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Promotion of Esports University

KAMK • University
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Abstract

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In a society defined by consistent advancements of technology, ecosystems such as the one of education and esports, have their values, as well as meaning redefined. Ultimately, with the impact of COVID-19 pandemic in the lives of billions of people, the industries of esports and education were accordingly adjusted to continue under a new reality.

To adhere to the new reality, the ideology behind Esports University was materialized. Capitalizing upon the efficiencies of a mixed research methodology, the purpose of this thesis was to promote Esports University towards a global audience in the industry of esports education. As numerous theoretical foundations were analyzed, implementation of interviews, questionnaires and secondary research provided vital information on ESU's capabilities, as well as KAMK's promotional footprint. Additionally, a set of analytical sequences, targeted at Esports University and the market of esports education, helped validate the primary output of the thesis, being a marketing plan.

As the marketing plan offered recommendations and platform specific tactics, its aim was to satisfy the predetermined "SMART" objectives of the brand regarding its digital presence on Social Media platforms. Finally, the author of the thesis will further evaluate the marketing mix of Esports University and amend it to match the desired audience's speculated expectations.

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Foreword

It has undoubtably been quite a journey.

Special appreciation goes to the people who supported me throughout the actualization of this thesis. To my family, who stood by me, to John Wideman, not only for supervising this thesis and tolerating me, but for being a great mentor, both academically and professionally.

And to my SO, for being there for me.

1 Introduction

Throughout the course of time, human nature has been altered and influenced by a plethora of sources. Specifically, industries such as the one of education, have been re-defined and given new standards regarding efficiency and pedagogical initiatives, while many ecosystems such as esports, have encountered rapid growth throughout the past few years, shifting their position regarding value and evident opportunities.

Herein, the actualization of the thesis focused on a development task, concerning the creation of a marketing plan for Esports University (ESU). By utilizing necessary information and supporting evidence, the ideology of ESU will be launched towards a global audience, occupying the ecosystem of esports and its educational sector. It is worth noting that the thesis was conducted whilst the author completed their practical training at KAMK, and specifically at their project department.

1.1 The Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of the thesis was derived and driven by the need for promotion of Esports University, a newly developed educational entity designed to participate in the growing industry of esports education. By analyzing supportive theoretical foundations and capitalizing upon data and statistics derived from systematic research, the study aims to promote the academic activities surrounding ESU and link its practical offerings to the multisegmented ecosystem of esports.

1.2 The Objective of the Study

With the primary objective of the study being the promotion of ESU, a necessary sequence of environmental analyses was conducted, assisting in the validation and scientific support of the produced output. The aim of the study was to develop a marketing plan for the commissioning party, offering guidelines and recommendations for the promotion of the brand to the global ecosystem of esports education.

It is worth noting that with limited studies and research on the topic of esports education, in addition to the underdeveloped nature of Esports University, the implementation of this thesis will act as a foundation for the development of further academic endeavors within the emerging industry of esports. With the Esports Bachelor's degree programme within the offering of international degrees at the commissioning UAS (University of Applied Sciences), the newly developed Esports University created the need for this thesis to promote ESU to a broad global audience.

1.3   KAMK & Esports University

With esports, a brand-new ecosystem is educed, defined by a considerable number of consistent advancements, and its vastly profitable nature (Rietkerk, 2020). With the reflective accomplishments of esports and its critical involvement within the academic bachelor roster of the commissioning UAS, the development of Esports University possesses as an opportunity for both, the industry of esports, and KAMK.

Ultimately, the idea of ESU was created in 2021, introducing itself as a fully automated, online university. With courses developed with the assistance of known researchers, authors and active industry experts, participants are provided with necessary skillsets to purse a wide range of career opportunities within the industry of esports, while at the same time being accredited.

Despite the rapid advancements of the industry (Rietkerk, 2020), it is worth noting that the ecosystem is still at an early stage; due to its infancy and lack of proper development, many attempts were made to deceive people off their money in exchange for studies with low quality, nor real-life applicability and justification. With the above depicting a law-less educational field, according to Richard Withers, Esports Development Manager and ESU Developer, Esports University matches the current needs of the industry, with its practical-orientation and honest nature.

1.4   Research Questions and Limitations

With the primary mission of the commission, the promotion of Esports University in the global ecosystem of esports education, the author of the thesis was required to develop a marketing plan. Therefore, the research questions of the thesis are the following:

- What elements are included in a Marketing Plan?

- How can Esports University attain visibility in the target market?

- How can Esports University increase the participant number, of its courses?

Ultimately, to answer the questions above, the author explored a range of theoretical foundations in addition to data acquisition methodologies of a survey, interviews, and secondary research. To further validate the study, results and data will be interpreted with the usage of mixed research methodology, filtered through inductive and deductive content analysis frameworks.

Finally, the limitations which became clear throughout the work, in addition to the development of the marketing plan, are defined by the underdeveloped nature of the industry. Specifically, as the foundation for the ecosystem of esports is still being formulated, its academic sector is equally underdeveloped, hindering the development and establishment of the academic brand. The evident limitations will be further analyzed in the discussion section of the thesis, providing examples, and studying in more detail the ramifications caused by the immature state of both concepts.

2 Theoretical Framework

As the thesis has now explored the research questions which will assist in the accomplishment of the commission, the author will now investigate the sum of elements which will assist in the development of a marketing plan, in addition to their theoretical foundation.

Derived from the need to develop a marketing plan for Esports University, the theoretical framework section highlights critical issues which define the promotion of ESU. Specifically, the theoretical section will firstly address the concept of Mission and Corporate objectives, as it focuses on the connectivity between the client's vision, mission, corporate objectives, and finally, the developed strategy.

Moreover, the thesis addresses the notion of marketing strategy, providing the necessary groundwork to examine the concepts of market segmentation, market targeting and finally, marketing position. Furthermore, the thesis discusses the concept of digital marketing Planning, as its content will contribute to the enhanced visibility of the brand in the target market. At the end of the section, the author explores the theoretical foundation of SWOT, TOWS and PESTLE analyses, in addition to the importance of evaluation and their ties to the commission.

2.1 Mission & Corporate objectives (SMART)

In an era during which the industry of esports is blooming, ESU was created to provide the ecosystem with the legitimacy that has been lacking from its academic sector. The concept of Esports University very quickly grew to become an actualized concept, with its range of practically oriented courses, open to access during its BETA stage.

Ultimately, the commission, which was derived from the creation of Esports University, aimed to promote the academic brand to the global ecosystem market of esports education. Hence, there was a need to highlight the link between the client's vision to the concepts of mission, objectives, and strategy.
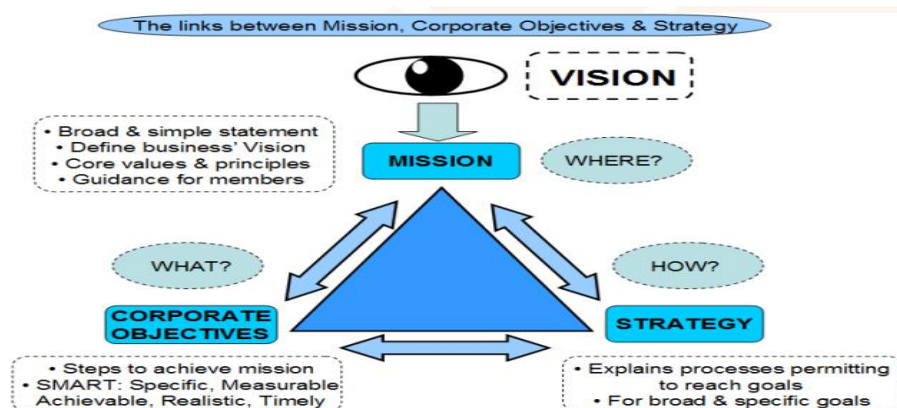
Figure 1 Mission, Objectives and Strategy links (Digischool, n.d.)

