

Module 3

Unit 1: Fan Engagement

1.0 Introduction

Fans Engagement

Fans engagement is concerned with developing a detailed understanding of the fan's passion and expectations —what motivates them, what they expect during and outside a match day— and then providing experiences that are strong in terms of delivering an unforgettable brand experience.

Fans experience should be delivered consistently and to a high standard.

2.0 Getting into the Detail

Fans engagement model

From game day to every day

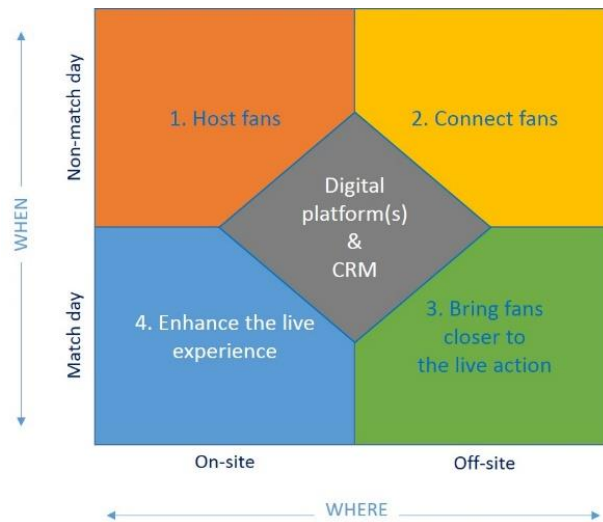
When it comes to fans engagement, Wilson (2016) expresses the following:

Engaging your fan base and enhancing their experience when they are at the stadium on game day has been a challenge for many sports clubs and Federations to get to grips with. However, as most sports organisations slowly find their feet, the new battleground of fan engagement is the period between game days. (Wilson, G. 2016) Progressive sports organizations are shaping a holistic fan engagement strategy as they push beyond the game day in search of the “every day”. They recognise that fan engagement must play a central role in their overall growth strategy and that a balance of activities reflecting each of the below four strategies is key. They also recognise that every fan engagement touchpoint represents an opportunity to collect data that can drive further value to the club, to fans and to sponsors. (Wilson, 2016, para. 1-2)

The digital plays a vital part and so do the traditional face-to-face events and activities. They all combine to become an effective force.

The model, which Geoff Wilson co-created in 2016 with David Fowler, can be applied to digital and non-digital fan engagement but for the purpose of this chapter we will focus solely on the digital type.

Image 1: Fan engagement model



©Fowler/Wilson August 2016

(Wilson & Fowler, 2016, as cited in Wilson, 2016)

2.1. Host Fans (at the Stadium on Non-Match Days)

Non-game days provide opportunities to “host” fans at your venue and make them feel part of the club by giving them an intimate experience. Stadium tours are a well-established way to achieve this. EE, a British mobile network operator, have shown with their smart guide (produced for the Wembley stadium tour), that the integration of technology can enhance the traditional idea of a stadium tour and present valuable data collection opportunities. Many clubs are now embedding Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR) technology within their stadium tour, which has added great value for the overall fan experience. Moments in history and messages from players and head coaches are being brought to life through AR and VR platforms.

Museum tours are another area touched by the digital revolution. The Minnesota Vikings are using virtual reality to bring their rich history to life for fans. The so-called “Vikings Voyage” is a 10,000 square foot interactive experience located at the club's U.S Bank Stadium.

