand into more popular esports titles and to be recognized as one of the leading organizations in Denmark.

Main points from the interview:

* According to Mathias, there is very limited data about esports, especially from Denmark. The few studies and reports made cover esports globally. In particular, they miss an insight into users - who are they exactly and what is their buying behavior?
* There is a challenge in finding sponsors or get companies to spend money in esports, including the reason that they do not see the business potential or simply do not understand what esports is. It will hopefully change soon as many of those who are raised with gaming and the internet are now also emerging as entrepreneurs or getting jobs as marketing/sponsorship managers.
* They see the two most common business models in esports as sports association with members who pay quota and a coach (e.g. HYDR) and companies that make off-line esports events (e.g. RFSH that organizes Blast Pro)
* If someone wants to get into esports, it is important to be aware that this is a very dynamic industry, where something new is constantly coming up.
* It is important to remember that esports is not just esports, but also that it is divided into traditional sports (LOL, CS: GO, FIFA equals football, handball, basketball). This also matters when talking about networks.

In relation to education or a toolkit in esports, two things were pointed out:

* Education is needed for people who have direct contact with players. It could be those who are coaches (typically a project manager role). Esports practitioners differ from "ordinary employees" as they lack professionalism. They are very skilled at esports, but unlike traditional athletes, they have never had a coach and therefore have a different mindset. They are used to being alone in front of the screen and training and not used to having a manager/organization that demands discipline. Therefore, many organizations feel that their attitude is quite special and not professional
* It would be useful to get reliable data about esports and further knowledge about business opportunities, with concrete explanations about why it makes sense to spend marketing money in esports.

1. **HYDR – Victor Bruun de Neergaard Adm. Director & Co Founder**

At HYDR esports, they have the ambition to offer professional conditions and state-of-the-art facilities to anyone with an interest in esports. Their long-term vision is to bring esports out of the dark and to help esports—through structured learning and with the community in focus—gain recognition on the same level as traditional sports. In the short run, their mission is to make HYDR esports a common, social hub for both boys and girls of all ages, regardless of level and background.

The HYDR history started when some investors decided to invest in esports; however, competing with Astralis and North was not an option, as they have powerful investors behind them Therefore, they concentrated on the amateur part of the gaming and saw how the existing associations struggled to get support, as esports is not recognized as a sport and therefore you cannot seek support. Therefore, they decided not to form an association, but to set up a company that offers esports education (they can be compared to a fitness center, not a handball club).

In the long term, they would like to extend their concept to other cities in the country, as they currently have no competitors (the closest ones are the associations). They try through communication, for instance newsletters, to provide some added value to their members, instead of being just commercial,

Main points from the interview:

* Their marketing activities include Facebook as a platform, where they can reach the parents of their customers, and events. They also make events for companies: for example, if a company such as PWC (leading audit, advisory and tax office) wants to meet students into gaming and IT, HYDR promote a matchmaking event on their premises.
* They mentioned that it is important to highlight that esports is not a modality of sport; instead, it is a whole concept with different modalities, such as football, basketball, handball, tennis, etc. In this way, you also have modalities and styles within the esports world, such as CS:GO, LOL, DOTA, etc.
* Betting is a huge part of esports and this is where the major sponsorship deals lie. It is a bit unfortunate that it is not regulated in the same way as we see in traditional sports, where, for example, you must not advertise betting companies on clothes.
* The administrative director has himself a large network within esports and he is a former CS:GO player. He believes that in this specific industry the main actors know each other, however, they are not good at sharing knowledge and experiences. This is especially true where team owners are concerned. Therefore, forming networks and meeting for knowledge sharing is only interesting if people really want to share their knowledge. Otherwise it does not make sense to settle networking meetings.

1. **Sponsor People – Thomas Badura CEO & Founder**

Sponsor People was founded in 2003 and is an independent agency in Copenhagen. They offer guidance throughout sponsorship processes.