To help facilitate a better understanding between the concepts of Vision, Mission, Strategy and Objectives, Figure 1 showcases the relation between the four elements. The concept of Vision indicates ESU's essence, which in this case, is the successes of Esports University in the ecosystem of esports education, and its wide recognition by the industry.

Accurate interpretation of a vision enables the development of a consistent link, found between the concepts of Mission, Strategy and Objectives. Ultimately, mission is a declaration of how the predefined vision, will be accomplished. Strategies are deemed as a set of activities which capitalizes upon the initial mission to achieve the vision, while goals and objectives act as the groundwork which state what needs to be accomplished, as well as the activities and evident timelines for the accomplishment of the mission (Mission Statement, n.d.).

Vision: Promotion of Esports University and as an end result, recognition of its academic capabilities by the wide ecosystem of esports education.

Mission = Promotion of Esports University to a global audience, in the target market.

Strategy = A marketing plan which will capitalize upon the initial mission and proceed to the accomplishment of the vision (See Marketing Plan section).

Objectives = As the commissioning party did not provide any accurate objectives, the author of the thesis developed a set of platform specific objectives, directing the promotional endeavors of Esports University.

To ensure the objectives are achievable, they were designed around S.M.A.R.T goals. Specifically, the acronym stands for **S**pecific, ensuring the objectives are simple, sensible, and significant; **M**easurable, defined by a meaningful and motivating nature; **A**chievable; **R**elevant, linked to the capacity of the brand and the available resources; and finally, **T**ime-bound, ensuring their implementation can be achieved within a time sensitive period of time ("SMART Goals", n.d.)

2.2   Marketing Strategy

Despite the advancements met by society, the concept of marketing has always been ideologically connected to the people; in its simplest form, marketing concentrates on what people want, providing customers with most appealing price to the most useful products and services. Ultimately, marketing aims to yield the most profit, provided by the observed exchanges of a brand to its customer (Kotler, 2009).

With a clear direction and purpose related objectives, the right story usually sells the most, achieving long-term advantages that put brands on the spotlight. While marketing is a notion that will remain, regardless of the advancements met by technology, the very core of proper marketing relies on the development of an efficient marketing strategy. Naturally, marketing strategy is what enables brands and organizations to stand out in their respective competitive industries (Tompson, 1998), while at the same time, it allows companies to attain a better understanding of their message, analyzing their presence and setting up expectations related to their opportunities and strengths.

2.2.1   Marketing Segmentation

Possessing a marketing strategy entails the development of a thorough plan. It should be efficient, defined by accurate concepts such as market segmentation, target, and positioning. Marketing segmentation, at its essence, develops categorized sections of society, capturing notions such as demographics, values, and priorities, in addition to psychographic and behavioral criteria. Ultimately, an interpretation of these indexes into actionable data, can assist in mapping demand, as well as the most interested, target audiences (Lotame, 2019).

With evident advantages, ranging from the development of impactful marketing messages to a steadily driven growth, market segmentation posses as a way for businesses, and in our case, Esports University, to attain more control over their complex macro-environment. Consequently, by targeting a specific segment, brands such as ESU are able to spark relevance within highly competitive industries, even if that relevance is created thanks to a portion of the market.

2.2.2 Market Targeting

As showcased above, market segmentation addresses the focus placed on the division and categorization of the market. However, the concept of market targeting initiates the process of stepping towards these markets. Ultimately, the activities which surround the concept of market targeting, evaluate, and select the most appropriate segmentation, initiating the procedure of marketing strategy. It is important to note, that factors such as segment size and growth, segment structural attractiveness, as well as company objectives and resources (Kotler, 2009), are taken under heavy deliberation.

According to Philip Kotler, the selection of the market target perquisites the existence of a clear organizational goal, in addition to a vibrant message which details the exact nature of the offerings towards customers. With Kotler's input taken in consideration, it is important to emphasize upon existing strategies which help facilitate a more concrete stance when initiating the process of market targeting.

Differentiated Marketing

To assist in market targeting endeavors, there exists a concept of differentiated marketing; a notion which allows organizations to be more flexible with their target selection through diversification of their offerings. What this concept entails, is essentially a different approach for each segment, enabling brands to provide exceptional benefits to each part of the market without having to leave any segments behind.

Undifferentiated (Mass) Marketing	Differentiated (Segmented) Marketing	Concentrated (Niche) Marketing	Micromarketing	
			Local Marketing	Individual Marketing
Whole market with one offer → Ignore segments	Decide to target several different market segments, separate offers for each	Concentrate on one or a few segments or niches	→ cities, neighbour-hoods, specific stores	→ 1 person

Figure 2 Market Targeting Strategies (Market Targeting Strategies, 2020)

As showcased in Figure 2, differentiated marketing possesses four factors. Starting with undifferentiated marketing the entire market is the primary target, where promotional activities follow a singular approach.

Marketing Mix Variation → Entirerty of the Market

Figure 3 Un-differentiated Marketing (Author's Interpretation, based on "Market Targeting Strategies Article)

In addition to un-differentiated marketing, exists the concept of segmented, differentiated marketing, whereas its primary attribute is differentiation of the approach based on segmentations which allow brands to develop different approaches for their segmented audience (Market Targeting Strategies, 2020).

Marketing Mix Variation #1 → Segment #1

Marketing Mix Variation #2 → Segment #2

Marketing Mix Variation #3 → Segment #3
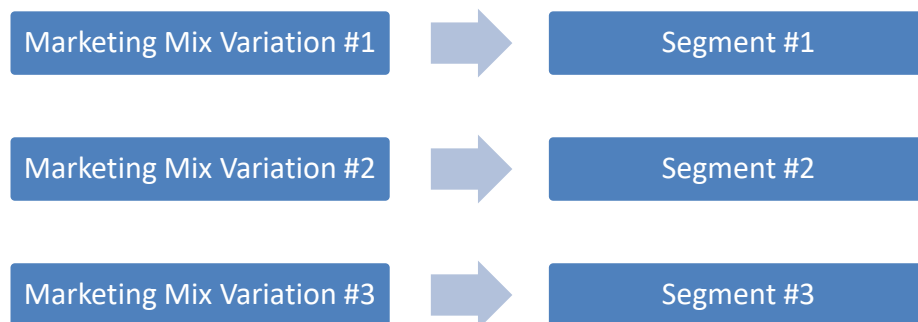
Figure 4 Differentiated Marketing (Author's Interpretation, based on "Market Targeting Strategies Article)

While the two previous differentiating marketing factors introduced a simplistic overhaul of promotion, the last two concepts introduce a more complex version. Specifically, concentrated marketing selects the segments which are useful with no adjustments being done in the original marketing mix (Market Targeting Strategies, 2020).
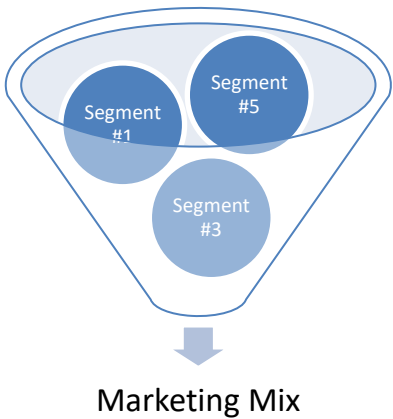
Figure 5 Concentrated Marketing (Author's Interpretation, based on "Market Targeting Strategies Article)

The final segment of differentiation marketing leads to micro-marketing, being defined as a realistic practice of tailored products and services. It is worth noting that local marketing and individual marketing are sub-categories of micro-marketing, segments which on their own possess unique approaches. However, as the previously mentioned practices are not relevant to the development and accomplishment of this commission, their theory will not be analyzed (Market Targeting Strategies, 2020).