English Premier League (EPL) club Tottenham Hotspur showed how a venue can be used to host fans and serve the community. Their use of the club's facilities to host job fairs which connected thousands of local job seekers and over 90 employers. In addition, Tottenham has signed an agreement with the NFL to host games at their multi functional stadium. Equally, clubs such as Manchester City, Chelsea FC and Bayern Munich, have hosted “Hackathons” to engage with new target audiences while solving a particular issue or challenge. (Wilson, 2016, para. 3-5)

Image 2: Tottenham Hotspur Jobs Fair at Wembley Stadium



Tottenham Hotspur Jobs Fair at Wembley Stadium [Online image] (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.kilburntimes.co.uk/news/spurs-football-club-to-host-job-fair-in-wembley-park-1-5440846>

eSports is likely to continue to be an attractive area for clubs and federations (and sponsors) in terms of fan engagement. Sports teams, event organizers and leagues have signed agreements with eSports teams and players. This is hardly surprising given that the global eSports market is estimated to be worth \$1.79 billion US dollars in 2022 (Gough, 2019). Finally, venues or stadiums are being used on non-match days for a wide range of activities such as hosting eSports tournaments, events and conferences, music concerts and hosting of other sports events (for example, boxing at football venues).

2.2 Connect Fans (Away from the Stadium on Non-match Days)

Fans are tribal and want to feel connected to fellow fans as well as the club, players and/or the team. Facilitating these connections is critical to an everyday fan engagement strategy.

Virtual reality, augmented reality and 360 degree video technologies are now enabling sports organizations to create exciting behind-the-scenes experiences. In American Football, Visa and Bank of America gave New England Patriots fans the chance to “Travel Inside the Game” to Patriots’ training sessions via Google Cardboard.

Top sports clubs are becoming more like media houses producing lots of digital content to fulfil and satisfy the craving of fans for information on players and team news. Developing exclusive content outside game day is a challenge not to mention the issue of feeding the multiple channels that the average sport organization now operates. This includes platforms such as the organisations web site, app, OTT platform, YouTube and social media feeds. (Wilson, 2016, para. 6-8)

Fantasy gaming has taken off in the USA and beyond with a number of technology companies offering fans the ability to play fantasy games from one game to the other. The Fantasy Sports Trade Association claim that daily fantasy players consume on average 40% more sports content than non-players do (Schrotenboer, 2015). While Fan Duel and Draft

Kings have grabbed the headlines, new players are emerging all the time. Many sports organizations such as F1 are using fantasy gaming to engage with fans throughout the week and on event days.

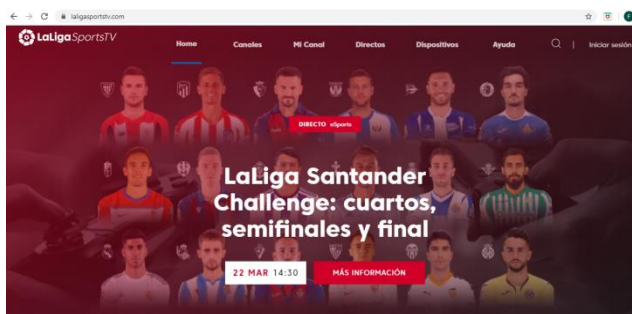
2.3. Bring Fans Closer to the Live Action (Not at the Stadium on Match Days)

Engaging those fans who are not in the stadium on game day is a key challenge for most sports organizations, particularly since live content rights can be tied-up with central media rights partners.

Clubs have become more creative in recent years with the development of behind-the-scenes content (such as tunnel cams and creatively deploying Go Pro cameras) as well as making use of live games during pre-season friendlies, youth and women's games. Many are also serving a broader base of fans by creating a presence on new platforms in new markets (e.g. Bayern Munich has been very successful in China via their Weibo and WeChat presence). As virtual reality technology continues to develop at pace, many are predicting the dawn of an era when sports clubs can offer an infinite number of fans a pitch side view of the action via a VR headset from the comfort of their sofa. (Wilson, 2016, para. 12-14)

The rise of OTT platforms has seen a number of clubs creating their own platforms. Clubs such as Man City and Barcelona are using the internet to live broadcast friendly, youth and women's matches to their global fanbase. In addition, leagues are also getting in on the act. LaLigaSportsTV has its own OTT platform showing a range of live games, highlights and behind-the-scenes content.