Main points from the interview:

* Esports is interesting as over 70% of the target group is under 30 and because they have a specific behavior. For example, if you watch YouTube at home, there is an algorithm that ensures that you keep getting content from the same universe—this is, for example, not applicable in regard to the TV audience.
* It's hard to attract youngsters to sports stadiums. It is also hard to reach youngsters on traditional channels such as television. Therefore, you must meet them in their own universe, where there is an opportunity for interaction. That's essential: they do not just come into any platform/universe.
* Esports should be as an appendix to the traditional sport. You can connect esports to a sports club and then use esports to reach the target group, as we also see several Danish super league clubs do with the eSuperliga, a Danish FIFA tournament where the best FIFA players in Denmark compete for the title of eSuperliga champion.
* When talking about partners and sponsorships, it is important to look at not only at who can invest in esports, but also how they can contribute to the community and how it is relevant. Here we have to move away from the whole traditional approach. It is important with integrated partnerships in order to create some credible content.
* Esports is not that popular yet, so it’s not representing the broad target audience or works through traditional exposure as the traditional marketing mix.
* There are many ways to get into esports, but it's about being creative: Thomas provided the example of Velux that may not be an obvious match with esports, but still it is possible to integrate their product with esports—for example, if a campaign includes a message for gamers about fresh light and air and why it is important to go outside. In this scenario, you can hire selected influencers who are already in the universe of esports who can sell the product. It is possible to connect different brands to esports and not just energy drinks and hardware.
* Regarding esports studies, it is important that the objective should be to learn something about interacting with and reaching this specific target group in their respective universe in the industry.
* In relation to networks it was pointed out that it is important to see esports as traditional sports—for instance, where you distinguish between football, handball etc., and similarly between LOL, FIFA, CS: GO. Networks are created and make sense within the various businesses.

1. **Esport Danmark – Thomas Koed Chairman**

Esport Danmark, also called ESD, is Denmark's official esports federation, established in 2007. It is a voluntary, non-profit organization supported by the Ministry of Culture and the Municipality of Slagelse. Thomas Koed was the Chairman of Esport Denmark from 2015 to February 2019 and has been in the gaming industry for a long time—he has working experience from both FIFA video games and the tech-equipment industry.

Main points from the interview:

* Esport DK started 11 years ago with the aim of recognizing esports. It could be compared to DBU, as they aim to represent esports as DBU represents football in the country. The association received a significant support of 1.5 million Danish kr. from the Ministry of Culture and have been able to build a foundation. In addition, they have established sports policy-correct statutes, agreement with anti-doping Denmark and their code of ethics.
* Esport DK created a project with Microsoft, aiming to gather young people who are about to get into crime. They have considered making a bus where they could drive around to several municipalities and get hold of the young people. Here you see how the esports can go across cultures and religions and bring different people together for physical socialization and not just for the online socialization.
* According to Thomas Koed, the driving force for playing is the social interaction both online and offline. It’s a matter of socially driven marketing—the social context that is the driving force for all gaming. Esports is merely about children playing in a different way. It is difficult for parents to understand and therefore it is often stigmatized. We should rather try to create a good framework for that.
* Esports is a platform for digitization and we need to support it and we need to help the young people and invest in both the youngsters and the esports to succeed as a society. Thomas Koed mentioned the Odense Municipality and Odicon as an example of how to invest in the young people. Those who win the digital agenda are also those who win "world domination". Esports and digitalization are a factor of power.
* Regarding esports education: It is important to focus on quality assurance, with systems that provide a ranking and help people choose one school or another. Inclusiveness is a very important aspect: Everyone can game, those with diagnoses, those with disabilities. Thomas Koed also thinks that there is need for specific skills in the esports industry, such as event management and streaming.
* DGI and DIF manage the funds to ensure that everyone in Denmark engages in some form of exercising through sports. But there are 650.000 who play games every week and if esport DK becomes a part of DIF, then esports must have a share in those funds. If we do not get something established, we will lose many young people because they think they can become professionals and therefore they stay at home and play. If the gaming activity got support, these players could, for instance, take a sports (or esports) education at the same time, as we also see it with team Denmark students within football.
* Right now, there is not much loyalty in the industry; players change form team to team and he finds it difficult to succeed in creating strength when things are constantly changing.
* Huge problem: There is not a triple division of power because the developer owns the game. Another proportional division in the industry for democratization and accountability. The provider cannot be both the legislative, the executive and the judicial powers. The Legislative part may be the game developer but the executive must be a split between the developer and a non-profit federation/European federation because this is where you educate judges. The education must be neutral, but based on the rules created by the developer. The judicial power has to get out of the commercial, it must be drawn into a responsible societal context so that we can reflect on it.
* The rules of the professional tournaments are very different—therefore, a federation is needed to, among other things, create transparency. The professional and commercial part of the esports exists, but there is no focus on amateurs and talent development. They would like to be a union, whose purpose is to give proper accreditation schools and contracts, etc., and not to be the organizers of tournaments.
* The biggest challenge of working with esports is that it is so prominent. One solution for it not to be so fragmented is that you mirror yourself in the social model we have in Denmark. With democratization, accountability and transparency that makes you have a basic foundation for saying "this is how we do it".
* The dream scenario is to think of federations in a new way: It must be all electronic sports that can embrace the entire technical agenda and the competitive agenda and be an association for the commercial part. So if you think of federations and professions, you think of culture and commercial interests together.