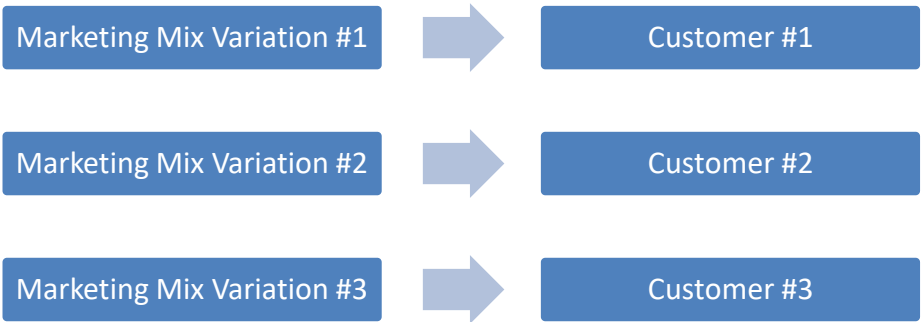
Figure 6 Micromarketing (Author's Interpretation, based on "Market Targeting Strategies Article)

2.2.3 Market Position – Competitiveness

Having addressed the concept of marketing strategy, in addition to two critical aspects of it, market position finalizes the theoretical segmentation tied to the ideology above. In a definition provided by Philip Kotler, promotion of an offering reaches the mind of the target consumer. However, its quality and values are the determinants which define its placement among different competitors.

As an example, it is impossible for a small UAS in Finland, and its respective educational offerings, to acquire the same visibility and brand acknowledgement as already established and widely known university brands (e.g., Harvard). However, with the correct message and a distinguished volume of values and quality, the targeted consumer's mind can be led to hold the small Finnish UAS in a higher hierarchy-based regard if it were to be compared to the example. Ultimately, the process behind competitive positioning, as described above, comes down to three steps according to research conducted by Lovelock and Wirtz (2004, 64).

> ➢ Identification of competitive advantages.

> ➢ Selection of the most efficient and influencing competitive advantage.

> ➢ Proper communication of the selected competitive advantage.

2.3 Digital Marketing Planning

Despite the evident penetration of technology in almost every industry, the ecosystem of news and media appears to be most impacted by the factor. With constantly evolving goods and services, catching the attention of people and influencing their purchase habits, the influence of technology has led to the consistent development of digital marketing. Led by the growth of digital marketing, "all marketing efforts through digital devices and internet", have a better chance at captivating the attention of a consumer (Alexander, 2019).

Due to the intrusive nature of the profound ecosystem, its connectivity with technology has resorted to the development of various promotion methodologies. From technics such as SEO

(search engine optimization), content, and partnership marketing to active influencer and social media promotion, digital marketing incorporates the sum of activities which strive to promote brands.

As the commission aims to subject Esports University to a global audience, found within the industry of esports education, it is important to emphasize the usage of digital marketing for its promotion, rather than singular, Social Media Marketing. Consequently, the unique nature of Esports University, tied to its meaning and importance to the industry of esports education, require it to capitalize upon additional methodologies, hence, the addition of SEO and Partnership marketing into the promotion mix.

2.4   Environmental Analysis tools

Before the author proceeds to the development and detailed analysis stage of the thesis, it is important to attain a better understanding of the theoretical tools which will be utilized for the accomplishment of this commission. Specifically, any acquired data will be filtered through analytical tools of SWOT, TOWS and PESTLE, as their implementation will assist in the process of mapping the environment of Esports University, and its desired ecosystem, esports education.

2.4.1   Situational Analysis

Ultimately, the notion of situation analysis capitalizes upon a volume of defining elements, which are found within relevant, competitive environments. As the concept above leads the assessment of markets, any ongoing trends which define the surrounding products and services, are similarly analyzed, and specified.

According to C. Jain, the already analyzed concept of marketing strategy is interlinked and consistently influenced by the three C Elements: Customer, Competition and Corporation (Subhash, C. Jain, 2006). The first C, Customer depending on the second C, competitive state of organizations, for increased quality, lower prices and larger variety of products, corporations reversely depend on the two concepts above for their survival within populated industries. Consequently,

when corporations are not able to match the consistently changing wants and needs of the consumers, competitors who are capable of the above, will simply overrule and take over any prior relevancy.

2.4.2   Internal & External Analysis

The concept of situation analysis is defined by two components, the external and the internal ecosystem of a business. Specifically, the ideology of internal analysis addresses the concepts found within the inner environment, focusing on matters such as resource diversification and allocation, structural features, in addition to human resources such as employees, target audiences and volunteers ("Internal Factors That May Affect Business Organization," n.d.); topics which in the long run, allow companies to remain focused on their primary objective and organizational goals.

In a different setting, external analysis addresses outer elements which are affected by factors outside and under no control of the company. Often, the examined elements range from business competition to politics and suppliers (Sherman,2019). While the internal outlet of situation analysis can be covered with the implementation of a SWOT (and its variant, TOWS) analysis, it is worth noting that the external segment of situation analysis branches away from the simplicity of SWOT, as the need for extensively analyzing industries is covered by the efficiencies of a PESTLE analysis.
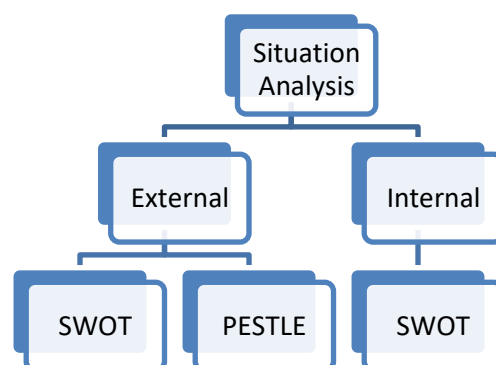

Figure 7 Situation Analysis (Author's Interpretation)

SWOT & TOWS Analysis

In its simplest form, SWOT analysis is defined by its ability to analyze the competitive ecosystem of an organization while at the same time, develop an overview of its internal efficiency. Specifically, SWOT is often used as a part of strategic planning, assisting in the process of decision making behind organizational movements. Additionally, the usage of this framework enables brands to highlight threats that are observed in their ecosystem and surroundings, leading to their nullification, before they become troubling.

As the name suggests, SWOT focuses on four different topics: strengths, addressing the internal capabilities of an organization, in addition to its assets; weaknesses, going over the same internal attributes and recognizing which require further attention and improvements; opportunities; examining external factors that the business could take advantage of and lead to success; and finally, threats, examining the external environment of an organization and identifying certain circumstances which could be harmful for future operations (Kenton, 2021).

Derived from the findings above, it is necessary to emphasize upon SWOT's ability to analyze both the internal and external environment of an organization, adding to the reasoning behind its usage and flexibility as an analytical framework tool. Specifically, the strengths quadrant, in addition to the weaknesses segment of the tool, address the internal capabilities of the framework, while in the other hand, evident threats and opportunities, address the external factors (Kenton, 2021).

	External Opportunities (O)	External Threats (T)
Internal Strengths (S)	**SO** *"Maxi-Maxi Strategy"* Strategies that use strengths to maximize opportunities.	**ST** *"Maxi-Mini Strategy"* Strategies that use strengths to minimize threats.
Internal Weaknesses (W)	**WO** *"Mini-Maxi Strategy"* Strategies that minimize weaknesses by taking advantage of opportunities.	**WT** *"Mini-Mini Strategy"* Strategies that minimize weaknesses and avoid threats.