Image 3: Laligasporstv.com OTT platform



[LaLigaSportsTV Home page] (n.d.) <https://www.laligasportstv.com/>. LaLigaSportsTV. Screenshot by author.

2.4. Enhance the Live Experience (Match Day at the Stadium)

For now at least, the live experience at the venue is at the core of the value proposition for sports organizations. Empty stands lead to a flat atmosphere for the

players and those watching at home. Therefore, this must remain the cornerstone of a sports fan engagement activities.

For many sports organizations, fan engagement rightly begins with understanding the fan journey and ensuring “pain points” are addressed. The Miami Dolphins, leveraging IBM’s Intelligent Operations Centre technology, smooth the fan journey by monitoring and reacting to weather forecasts, parking delays and even concessions shortages at specific stands in the Sun Life Stadium. In addition, many sports clubs and Federations are now deploying Cashless ticketing such as Orlando City SC.

Live entertainment before the game and at half time, including dedicated fan zone areas with live music, specific sport related games etc., can add significant value to the match day experience. Manchester City’s “City Square”, a fixture in the match day ritual for city fans, is an award-winning example of how to build such a concept. (Wilson, 2016, para. 17-19)

Strong stadium Wi-Fi is now expected (and can be a crucial facilitator when collecting fan data) yet in certain stadia slow networks have been a source of frustration. Levi’s Stadium (home to the San Francisco 49ers) has a Wi-Fi access port for every 100 seats in the stadium and for the fan who doesn’t want to leave his or her seat, there is a specially developed app to order food and watch on-field replays. With the roll out of 5G connectivity at stadiums and venues, this will open endless possibilities from multi camera content to enhanced customer experience offerings to gathering more data on fans at the game.

Providing behind-the-scenes content and serving this exclusively to fans at the game is a valuable way to reward those that have come to the stadium (Liverpool FC do this particularly well at home games in the EPL).

GPS player tracking technology is advancing at a rapid pace allowing coaches to track individual player data. As we move into the future, it is a question of when not if this data will be used by sports organizations to enhance the live experience [by providing player and team detailed data and enhanced betting opportunities.] (Wilson, 2016, para. 21-22)

Chatbots, computer programmes designed to simulate intelligent human conversation, promise to play an increasingly influential role in driving content consumption amongst fans on game day and non-match days. The NBA showed what is possible with the introduction of a Facebook Messenger chatbot around the NBA Finals that helped fans locate historical NBA content featuring the two teams. (Wilson, 2016, para. 9)

Chatbots are gaining popularity because they offer sports organizations a chance to engage with fans in a manner never seen before. A fan with match tickets in hand the morning of a game can quickly ask the chatbot the best place to park near the stadium or immediately after the game inquire about the seats for the next home match. Young and old followers can ask a question at a moment's notice, and they can be provided with the answers they seek, thus casting a positive light on your brand.

The importance of having an integrated fan engagement platform

More and more sports organizations recognize the importance of having a digital platform on which fans and fan engagement activities are hosted 365 days per year. The best platforms integrate activities across all four of the fan engagement strategies outlined here. As CRM continues to be an important source of business growth for sports clubs and federations, platform choices are more important than ever. A greater number of data sources are being linked in to a back-end CRM system; from social media, to ticketing, to merchandising and more.

2.5 Engaging Fans From One Game Day to the Next

It is not easy to go from game day to every day but hopefully this chapter has given you some food for thought to bring your fans closer to your club or federation and reduce your reliance on the game day experience.

Technology is likely to continue to shape the future of fan engagement and, for example, chips implanted in fans that allow a club to engage with them on a far more sophisticated level than we can imagine today, promise to test today's legal frameworks and ethical standards.

Ensuring that you are engaging and not annoying your fans, as well as not distracting from your core product, are probably the biggest challenges you will face in moving from game day to every day.