1. **Advice Law Firm – Morten Bro Lawyer**

Advice Law Firm was set up in 2010 and they aim to provide legal advice and business guidance of high quality in an unpretentious setting. Morten Bro deals with contracts in both sports and esports, sponsorship contracts, player contracts etc.

Main points from the interview:

* Recognition of esports as sports: The federation (Esport Danmark) has received funding from the Ministry of Culture, but the problem remains that one cannot be a regulator without entering into agreements with the game developer on what the league system should look like.
* The professional teams: "The American sports model" where teams sign up and are invited and where there is a fee to join. One cannot qualify as an amateur from e.g. Sørby Esport—it requires one's team to be registered. This is the whole problem and it is therefore difficult to run esports in a traditional way, as we know from traditional sports. It is the game provider that decides, and a federation cannot make the rules. For example, if there is to be doping control for the Blast Pro Series, as for events within regular sports events, then it must be stipulated in the organizer's rules and then players and teams must adhere to these rules.
* DGI, Esport Danmark and others have tried to make it more association-based by setting up the YouSee Esport league—perhaps an attempt to run it more traditionally.
* In relation to the fact that Esport Danmark has not succeeded in becoming part of DIF, there are two aspects—that one can discuss whether esports is a sport and about the ethical aspect of letting children play shooting games, but also the problem of the game providers owning the game.
* For the major providers, the discussion is completely equal because there is so much money in it and because it is about entertainment. They do not depend on whether Esport Denmark, for example, is accepted in DIF. Those who deal with esports professionally do not care about that discussion.
* Morten Bro experiences the industry as very dynamic, e.g. things are also changing in broadcasting, where there are no longer media deals with the traditional channels; instead there is Twitch, YouTube and more.
* In relation to education in sports and law, there is already a module in law education called sports law. He does not believe that it is necessary to create a specific program for esports but that it is more about having some general skills that can be transferred to the esports context.
* It might be easier to make a regulation with the games from FIFA or the NBA because it is about traditional sports on a console and there is not the same ethical dilemma. However, it still requires EA Games’ permission to regulate it.

1. **Igenta – Anders Kristiansen CEO & Co Founder**

Igenta is a start-up from the business academy in Aarhus. It started with the activity of providing internship places for students and was encouraged by people from the Esport Service to look more closely into esports, as there was a growing demand from companies/teams providing jobs in esports.

Main points from the interview:

* Anders believes that it is a clear advantage for companies to have an employee who is familiar with the world of esports. As an example, he mentions that it can be a challenge for the “traditional” marketer to understand esports communities and how this very passionate fan base interacts with each other. On the other hand, an employee who knows about esports and its fans will also be better placed to reach them. For instance, if El Giganten had dedicated esports areas in the shops, an employee who is a gamer (like himself) can better advise the customers than a regular salesperson.
* At the moment, Igenta is working hard for companies to see the value in posting job listings with them and not on Jobindex, and so it is currently free. Most jobs they match now are between teams and coaches. Anders explains that it usually comes first and when an esports business gets bigger, then they start to look for employees like project managers, web developers, etc., with experience in esports.
* There are also some of the larger and more established companies that are looking for esports skills, such as those who spend money on sponsorships in esports—they most often want a marketing professional with knowledge of esports. The same applies to companies that deal with events—they also increasingly demand employees who have experience with esports, as there is a big difference between organizing an esports event and a music festival. Employees need to use their network in esports and must have a good knowledge of the target group.
* Igenta wants to work on creating more knowledge about what esports can do and what esports means in relation to the development of the athletes' competencies. They also think the players need to learn more about themselves and what esports has done for them.
* Igenta is currently in the process of establishing a collaboration with Play Your Talent, which is a management and development tool that through gamification makes it possible to work with talent development, etc. (www.playyourtalent.com). The collaboration is under development but the purpose is to help esports practitioners to make visible what skills it gives them to practice esports.
* Anders also sees challenges in the fact that esports right now is a buzzword that many would like to invest in or get involved in. Many of the initiatives that are taken are therefore rather short-term and one might consider whether a bubble may arise.
* Anders thinks it is important that the big sports companies/players are good role models. He hopes that Igenta can contribute to the esports in a positive way, which can contribute to a wider recognition of esports as a consequence.
* Educational institutions should work more with ECTS in relation to the activities they are doing/want to do, and that there must be political support for esports and learning. He believes that you can combine esports with many softer skills; here he mentions 21st century skills: "Innovation" - "usually we do this when we play CS: GO, now we try to do it in a different way".