Figure 8 TOWS Matrix (Mindtools, 2009)

Before moving forward, it is important to also link SWOT to its extended version, namely, TOWS. While SWOT develops a better, holistic perspective of an internal environment, TOWS Matrix,

forces a perspective upon the external environments, developing a greater understanding of the available strategic choices.

With leading questions such as: *"How can we make the most out of the brand's strong points"*; ;*"How can you utilize evident strengths, to avoid potential threats"*; *"How can you use your opportunities to nullify profound weaknesses?"*; and, *"How to minimize weaknesses and overcome threats?"*, the TOWS Matrix combines the results, derived from the initial implementation of SWOT, and develops strategies which can either, enhance the target's dynamic, or nullify the effects of its weaknesses and threats ("TOWS Matrix: Meaning", 2021).

Ultimately, the implementation of SWOT and its variation, TOWS, will assist in the uncovering of Esports University's capabilities; with the environmental analysis of ESU, led by the usage of the frameworks above, the competences of the educational asset will be highlighted, indicating the quality behind its brand, and the value provided towards the desired industry of esports education. As the application of the variants will be finalized, the frameworks will also reveal any critical issues found within the internal as well as external environment of Esports University, providing the commissioner with an essential volume of information, necessary for the counteracting of any discovered ramifications.

PESTLE Analysis

As the name suggests, PESTLE is defined by 6 different aspects, addressing political, economic, social, technological, environmental, and legal factors; topics which influence the flow of an organization or market.

Specifically, political factors can include tax policies, laws, and restrictions, while economic factors range from financial growth to inflation and disposable income of consumers as well as businesses. Furthermore, social, and technological factors, respectively, address socio-cultural tendencies, while the latter, examines the landscape change which society have been experiencing thanks to the consistent technological advancements. Finalizing with the two remaining factors, the environmental segment addresses ethical and pollution related matters, while addressing legal factors, entails a deeper understanding of items such as health, safety, and equal opportunism (Corporate Finance Institute, 2021).

2.5 Marketing Mix

Before proceeding towards the methodologies, it is important to address the concept of marketing mix, as it refers to the set of activities and tactics that aim to conceive the most efficient form of marketing. Often referred as the 4Ps, the details behind price, product, promotion, and place are addressed in a thorough manner to provide value within a business plan.

Price addresses the exchange value of an offering, often dependent to the costs of manufacturing, audience segmentation as well as the ability of the market to offer liquidity for said offering. Moving forward, product, offers information as well as a description of the products, often developing a level of expectation. Lastly, Place and Promotion, respectively, refer to the point of sale within the competitive industry, as the latter, refers to sum of promotional activities, targeted at the customer ("What is the Definition of a Marketing Mix?", n.d.).

While the notion above defines the foundational theory behind marketing mix, the commission aims to promote the asset towards a global environment, hence, the need of understanding how the framework responds in a global manner. Ultimately, when the concept of product, price, place, and promotion are being applied to global marketing, the most important factors, ranging from Social, Political and Legal, to Environmental, Economic as well as Technological, define the target market, and require appropriate actions from the occupying organizations. By evaluating the conditions above and their impact to the desired ecosystem, brands such as Esports University are given two options (Sramkowski, 2021):

➢ To standardize their offerings and enter the market with no significant change in their marketing mix.

➢ To adapt their marketing mix and enter the market with changes, which reflect upon the already explored factors, matching the unique attributes of the ecosystem.

2.6 Evaluation and Control

Concluding the theoretical framework component of the thesis, the author will now address the concept of Evaluation and Control, as their implementation will define the efficiency, and safety

of the developed marketing plan. Ultimately, with the finalization of this section, the elements which compile a sound, efficient, marketing plan, have now been addressed, however it is important to note that ramifications can always appear, risking the stability and performance of a brand such as Esports University.

Whether the implementation of a marketing plan entails promotion through direct e-mail, or with the launching of a website, the strategic steps which were taken prior to the execution of the plan, can be flawed, or even, have their efficiency nullified due to the consistent changes happening in the target market or environment of the brand ("Effective Evaluation and Control Plan", n.d.).

Ultimately, the concept of evaluation strives to review data and statistics which indicate whether the marketing plan was successful or not. From the usage of questionnaires, interviews, and calculations (ROI – Return on Investment), to the usage of analytics imbued to Social Media platforms; the results derived from the sources above, can be utilized in a qualitative as well as quantitative manner to interpret findings and develop appropriate changes.

While the concept of evaluation entails the monitoring of a marketing plan's progress, control of a marketing plan is defined by the sum of contingency actions, as well as the existence of budget, both as a mean to protect the brand against potential ramifications, as well as a way to enhance its performance on a large sum of Social Media platforms ("Examples of Marketing Plan Control", 2019).

3   Methodology

Approaching the topic of methodology, a mixed method research was used throughout the accomplishment of the thesis. Ultimately, a mixed method entails the usage of both quantitative and qualitative approaches, as their combination offers statistic and interpretation driven coverage.

To further emphasize the above; quantitative research, as the name suggests, will be focused on the exploration of numeric patterns (University of Texas Arlington, 2014). Its implementation within the thesis will be observed through the actualization of a questionnaire, with its results being logical, statistical, and unbiased (Sheard, 2018). The implementation of this methodology will provide the necessary credibility to support any elaborate activities for the promotion of Esports University.

Capitalizing upon the usage of interviews, targeting esports students which are studying at KAMK; The information received will help facilitate a better understanding of ESU's capabilities. The participant's answers will help determine a realistic set of expectations prior to the launching of the asset, tied to the diverse background of the interviewees and their connection to the industry. The data acquisition method above will represent the qualitative aspect of the mixed method research, as it will explore the reasoning behind psychological, sociological as well as anthropological factors, tied to the interviewee's answers.

3.1   Data Collection Methods

3.1.1   Questionnaire

While Esports University does not possess a developed set of promotional activities, its host university, KAMK, possesses an already established digital footprint due to its prior promotion and marketing of its degrees. By capturing the opinion of students and directing their input on KAMK's appearance on numerous Social Media platforms, the author of the thesis determined whether

prior promotional endeavors, conducted on the Esports Degree, were successful, and therefore useful for the promotion of ESU.

Specifically, by capitalizing upon the questionnaire's efficiency, accuracy, and timely implementation (Cleave, 2021), the evident data acquisition methodology will target, invited (Appendix A), esports students which are currently conducting their studies at KAMK. It is worth noting that while the current number of esports students totals up to 145 (From Years 2019 to 2021) according to data evident on their community Esports Discord server, a total amount of 31 esports students participated and answered the questionnaire, being translated to a 21.37% participation rate. Despite the low number of participants, the diverse background of the sample will offer a realistic as well as varied opinions on the matter.

According to Richard Withers, marketing on the Esports Degree has always been defined by realism, while it consistently has focused on the practicality of its ecosystem, in addition to the hands-on experience attained through the student's participation in the KAMK's esports curriculum. The implementation of the questionnaire and its reflective questions aimed to discover if the promotion of the degree is accurate, as well as efficient, after comparing the marketed offerings of the Esports Bachelor's degree, to the student's ongoing studies at KAMK.

In addition to defining the promotion of the degree, the questionnaire reveals which Social Media platforms were most efficient in reaching out to the participating sample of esports students. By mapping out KAMK's promotional sequences on the Esports Degree, and their reflective efficiency, the author of the thesis will be able to discover the most commonly appearing Social Media platforms, assisting in the adaptation and development of a brand-new marketing strategy, tailored for Esports University and its primary aim of addressing a global audience. The questions are found in the appendices section of the thesis (Appendix D).