2.6 Looking Forward

It is very difficult to predict the future of fan engagement and the role of digital, but the following broad themes are important to consider:

- Greater personalization. Greater personalization of marketing messages linked to data gleaned from a variety of sources will present relevant information based on preferences, behaviour and location-based data.
- Data capture. You need to link various data streams together to build a picture of the fan. This data must be gathered in both real time and static forms of data. A key element to consider is the quality of the data captured.
- Single Customer View (SCV). Linked to the above point, sports organizations must roll out CRM platforms that link together the various databases while providing tools to give the organization the ability to provide meaningful and actionable insights. A key component on the SCV will be to make content timely and relevant to the recipient, based on the data

captured by the organization. A key area to consider would be the employment of knowledgeable staff who have the skills to analyse the data.

- Artificial intelligence (AI). This is an area which is linked to many of the points outlined in this chapter. AI is becoming embedded into many parts of our lives and this is no different in sport. AI technologies will be employed in a wide range of ways to engage fans in a more personalized way: from asking clubs and federations on routine and non-routine questions to automated responses being answered through the medium of voice. Through AI, we will be able to discover hidden patterns in sports, both on and off the field/court. This will allow us to better understand the complexities of a game to project patterns forward to predict future outcomes and fan engagement behaviour.

- Greater impact of voice activated commands. Fans will use voice activation to conduct everything from searching for content and booking tickets, to buying merchandise online and much more.

- Chip under the skin. We humans have been used to cash, then that was the job of credit and debit cards. The next step will be a chip under the skin that will be used for buying and selling all products and services and for travelling. In a sports context, this will mean being able to scan the chip to gain entry into the stadium, to purchase food and beverage, to gauge our heart rate and overall health, and to be able to travel out of the country for away games (which will mean doing away with the need for a passport.)

- Greater collaboration between sports organizations with sports tech companies for improved fan engagement. For example, in Real Sociedad, Barcelona, have all set up programmes to focus on fan engagement, stadium operations and player performance.

3.0 Fan Journey on Match Day

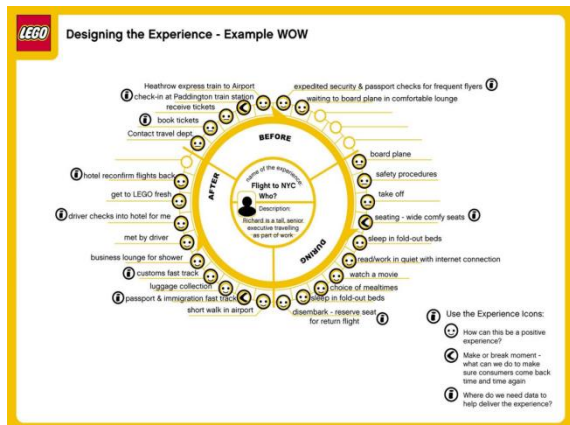
The Lego experience wheel

The Lego experience wheel is a useful tool to help sports organizations document the fans experience during events. A model like this can be amended for sport and help to map the match day experience. By using a model such as the Lego experience wheel, sports organizations can document the stadium or venue experience and gather deep insights in the fans experience, which is then translated into engagement.

From a digital perspective, it is key for the sports organization to identify where data and digital can help with the overall fan experience. This could be as follows:

- Weather to be included in the sports organization app
- Detail of queues getting into the stadium
- Information on parking at the stadium
- Food ordering from a seat inside the stadium
- Possibility to see multiple camera views through the club/federation app

Image 4: Lego experience wheel



Designing the experience. Example WOW. [Online image]. (n.d.) Retrieved from <https://weboolutions.com/experience-marketing-example-lego-creating-an-experience-with-intention/>

In addition to the Lego experience wheel, the sports organization should conduct a fan engagement audit with fans, to see how the experience can be improved and where digital can play a part.