1. **Eoddset – Rasmus Simonsen Brand Manager for esport & poker at Danske Spil**

Danske Spil offers a wide selection of odds, through eoddset, on many esports gaming genres and covers the major tournaments in League of Legends, Counter Strike, Starcraft 2, Dota 2 and Overwatch.

Rasmus is a gamer from the older generation and has been in the business for 20 years. He believes that there are many opportunities to work professionally in the esports market, but they are not exactly in Denmark. The majority of the specialized recruitment agencies are in France, Germany and England, where the publishers are located.

Main points from the interview:

* It is very important to highlight that gaming and esports are not the same—gaming is about playing on a computer. When you go to somewhere to watch others play on a computer, engaging others that you can relate to, and you have the crowd and the teams, then it is esports, and must be successful and popular.
* The customers don't care about who has the rights to the game they play—they go and watch it; it is not the same fidelity relation that exists in the sports industry. Even if organizations try to impose decisions makers and traditional hierarchical structures in the esports, it is not the way it works. The flow is bottom-up and not top-down in this industry.
* In esports, 99% of the revenue comes from CS, LOL and Dota 2, in the Western world. Mentioning gaming and esports differences again, he states that based on this percentage, he does not consider FIFA esports yet—their audience reach is still in the gaming phase, compared to those other Fist Person Shooter games. As with FIFA, he sees Fortnite as a game as well—not esports yet.
* In esports you need tournament structures, personalities, stories that generate great viewership or interest and the tournament players to create a foundation and a legacy. In esports history, almost 100% of initiatives and investments were driven by private efforts, and mainly by fiery souls. In the long run, it has great importance and creates a permanent framework—a hallmark for this business.
* Continuity is what is special about the three major esports branches: CS/LOL/Dota 2. As in sports, for example, football has a long history and so has CS, since 1998; what is today Dota and LOL originate from the same game. Dota was a fan modification, in 98/2000. It has evolved the competition elements. Over time, there have been many setbacks and failed attempts to make leagues because people have a keen interest in competing. Dota and LOL are the same games but by different game providers (rights, etc.). So they have been around for some time, there has been a lot of interest in these games and people know them because they grew up with them—from the age of 13. The major esports branches are also hugely accessible: Dota 2 is free, Dota 1 was free and CS is also free.
* Rasmus believes that esports has a well-established organization/structure: One cannot underestimate the players that are on the market now and how successful they became. Taking ESL as an example, Europe's biggest esports organizer, which is owned by what is called MTG in the old days, those with TV3 and other TV stations, a huge Swedish media conglomerate. ESL has also existed since the 90s and they have a tournament circuit (like tennis) for CS, where the ESL team travels around, collecting points for each tournament, arranging everything, selling tickets, putting on a big show and leaving again—they do this every two months. In addition, there are the leagues. They have amateur league stages all the way up to the champions league. It is a great business with offices in 35 countries all over the world. So they feed in to the big tournaments and the big leagues. ESL has commercial partnerships with many developers; this means that when new games are launched they can make promotional tournament to get people to play those. They build the bridge between the developers and the gamers, based on an organized business model.
* Broadcasting is a very commercial angle about esports. TV2 has purchased the rights for next year. But right now, the big money is in broadcasting when they sell to Facebook. The race is between Facebook, YouTube and Twitch, owned by Amazon—they are the ones buying the rights to the major esports finals.
* From Eoddset’s point of view there is not a big difference between esports and sports. There are the same requirements for integrity and the same control mechanisms and accountability. The GLMS (Game lottery monetary system) takes care of playing integrity in all sports; it's a cross-border monitoring team—they monitor the movements they see in both markets, and esports is on the same path as other sport types. Whenever there are any doubts about gaming behaviors, the case is forwarded to anti-doping Denmark. So, esports is in the exact same framework as sports, and there are actually fewer episodes of suspicion in esports than there are in sports, and there is an intuitive reason for that: there is much greater transparency on computer, so it is difficult to cheat.
* Rasmus highlights that DGI does a very good job within esports regarding education and trainer programs and coach certifications. They make proper esports camps.
* It would be very useful to study esports business, taking into consideration how to compare and make parallels between sports and esports. It is also very important to aggregate the technological/technical part in any esports education, working across educations and fields: IT x Commercial. The customers really go into the technical part and technics and deeper digital knowledge are essential to the players to participate in the tournaments.