3.1.2 Interviews

Diving deeper within the data acquisition methodologies, the thesis will also be utilizing interviews; interviews are divided into three distinctive categories: Structured, Semi-Structured and Unstructured. The notion behind structured interviews is defined by a series of questions that follow the same direction as a pre-structured script, with very little deviation. Diversely,

unstructured interviews are defined by the evident lack of direction, as the interview is based on open-ended questions which strive to develop a connection between the interviewer and interviewee, aiming for a discussion that showcases unfiltered feelings and opinions. (Brennen, 2013, 28-39.)

In this case, the author capitalized upon the efficiencies of semi-structured interviews, by developing scripted questions, and at the same time, deviating accordingly to offer the necessary flexibility and room for associated conversations (Brennen, 2013, 28-39.). Prior to the analysis of the interviewees and overview of the questions, it is important to first explore the purpose of the interviews:

1) To understand the interviewee's connection to the industry.

2) To attain input regarding Esports University's efficiencies, or reflective inabilities.

The goals above aim to imbue the author's thesis with information derived from a diverse set of esports students. As the academic asset of Esports University wishes to occupy the vast ecosystem of esports education, its occupants are defined by enthusiasts of the industry, or newly appreciating members; such segments possess similar attributes to the esports students which were subjected to these interviews, providing a realistic overview of the expectations that define the asset's success when wishing to attract similar-minded individuals.

Interviewees

The interviews targeted individuals with an academic background in esports, whose education is ongoingly based at the commissioning university, KAMK. The individuals ranging from LBE student segments (Esports Degree) from year 2019 to 2021, were subjected to a series of questions which aimed to highlight their expectations regarding the Esports University asset, specifically addressing its practicality, implementation, and course content.

Prior to the settling of the interview, all interviewees were given access to the platform of Esports University, providing them with enough time to explore its academic content. All 20 participants were interviewed across various, online platforms (Discord, Teams, WhatsApp) throughout May 01, 2022, to May 13, 2022. The inquiries below focused on their set of experiences with the industry, while dividing deeper, the set of questions highlighted their expectations regarding

Esports University and its implementation within the global ecosystem of esports education. Beyond the introductory and interview establishment phase, the questions which directed the interview and any additional conversations, are evident in the appendices section of the thesis (Appendix C).

In addition to the interviews above, the author of the thesis conducted a final interview with Richard Withers, Esports Development Manager and Esports University Developer; specifically, the discussion was conducted in an unstructured arrangement, capitalizing upon the format's flexibility, and emphasizing upon the interviewee's unfiltered opinions. Actualization of the interview provided information which described the environment of Esports University and KAMK.

3.2   Secondary Research

Having addressed the primary data acquisition methodologies of Interviews and Questionnaire, the thesis will now address the concept of Secondary Research. Secondary research or desk research is a technique which involves already existing data to derive a result based upon a specific topic. Existing information is then reviewed, altered, and assembled to improve and justify the research which is being compiled.

Specifically, secondary research contains information available in studies and similar documents; documents which are available within public libraries, websites, as well as surveys and questionnaires, whose goal is to provide a better understanding regarding specific topics. It is also important to mention that several governments and non-government agencies also collect statistics and information that can be utilized for research purposes (Secondary Research – Definition, n.d.). While there is no absolute definition for the method of secondary research, Hakim (1982) defines secondary research as "an examination of an existing dataset which presents clarifications, deductions or information additional to, or dissimilar from, those showcased in the first report on the review as a whole and its main results".

In most cases, data collection is initiated with a basic examination of what information is available within reach, with the main goal of enhancing the credibility, as well as the efficiency of research or reports. However, utilizing secondary research as a tool, is a process which is often considered to be easier when compared to the variety of data collection techniques.

Ultimately, while interviews and questionnaires will capture crucial information for the promotion of Esports University, secondary research will funnel a large volume of data towards the analytical sequences of Esports University (through SWOT & TOWS) and esports education (through PESTLE), defining the industry and its reflective attributes in addition to the unique capabilities of ESU.

As the results and their interpretations, derived from the interviews (Appendix E) and questionnaires (Appendix F), are evident within the appendices section of the thesis, it is important to showcase the set of activities which resorted to the analysis of the received content.

3.2.1   Content Analysis

Ultimately, the procedure found behind the concept of content analysis is brought down and summarized within two approaches: the inductive and deductive framework, however, before these two frameworks are allowed to utilize data, there is an apparent need for a preparation phase. According to the authors of "The qualitative content analysis process", both inductive and deductive analysis are in need for a preparation phase as the sequence of activities follows as preparation, organizing and reporting.

Inductive Analysis

Prior to the preview of the author's analytical endeavors, it is important to highlight the reasoning behind the usage of each framework. Particularly, inductive content analysis was utilized for the evaluation of the results which were derived from the interviews; the general approach of inductive analysis, lies with its ability to utilize textual data to establish meaningful links (Dudovskiy, 2011) between results.

Figure 9 Inductive Content Analysis ("Inductive or Deductive?" Two Different Approaches, n.d.)

While for the purpose of this thesis, the four questions the students were subjected to, aimed to capture data and information regarding the student's connectivity to the industry, and their opinion on Esports University as well as its potential impact to their success, it is worth noting, with the operation of inductive content analysis, the author of the thesis was able to identify patterns, which through keyword analysis (Keyword Density Checker, 2018), and its results (Appendix B), were theorized.

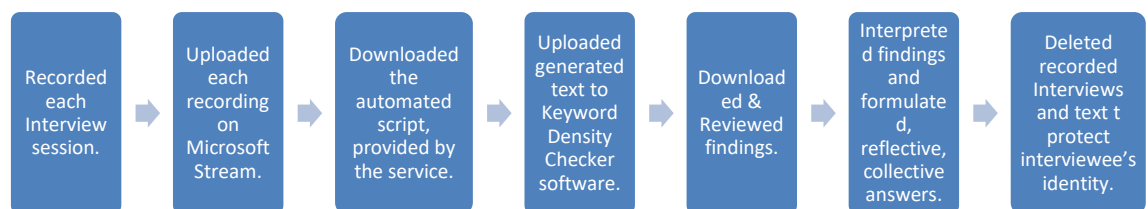To review the material, analyze and interpret its findings, the author of the thesis acted in this manner:

| Recorded each Interview session. | Uploaded each recording on Microsoft Stream. | Downloaded the automated script, provided by the service. | Uploaded generated text to Keyword Density Checker software. | Downloaded & Reviewed findings. | Interpreted findings and formulated, reflective, collective answers. | Deleted recorded Interviews and text t protect interviewee's identity. |

Figure 10 Author's Inductive process

Deductive Analysis

The author of the thesis also created a questionnaire, to study the efficiency of KAMK's degree marketing and capture participant's opinions.

The process of analyzing the findings and interpreting them, focused on the efficiencies of a deductive content analysis. Specifically, the deductive framework entails the formulation of an initial hypothesis, which then, through the collection of data and statistics, capitalizes upon the findings and confirms whether the initial hypothesis was accurate, or incorrect (Dudoskiy, 2010).

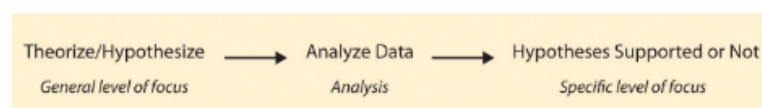| Theorize/Hypothesize | → | Analyze Data | → | Hypotheses Supported or Not |
| General level of focus | | Analysis | | Specific level of focus |

Figure 11 Deductive Content Analysis ("Inductive or Deductive?" Two Different Approaches, n.d.)