Table 1: Fans engagement audit checklist

Fans engagement audit checklist					
Game attended					
Date					
Areas to audit	Very poor (insert comment)	Poor (insert comment)	Average (insert comment)	Good (insert comment)	Very Good (insert comment)
Customer service/dealing with the club – What digital channels did they use?					
Ticketing office and online-ticket sales					

Friendliness and helpfulness of staff/volunteers					
Atmosphere at the match					
Refreshments – Food and beverages					
Car parking					
Transport into and out of the stadium					
VIP hospitality					
Information from the club on email, social media					
Club or federation app					
Stewarding					
<p>Where can digital play a part in the areas above? Outline key areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 3. 					

4.0 Fans Engagement Tools

The following provides a number of tools, which can be deployed by the sports organization to help gain a greater understanding of the fan experience. Again, it is key to see where digital can play a part to improve the overall experience.

1. Fans survey. Feedback on match day, feedback on the venue, feedback on the event. Online survey can be sent to fans after a match.
2. Fans or supporter’s forum. Formal meeting with fans and the federation to discuss a range of common issues. These meetings can be face-to-face or on a digital platform.
3. Supporter Liaison Officer (SLO). Ensure your SLO is involved and pioneering fans engagement.
4. Walk in the fan’s shoes. CEO goes from home to the match and back as a fan in order to gain a greater understanding of the match day and fans experience.
5. Training for staff. Be helpful and friendly when interacting with fans.

5.0 Tips



- Conduct a fans survey. What do they want (match day, non-match day)? How can you reach the various fans? What do they think of the food and beverages you serve? Can they be improved? How?
- Conduct a fans engagement audit consisting of a check-out or a fans engagement audit checklist for clubs document.
- Follow up the survey with meeting fans groups on a regular basis for exchange of ideas and feedback.
- Enhance the food and beverage offering at the venue. Allow for food orders from your seat within the stadium.
- Improve the information on your app for fans in terms of getting into and out of the venue. This includes car parking, getting to your seat, finding where the toilets are located.
- Consider video content for non-match day engagement. This includes interviews with the manager and players, breaking news from the sports organization.
- Send a birthday message to your fans via email or your app (this requires data collection.)
- Identify key fans engagement touch points, such as renewing season tickets, buying a ticket to a game, getting all the information you need from the club website, i.e. the menu, match day info., etc. Improve each of these touch points from a digital point of view.
- Personalize the fan experience. Organize a welcome team or greeters on the sports organization app.

Unit 2: eSports

1.0 Introduction

Competitive gaming or “eSports” is a form of competition using video games and professional players.

The **Cambridge Dictionary** defines it as “the activity of playing computer games against other people on the internet, often for money, and often watched by other people using the internet, sometimes at special organized events.” (eSports, n.d.)

eSports has only been around since 1972. The first ever known video game competition was held at Stanford University, for the game Spacewar with a Rolling Stone Magazine subscription as the prize for the winner. To put that in context, the prize pool for the 2019 Fortnite World Cup, a battle royale game, was \$30 million.

There are typically 7 different types of eSports genres.

Table 2: Different types of eSports genres

eSports Genre	Most common Game
First-person shooter	Overwatch
Fighting games	Street Fighter
Real-time strategy	StarCraft III
Sporting eSports	EA FIFA
Racing	Formula 1 video game
Multiplayer online battle arena	League of Legends
Battle royale	Fortnite
Other	Pokémon & Tetris

2019 saw the industry generate revenue of \$1.1 billion, and according to Gough (2019), the eSports industry is expected to be worth \$1.79 billion U.S. dollars in 2022. Due to the nature of eSports, it engages a key 14-30-year-old demographic for leagues, clubs and sponsors. eSports viewers and players reside on Twitch, Social Media, Discord and other non-traditional channels. Of the 595 million people watching eSport events and participating, 125 million are casual viewers (Gough, 2019) .

Sport and eSports

There are a number of sports simulation games that have adopted eSports as a means to engage a new audience. The most possible eSports are EA FIFA, Madden, NBA2K and Pro Evolution Soccer.