**Conclusions:**

The qualitative interviews provided us specific patterns, and made the explorative approach worth it, even though it might imply extra work and considerations, as a design thinking process of the stated hypothesis. After all, we got a better understanding of the scenario, especially in Denmark, with different points of views from different actors. We had one interview with an international stakeholder in the beginning of the project and decided to focus on the Danish stakeholders, as it best suited the aim of the project. In addition, we had to consider the knowledge sharing relevance in the local market, including the academy and the businesses.

The divergent points encountered are more related to political, structural points of view, such as the organizational and structural part of the industry and the need for that in each case or for each company. Then, there are still doubts related to what extent a specific education in esports is needed, or at least an entire undergraduate program.

The common points include: all interviewed persons at some point mention the lack of unity in some area, and that they miss a more collaborative network that shares knowledge and debates on issues across the ecosystem. Furthermore, the need of educational initiatives, whether at high school level, business academies, as training or coaching, at behavioral and societal levels, or even for parents at home.

# Esports Electives in Cphbusiness Spring 19

Linked to business and student demands we aimed to establish a esports elective during 5 weeks in February 2020: driving the experiences and information we got from the previous phases, we decided to organize an elective that focused on previous field research and preparation for the elective presentations, debates and discussions with business representatives and key actors in the Danish esports industry, as well as an industry visit at North FCK. The key takeaways from this phase led to the inclusion of another main aspect, besides “The lack of unity across stakeholders”: “Esports formation and education – what are our needs?”

We started with the overall knowledge, pinpointing the main characteristics of the industry and looking at best practices cases. Moreover, student activities were based on a collaboration with an esports startup, HYDR, which needs an effective marketing plan. The use of digital marketing tools would be in focus.

The students had to act as if they were consultants for the company. The approach was "hands on" in order to gain an understanding of how to apply marketing strategies for an esports company. They had to handle resources and economics, as well as how to make quality assurance on a project.

Topics involved: Industry understanding/stakeholder analysis /marketing plan /digital marketing /innovation.

Output for HYDR: A presentation of a marketing plan. The presentation took place at HYDR’s location and a panel with teachers and professionals were in charge of judging all works. They got feedback on how it works in real life, thus we chose a winner.

Business participation: We succeed to involve esports stakeholders, who made presentations and promoted very interesting discussions in the classroom. This initiative made sense in form of motivation, continuity and practice-oriented tasks and debates in a daily basis.

The participants were all representatives of the Danish market. They represented the institutional/organizational part (Esports Danmark, DGI), the entrepreneurial part (Gamerzclass) the legislative part (Advisory Attorneys) and the sports-health part - involving physical and mental activities - (Eathlete). Those were:

1. **Gamerzclass – Mircea Saticu, marketing manager**. The company is a successful startup that provides an esports and gaming learning platform to the costumers. They are funded by Vækstfonden, Bumble ventures and 500 startups. They started in May 2018 with 3 employees in Copenhagen and by January 2020 had 12 employees. They are located in both Copenhagen and San Francisco. They have customers in more than 120 countries. The presentation clarified the way they operate and offer their service/product, their target audience and positioning in the market, their marketing strategy, their business model and their challenges.
2. **DGI Esports – Martin Fritzen, esports manager and keynote speaker**. DGI is a national umbrella organization and DGI Esport supports and promotes the development of esports in Denmark. The presentation clarified the work of the organization, how sports clubs should be interested and engage with esports on a grassroots level and how esports and players can benefit from the affiliation with traditional sports clubs.
3. **Esport Danmark – Thomas Koed, chairman**. The presentation clarified the vision and role of the organization and the ecosystem interdependency, the gamification nature of esports, the Danish market and the country’s positioning in the esports world scenario, the ethical codex and benefits of esports, the actual challenges they encounter and how they are dealing with them.
4. **Advisory Law Firm – Morten Bro, lawyer.** Morten works with corporate and commercial law and has knowledge of Danish and international sports law, including about matters relating to esports. The presentation clarified what the juridical aspects regarding esports teams, esports athletes and esports federations.
5. **Eathlete – Mads Flindtgaard** **development consultant**. Mads holds a bachelor degree in sports from Copenhagen University. The presentation clarified what the company is what they offer and how their market experience is so far. Eathlete.dk is a platform that aims to bridge the gap between physical exercise, healthy eating and e-sports. Their primary focus is to improve your in-game performance and overall health and strength by integrating physical exercise into your daily life. Mads develops the physical tests, professional presentations and workshops for the company. They are currently running a research project in partnership with Brøndby Esports, in order to try their methods on their esports athletes and collect reliable data that can be used in the industry.

Final output for this elective: The students wrote an article about any area of the esports ecosystem and decided on the right social media to disseminate the core message.

Student feedback: In general we got a lot of good response about how practical-oriented the elective was and how they really had learnt throughout the whole process and that even people who had never thought about esports as a sport or a future work possibility now see it as a fundamental part of their education.

# Knowledge sharing with partners and interested businesses

Sharing our findings with interested business and educational institutes is one of the goals for continuity and a bequest of this project. Hence, we aim to promote network meetings and to participate in conferences that approach the subject. A concrete example is the promotion of network meetings at Cphbusiness and knowledge sharing with partner universities.

# Conclusion, perspectives and legacy of the project: Networking

If we had to state the most important learning and output of this project, then it is the need for networking in esports. In this way, the next step is to engage in an Advisory Board for Education in order to get a constant update about the sector and its needs and challenges, both for the commercial and educational aspects.

This paper has explored underlying discussions of whether esports is going to be a part of our educational and institutional system and how it could contribute to business opportunities and innovation in the area. In addition, this paper has investigated business models and organizational structures that are already a part of this ecosystem, and how they collaborate with each other or not, how dependent they are on public or private initiatives and what they wish to accomplish through their ventures. The idea of unifying the industry through network interactions is strongly recommended for all parts and can contribute to further research in the short- and long-term. In this way, the overwhelming dynamic nature of the industry becomes less ungovernable, and thus it is imperative to think locally (country wise) and then globally in this process. It is very important to highlight the bottom-up movement that happens in this industry as well, where the customers define the needs and the success of the products and service offers in the market. This movement is already known from other concrete examples in business, where subcultures evolve into mainstream cultures, though the digital aspect and the upcoming generation changes affect the whole scenario and will definitely affect it even more, following technological advancements worldwide.

Basically, the explorative research in this paper has provided choices to answer, reflect upon and debate the primary main statement “Esports Business and Ecosystem – Innovation and new business models and possibilities.” by presenting new statements that blossom out from the data collection results and patterns and the experience of conducting a business collaborative and practice-oriented elective at Cphbusiness premises.

The areas that we might focus on for further activities and research are:

• Lack of unity across stakeholders

• Esports formation and education – how to conduct it in different levels and institutions

• The Danish sports system its advantages and disadvantages to establish governance in the industry

• The governmental and societal embracement of the phenomenon, considering the new disruptive generation behaviors.

• Networking as a key of development within the industry

It is recommended that future activities and research have a starting point in the previously listed remarks. The industry is already quite fragmented and by choosing specific areas for proper investigation, the results will certainly add value to businesses, institutions and educational systems that in turn can benefit from the esports ecosystem. This (eco)system presents an inevitable progressive shareholding within the sport and entertainment industry, which is already happening now, and therefore requires appropriate attention and action from all parties involved.

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