In this case, initial theory deemed the promotion of the degrees, under the commissioning university, KAMK, to be defined by a set of efficient, accurate and realistic principles. Capitalizing

upon deductive analysis' efficiencies, namely, its ability to develop connections between concepts and variables, to analyze and interpret findings, the author of the thesis acted in this manner:
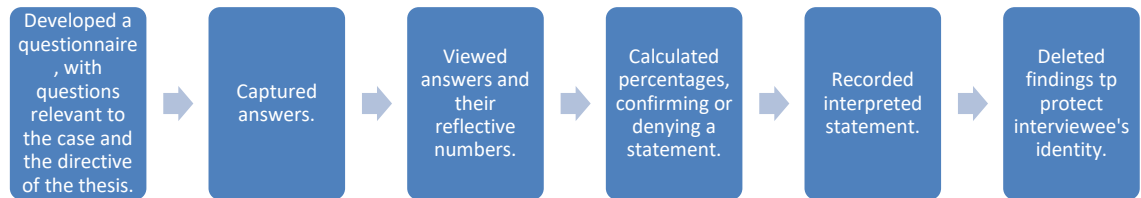
| Developed a questionnaire, with questions relevant to the case and the directive of the thesis. | | Captured answers. | | Viewed answers and their reflective numbers. | | Calculated percentages, confirming or denying a statement. | | Recorded interpreted statement. | | Deleted findings tp protect interviewee's identity. |

Figure 12 Author's Deductive process

3.3   Research Validity and Reliability

For the efficiency of the thesis, it is vital to address the concept of validity and reliability. Specifically, the concept of validity examines the accuracy of the findings, concerning topics such as Sample vs Population, in addition to the relevance of utilized material.

The author of the thesis capitalized upon the semi-structured and unstructured formats of the data acquisition method; in doing so, the scripted nature of the questions, in addition to the evident room for deviation, allowing for relevant conversations, led to the interpretation of vital findings.

Furthermore, interpretation of the findings followed the framework of a qualitative, inductive content analysis, capitalizing upon its efficiency of utilizing textual data, to derive meaningful results. It is worth noting, the participation of the interviewees was under complete anonymity, as the interpreted results did not reveal their identity, while any information derived from the research is now deleted (as of 30th of May).

The implementation of the questionnaire, aimed to attain a better understanding of KAMK's promotion, confirming an initial theory deeming the observed promotion of KAMK's degrees to be efficient, accurate and realistic. Confirmation of this initial theory would enable Esports University to benefit from the already established digital marketing presence of KAMK, while verifying the

initial theory, would further benefit Esports University due to the credibility derived from the realistic nature of the commissioner's promotion.

Interpretation of the findings followed the framework of a quantitative, deductive content analysis, capitalizing upon its efficiency of connecting variables to concepts. Similarly, to interviews, the participants were under complete anonymity, while any information which could have potentially revealed their identity, are now deleted (as of 30th of May).

Furthermore, the literature used to support findings and funnel information towards the analytical tools of PESTLE and SWOT (in addition to its variant), were all relevant and from trusted, objective sources, from which the author had no, or very little commercial intention. Furthermore, the author of the thesis utilized recent sources for the analytical sequences, described above. Findings were often derived from Google Scholar, online articles, organizational content, as well as studies on relevant topics.

Sample vs Population

Finalizing with the validity and reliability of the research, it is important to address the concept of sample vs population. Ultimately, the interviews and questionnaires targeted esports students which are currently conducting their studies at the commissioning university, KAMK. The author of the thesis interviewed 20 students whose cultural background, nationality, connectivity, and current occupation to the Industry of esports, are dominatingly different, while the questionnaire received 31 answers, derived from individuals of similar nature.

Based on the total number of esports students found on the Esports Business Discord server, the total number of esports students, ranging from LBE 2019, 2020 and 2021, are 145. Derived from the available information, the number of participants in the interviews reflect to 13.79% of the total esports Business students, while reviewing the number of participants on the questionnaire, the sample represents 21.37% of the student segment.

Due to limited resources, as well as time constrains, the author could not attain a larger sample, however, the discrepancies found among the participants, in addition to their common esports enthusiast defining attribute, proved to offer a realistic set of information as results were matched, as well as validated, through a number of research and studies on relevant topics.

4   Marketing Plan

Confidential

5   Discussion & Conclusion

As the thesis has covered a multitude of aspects influencing the promotion of Esports University, the author of the thesis now explores the validity and reliability of his research, as well as expand upon the evident limitations. As previously indicated, the thesis as well as the commission, aimed to develop a marketing plan to enable Esports University to reach a global audience, within the academic ecosystem of esports. Revising upon the research questions which were the following:

- What elements are included in a Marketing Plan?

- How can Esports University attain visibility in target market?

- How can Esports University increase the participant number, of its courses?

The first research question was answered by theoretical foundations found in the beginning of the thesis. The second research question was answered by a set of suggestions aiming to promote Esports University to a global audience, while the last question, was answered by the set of conversion activities, found in the Conversion & Evaluation section of the thesis.

Focusing on the reliability and validity of the thesis, data and statistics utilized for the formulation of the finalized output were obtained from the implementation of data acquisition method of questionnaires and interviews. Ultimately, the findings derived from their implementation, were analyzed, and interpreted, formulating a volume of numerically, and statistically, opinionated results which were utilized to justify the author's multi-segmented output. The analysis of the findings on the acquired data was conducted by capitalizing upon inductive as well as deductive content analysis frameworks.

Furthermore, the number of participants, on the interviews and questionnaires, provided a diverse set of results, as the participants came from various cultural backgrounds, occupations, and opinions on the matter, providing realistic and diversified information. Additionally, secondary research on scientific articles, online editorials, organizational content, as well as studies on relevant topics, supported the interpreted results received from the questionnaires and interviews, providing further validation to the output of the commission.

It is worth noting that the observed output is not flawless; for the development of the output, the author of the thesis was required to make assumptions, and connections which were not statistically approved by the client, as there was not enough evidence to support the industry's connectivity to specific factors (PESTLE). Such occurrences can be observed in the set of recommendations surrounding the objectives of the asset's Digital Media, as well as the proposals surrounding the concept of budget. Despite the accuracy of the interviewee's and questionnaire participant's answers and their connection to findings derived from studies, the lack of participants, compared to the total population of 145 esports students (LBE 19, 20, 21) could have potentially presented unrealistic information.

To make the cases above, as realistic and accurate as possible, the author applied information derived from numerous studies, analytical sequences, and opinions, absorbed from the semi-structured and unstructured interviews. It is also important to remember the infant nature of the Esports University and the underdeveloped ecosystem of esports, as their immature state required the development of a brand-new marketing plan, as well as the creation of new courses to aid the appeal and connection of the asset to the target audience of esports enthusiasts.

Moreover, the two concepts above were often leading to "dead ends", as there was not enough evidence to formulate a perspective upon certain topics. An evident example of such, is the lack of information within the distinctive ecosystem of esports education. While esports is strictly against the imbuement of politics within its environment, the academic industry requires governmental assistance on a number of topics, placing esports education in an underdeveloped, "gray", area. While the above is a leading example of ESU's and the industry's immaturity, this phenomenon has consistently appeared throughout the research, hindering the investigation and the development of the delivered output.

Tying the number of theoretical foundations which the thesis previously explored, initial understanding of the concept of corporate strategy and mission objective, highlighted the connection between the client's mission, and the need for development of a concrete strategy and objectives. Additionally, marketing strategy and digital marketing enabled the efficient identification of ESU's target audience, while the explored influence of digital marketing created expectations for the brand's presence on a range of digital platforms.