2.0 Getting Into the Detail

2.1 EA FIFA

The EA FIFA game is a football simulation game developed by Electronic Arts (EA). The game was first released on July 15 1993, and is one of the world's best-selling video game franchises, with sales in excess of 260 million. The 2018 edition sold over 24 million copies and had 193 million installs of the mobile version. The game was notable for being the first video game to have an official licence from FIFA.

The game is a licenced simulation featuring real-life players, coaches, teams and stadiums in the game. The latest version of the game, FIFA 20, was released on September 2019. There are currently 18 domestic leagues running official eLeagues (competitive eSports leagues) based on the EA FIFA game; these include the Premier League, eMLS, eLeague (Australia), Denmark, Dutch and the eBundesliga.

2.2 Madden

The Madden game is an American football simulation game developed by Electronic Arts (EA).

The game was first released in 1988, some 5 years before the EA FIFA game was released.

The game is a licenced simulation featuring real life players, coaches, teams and stadiums in the game. The latest version of the game, Madden 20, was released on September 2019.

The eSports side of Madden sees the best Madden competitors in the world compete to win huge cash prizes (\$1.3 million prize pool), the Madden Championship Series belt, and the opportunity to contend for the title of Madden NFL 20 Champion at the final EA Major of the season, the Madden Bowl.

2.3 NBA2K

The basketball simulation game was developed by 2k Sports. The game was first released in 1999 and, according to a report by Take-Two Interactive Software Inc. (2019), as of December 2018 had sold nearly 90 million units worldwide.

The eSports offering is a JV between Take-two Interactive and the NBA. The league features 22 NBA 2K Teams with all-games live streamed on YouTube and Twitch. The league consists of a draft in the recruitment of eSports gamers, with the gamers competing in 5 vs. 5 gameplay, using unique characters (i.e. non-existing NBA players.) There is an online application process to reach the draft.

2.4 Pro Evolution Soccer

Pro Evolution Soccer, more commonly referred to as PES, is a soccer simulation game developed by Konami. The game was first released in 1995 and features an individual tournament and 3v3 tournament format.



The game is a licenced simulation featuring real life players, coaches, teams and stadiums in the game, with focused individual partnerships rather than league wide partnerships. The latest version of the game was released on September 2019.

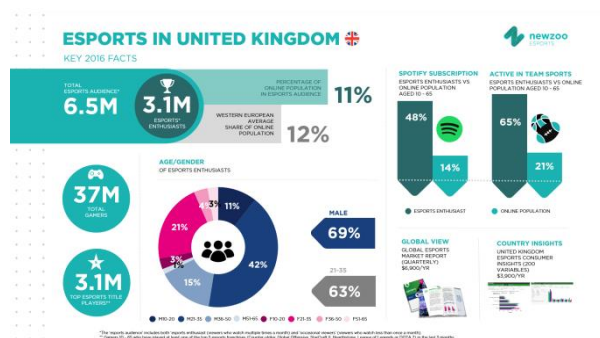
The eFootball pro league is the official eSports tournament for PES. It features 6 teams, including Barcelona, Monaco, Celtic, Schalke, Nantes and Boavista, which are football clubs that PES have licencing partnerships with.

The NHL also has a simulated game, developed by electronic art, and in June 2019 they ran the NHL gaming world championship.

2.5 Why Should a Club Get Involved?

There are numerous reasons for a club to get involved in eSports. The main one, though, is the demographic. The vast majority of these are males (69%) and aged between 14-30, reaching up to 35. According to research carried out by NewZoo, a market intelligence gaming website, “almost half of these ESports Enthusiasts in the UK have a Spotify subscription versus just 14% of the online population. They are also far more likely to be active in a team sport” (The UK ESports Audience 2016, 2016, para. 2).