Furthermore, a detailed overview of SWOT, TOWS and PESTLE analyses, supported their effective implementation, as they provided a necessary overview of the academic esports ecosystem, in addition to defining the environment of Esports University. The author also explored the concept of marketing mix, as its defining factors, Price, Product, Promotion and Place, ensured the development of a marketing plan, linking ESU's capabilities to the industry's profound expectations. It is worth highlight that the validity behind data acquisition methods of questionnaire, interview, secondary research as well as their reflective analysis, were showcased, as they provided essential information for the establishment of the thesis' final output.

Additionally, the thesis has provided the client, KAMK, with a set of guidelines as well as platform specific tactics for the efficient promotion of the academic asset. Moreover, the target audience's identification (esports enthusiasts), in addition to the esports students' interview answers, led to the development of a game specific course, linking the academic offerings of ESU.

Overall, the implementation of the concepts above, highlighted the need for contingencies, while the Conversion & Evaluation section, in addition to its already analyzed theoretical foundation, showcased the need for control. Approaching the end of the thesis, the author estimated the needed personnel for the successful implementation of the platform specific tactics, enabling Esports University to be promoted in the global ecosystem of esports education.

To finalize, further research can focus on a study enabling the development of pedagogically supportive courses, enriching the asset's academic roster, and providing further variety. The example provided in the final output of the commission, for the purpose of elevating ESU's marketing mix, can be utilized as a foundation for the development of a larger course, with emphasis on the connectivity between the competitive and academic segments of esports.

If the client chooses to follow the provided marketing plan, the brand of Esports University will be equipped with the necessary characteristics to succeed in the global ecosystem of esports education and attract esports enthusiasts' audience. Emphasis should also be given on the need for consistently updating ESU's courses, as well as monitoring advancements and changes in the industry of esports, as any alterations within the industry, ranging from its competitive to business-oriented components, will reflect on the ecosystem's education sector.

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Appendices

Appendix A Invitation letter to Questionnaire

Ilias Avgeropoulos LBI19S
Project Associate
14th of April 2022

Dear Esports Students

On the basis of my studies, I am working with KAMK as my commissioner for the accomplishment of the thesis: "Promotion of Esports University".

This thesis will dive deep into the global ecosystem of Esports education, as well as analyze information derived from the environment of Esports University, to offer an efficient marketing plan for its launch towards a global audience.

The questionnaire attached below, will help me facilitate a better understanding of KAMK's successes in terms to the promotion of their Esports Degree, as well as its educational successes.

Capturing your opinion on the two concepts above, will be a tremendous help to the accomplishment of the thesis.

Time:
The questionnaire requires, approximately, **2 minutes** to be finalized

Confidentiality:
The questionnaire is **anonymous** – no contact information/data are collected.
All answers will be utilized to drive a hypothesis (**answers will not be quoted**)

Thank you for your time,
Ilias Avgeropoulos LBI19S

Appendix B Keyword Density Checker

With the utilization of this tool, the author was able to determine trends which led to the opinionated segmentations of the participants, based on the frequency of certain keywords.

The outcome, namely, one-word phrases, provided a basic understanding of the participant's views on the topic of discussion. The results below indicate the keyword frequency of a singular

interview. The author developed a script of the interview (using Microsoft Stream), filtered the text through the Keyword Density Checker software, and interpreted the results.

It is important to highlight that the developed script, and evident keyword density, are taking in consideration conversations from both parties (interviewer and interviewee).

Result	Keyword	Keyword Type	Frequency	Keyword Density
1	Esports	One word phrases	30	4.75%
2	Practical	One word phrases	25	4.45%
3	Business	One word phrases	16	3.34%
4	Efficient	One word phrases	15	3.30%
5	Industry	One word phrases	15	3.30%
6	Games	One word phrases	14	3.26%
7	Competitive	One word phrases	10	3.23%
8	Growth	One word phrases	9	3.15%
9	Marketing	One word phrases	4	0.94%

Appendix C Interview Questions

- Why are you studying Esports?

- What's your connection to the industry of Esports?

- What did you think about Esports University and its material?

- How does this asset influence your own connection to Esports?

Appendix D Questionnaire Questions

- Which year are you in?

    o LBE 19

    o LBE 20

    o LBE 21

- How did you hear about KAMK? (If other, specify) (Each answer below leads to a question requesting further clarification – Example: Which Social Media platform?)

    o Social Media

    o Friends/Family

    o Online Advertisements

    o Other

- Do you believe the marketing of the degree was realistic? (If other, specific)

    o Yes

    o No

    o Other

- How satisfied are you with the educational offerings of the Esports Degree?

    o Scale of 1 to 5

Appendix E Interview Results

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Appendix F Questionnaire results

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Appendix G Environmental Analysis – Esports University – SWOT

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Appendix H Esports Education PESTLE

Political

Initiating the analytical endeavors on Esports Education, it is important to highlight the radioactive nature of this factor and its impact on the industry. Both Esports and politics are often kept separated due to the sensitivity of the subject; from COVID's outbreak to evident peace disturbing incidents (Tisdall, 2021), Esports has acted as a means to escape reality and amend the negativities caused by the occurrences above. In a survey with a sample of over 500 American citizens, a closely dominating percentage of 46%, indicated that their daily life is oriented around the concept of Esports, through viewership, participation, or direct communication with fellow enthusiasts, to cope and endure. (Gaming & Esports escape, n.d.).

Even as the games evident in Esports often take place in a timeline of political disturbances and wars, with primary example being The Division 2 (Parkin, 2019), game developers, Esports organizations and tournament organizers do not endorse any political messages, nor accept the involvement of political opinionated messages, evident in their activities. Most recent indicator of the above, as of 2022, is Blizzard's response to a competitive player's political message, resulting to a suspension and immediate termination of the player from their Hearthstone tournament, set in 2019 (InvenGlobal, 2019).

Furthermore, due to most recent peace threatening situations, as of 2022, the behavior described above has reached new heights; developing a harsher stance against the involvement of politics, with Esports organizations denying the participation of competitive players purely based on their origins and nationality (BlastPremier, 2022).

Despite several attempts to defuse the situation (evident in the economic factor section), the involvement of politics is strictly forbidden from influencing the industry of Esports. However, the implementation and actualization of Esports Education places the concept in a "gray area".

Focusing on the educational aspect of Esports, its endeavors are often intervened by policies on a state-level. Concepts such as financing, curriculum development, budgeting as well as course creation are all topics which require approval and knit-tight involvement of governmental units (Kolesnikova, 2021).

The lack of connectivity showcased between Politics and Esports, in addition to the need for involvement of Politics in the sector of education, places Esports Education in uncharted territory, bringing up the question of functionality, efficiency and credibility, all vital aspects for the educational asset of Esports University.

Economic

Despite the evident lack of politics in Esports, it is important to mention that several attempts have been made to connect the two factors and amend the evident hostility between them. In 2018, Syed Saddiq, Minister of Youth and Sports for Malaysia, redirected an astounding amount of 2.4M USD from the nation's governmental budget towards the country's Esports scene (Esports Investment, 2018). Similar occurrence has been observed in Hangzhou city, as China's government opened a 3.94M square feet Esports facility in November 2018, in addition to a public announcement, declaring their intention to invest in 14 Esports projects by 2022, worth 1.26B USD (Esports Town, 2018).

Unlike the underdeveloped connectivity observed between Esports and Politics, analysis indicated substantial economic growth, linked to the rise in interest for Esports and its educational sector. To specifically address the observed growth in Esports, Newzoo's investigation revealed that the worldwide Esports crowd is defined by 454 million watchers, with data suggesting further increase of nearly 700M, by 2022, with additional expansion of 15% on a year-to-year premise. With the information above in place, the worldwide Esports market is expected to produce 1.8B USD in 2022 (Kallinen-Kuisma & Auvinen 2018; Newzoo, 2019).

Furthermore, GlobalWebIndex's most recent analysis show that almost 3 in each 10 internet users currently are directly associated in the industry of Esports, either by playing esports related games, viewing events, or being professional players themselves, totaling to a worldwide crowd of nearly 1.25 billion individuals. Esports' profitability is also showcased by the MVIS Global Video

gaming and Esports Index (MVEPSO) as the value of the index has met substantial growth throughout the past, few years (MVIS Insights, 2022).

Figure 13 growth of MVIS Global Video Gaming & Esports Index – (MVIS Insights, n.d.)

Connecting the findings above, similar growth has been observed within the industry of education, and specifically, online learning. With traditional learning being disrupted due to the effects of COVID (Dorn, Hancock, Sarakatsannis & Viruleg, 2021), the concept of online learning allowed students to continue their studies, with a first-hand example being the commissioning university's online facilitation. With the need for online teaching, the industry of education has been redefined with the evident rise of e-learning, through a remote and online platform-oriented manner.

Supportive of e-learning, is research conducted by SHIFT (Gutierrez, 2016), with data suggesting an increase of 25-60% retention rate of material in an online environment, while on a different setting, similar research done by SHIFT (Chernev, 2019), indicates 40-60% less required time to learn when compared to traditional education environments.

The concepts above have assisted in the economic growth of the market, allowing education technology market to reach 18.66B USD in 2019 (GmbH, 2020), while the industry of online education is projected to reach 350B USD by 2025 (Markets, 2019), caused by the need for virtual platforms as well as required software and hardware. By combining the results of the analysis, indicating economic growth within the ecosystem of Esports and Online learning, the practicality and value

offered by Esports Education can help facilitate the next version of online education. (Duran, 2021)

Social

Over the years, society has been transformed into a digital empire, led by the effects of globalization and the evolution of technology. The occurred digital transformation has directly influenced the way businesses operate, while in doing so, has affected the lives of billions of people. Ultimately, this change has had a positive effect on the industry of video games, and specifically, Esports, as it provided the necessary space for them to grow. Ever since its first steps, back in late 1971 (History of Esports, n.d.) the ecosystem possessed a negative stigma attached to it, questioning its efficiency and value towards society. However, in most recent years, organizations begun acknowledging the potential behind the industry, while an evident increase in participation and interest led by the common people followed shortly.

The occurrences above are an indication of the evolution observed, both in Esports as well as society itself (Gamers vs Society, 2017). Following the evident "change of heart", as the opinions surrounding the industry are becoming positive, the competitive nature of the industry has started being represented in a different manner, as many nations have accepted Esports as a sport, and therefore, acknowledge its class and importance ("Is Esports a Sport?", n.d.) Ultimately, the ecosystem of Esports is defined by its inclusivity, as the platforms that have been developed around its ideology, have enabled players, viewers, and professionals to share their identity with the rest of the world under a sense of equality, with no attention or judgement towards gender, race, or background. Furthermore, with time passing, an increasing number of universities is implementing Esports into their academic roster, as it poses one of the many ways for students to stimulate their engagement with STEM and their relation to technology ("5 Benefits of Esports in Schools", 2021).

Technology

As it has previously been highlighted, the industry of Esports has recently been on the rise, with organizations and individuals being understanding of the potential behind the developed ecosystem. At length, the ascension of this industry matches the appearance of COVID, while it also ties

with the introduction of technological innovations, as their implementation has played a vital role to its growth; growth introduced through the rise of livestreaming technology, improved connectivity, or even enhanced accessibility to the common people ("How technology has elevated the structure of Esports", 2021).

Specifically, availability of a high-speed internet connection is one the primary factors that have managed to accelerate the growth of the industry; from games such as CS: GO and Lost Ark, to competitive, timeless, gems such as League of Legends and DOTA 2, the gaming experience has been elevated and made more efficient due to the availability of high-speed internet at appropriate pricing (Internet and Esports, 2021). Furthermore, the introduction of 5G networks, has enabled technologies such VR and AR (through mobile games), to tackle upon the missing elements and increase their impact within the respective industry. (Rogers, 2019).

In addition to the increased, global, connectivity, the phenomenon of cloud gaming currently possesses the potential to transform how people enjoy games. "The Netflix of gaming", cloud gaming, enables gamers to access games from their low-end devices, with only requirement being a strong, fast internet connection (Torres, 2022). With the ability to eliminate the need for expensive equipment, cloud gaming, in the premises of Esports, has the capacity to make its competitive spirit available to everyone ("Is cloud gaming the future of esports?", 2019).

Esports itself possesses numerous projects ranging from tech-oriented schemes such as Weavr, offering a new, immersive, experience for Esports audiences (Weavr.tv, 2022), to education related matters, with most recent, close to heart example, being Esports University. Overall, in matters of education, technology has attained a vital role to its continuation over the past few years, as with the evident ramifications of COVID, the phenomenon of e-learning became apparent.

Throughout the past few years, technology has assisted thousands of students with easy to access scholar information, necessary for the continuity of their academic endeavors. With studies supporting the benevolent impact of the factor, resulting to accelerated learning and immaculate opportunities for practice of what is being learnt (McKisney, n.d.), the connection of technology to the industry of education showcases that student attain more value, as their basis is being evaluated with a sum of technical skills linked to occupations in the 21st century (21st Century Learning Skills Through Gaming, 2020).

Furthermore, with the assistance of the technological factor, hybrid and online education became a reality, as universities such as the commissioner, were able to transfer a large volume of their courses towards an online environment, allowing students to continue their studies with minimal to no loss of quality. Ultimately, the connectivity of the two concepts above, Esports and online education, create a concrete case, predicting the success of Esports Education during a time where technology is advancing and the need for e-learning is on the rise.

Legal

While the industry of education and e-learning is already determined when it comes to legality and its regulations, Esports' legal foundation is still being established, as laws are constantly being adapted and evolve alongside the industry. At a basic level, Esports is not a new phenomenon, however, its rapid growth over the past few years, linked to the technological advancements surrounding its system, have caught the world by surprise, justifying its underdeveloped legal groundwork. (Blomeley, 2021)

Regarding the legal aspect of the industry, the competitive element of Esports, at its essence, possesses a large volume of similarities to traditional sports, however, the growing industry's array has developed regulatory as well as structural ramifications, highlighting legal gaps in topics such as Intellectual Property (IP), streaming rights as well as the compensation surrounding the ecosystem's players ("Gamma law – Issues in Esports Law", 2020). Initially, one of the most significant issues surrounding Esports law, is the lack of understanding that it is not similar to traditional sports.

Among the issues addressed above, the industry is defined by the shortage of competitor's rights, as player unions do not exist. Furthermore, while this issue remains a common factor among numerous industries, lack of salary caps as well as absence of transparency, introduce similar negative effects to the underdeveloped ecosystem of Esports. Ultimately, the environment of Esports, whether its competitive nature is addressed, or its education, requires the creation of a vigorous governance, in addition to authoritarian frameworks that aim to introduce the necessary stability. ("Gamma law – Issues in Esports Law", 2020)

Environment

Approaching the last module of PESTLE, it is important to highlight the unrelated nature of Esports to the factor, as it does not benefit, nor is benefited from any environmental concepts. The only profound relation of both Esports and its academic sector to the environmental factor, is through CSR activities observed by Esports organizations. Evident example of such is observed by Riot Games, ZeniMax, Humble Bundle, and more, as their policies aim to provide value towards the areas of education, economy, and environment ("7 Gaming Brands with High Scores in Social Impact", n.d.).

Appendix I Example of KAMK.GG's advocation, through KAMK's Social Media platform

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Appendix J Contingencies

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Appendix K Marketing Team Structure

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