Image 5: eSports in UK



The UK eSports Audience. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://newzoo.com/insights/infographics/uk-esports-audience-2016/>

eSports is considered the fastest growing sport in the world. However, instead of testing physical strength and stamina, competitive gamers are tested on how fast they can click buttons and think strategically. That coupled with the gameplay of the games makes it compelling viewing.

2.6 Own the Space

One of the main benefits of getting involved is to own the eSports space for your community and region. With various sporting eSports options available, there is a strong growing grassroots element to rival the emerging competitive scene.



Extending your brand to own the gaming community within your club and region can help make people be more aware of your club and its identity. Within your existing fanbase, you will have gamers, both of sporting titles and non-sporting titles, so it is important to engage with them.

2.7 New Revenue and Opportunities

Brands are very keen on entering the eSports space. In the last 12 months, Louis Vuitton, Audi, Visa, Walt Disney, Amazon and Coca-Cola Company have entered the eSports space. The reason is due to the type of audience Sports attracts.

For example, in the UK, the current median age of a football supporter is 42, and it is getting older. A typical eSports demographic is between 14 and 30. These are the new generation of fans that consume their sport in different ways. By engaging this audience, it will open new revenue opportunities, including sponsorship and rights/content distribution deals from non-linear sources.

2.8 Sample of the Revenue opportunities

- Sponsorship: Official eSports snack, official energy drink, official gaming chair
- Content distribution deal
- Advertising revenue from social channels (once audience develops)
- Merchandise – official eSports league attire

Having a dedicated eSports team/player means new social channels. Twitch, Mixer and Discord are considered dedicated social channels. Having a presence on these channels will allow you to reach a new audience.

For example, in its first ten months in operation, the Eredivisie eSports league achieved a social following of over 110,000. This tally included 46k YouTube followers.

Having an official gamer would also allow clubs to invite younger fans into stadiums earlier to play live games, while running major tournaments offers the chance for revenue outside the game day. Clubs could also arrange online games between fans and their gamer to be shared on their social channels, or a competition amongst fans to determine who gets to play with the club's gamer.

2.8 How to Engage:

- Create an eSports tournament to find gamers in your region
- Talk with the player staff to find in-house gamers and create content around them
- Partner with your local university or college and partner eSports with the team – branding extension



2.9 Be on Trend

For marketing and digital people in a club environment it is important to be aware of trends. While eSports is in vogue at the moment, research shows that it is here to stay. Participation rates and viewer numbers are increasing year-on-year.

According to a report by the Nielsen Company (2017), 61% of eSports fans live in a household with 3+ people. Even though these people are from a young demographic group, they are emerging as influencers in households. They spend 83% of their disposable income on non-gaming goods and services, an average of 8.3 hours playing online games versus 3.8 hours watching linear TV. YouTube, Live video streaming (Twitch), and Twitter are the most common channels used.

eSports fans resonate very strongly with endemic sponsors such as gaming products snack food, energy drinks and internet service providers.

2.10 eSports Checklist

Do we have a strategy to enter eSports?	Additional notes: Understanding the space and selling this is key to internal stakeholders.
Is there a native game to our sport?	E.g. There is a natural relationship with football and EA FIFA/PES.
Is there a relationship with a non-native game we can develop?	This can be crucial for entering other markets. A good example is PSG and League of Legends. They wanted to reach the Chinese audience, so they partnered with a Chinese League of Legends team for a major tournament.
Do we have Twitch/Discord and Mixer channels set up?	Do research on which channel is the best for you. Mixer is owned by Microsoft, while Twitch is Amazon owned. Twitch has a bigger captive audience, while Mixer's is growing. Discord is a communication channel used by gamers.
Have we developed a way to monetize this?	Examples of ways to monetize are running camps for gamers, content sponsorship opportunities and new partners.
Will our eSports partnership programme be an extension of our current digital offering or	This is important for current sponsors. Do you upsell the opportunity? Is it

a new offering?	already included in deals or can you bring new partners in?
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