EASM Abstract Thibault Fouquaert

How Can Sports Clubs Integrate Esports And Exergames? Understanding Adoption Determinants

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# Aims and research Question

Electronic sports (eSports), i.e. competitive gaming, and exercise games (exergames) could provide a means to achieve and promote grassroots sport. As eSports has grown beyond solely sedentary gaming (e.g., Zwift, virtual rowing), its potential to complement sports clubs’ traditional offerings has increased. However, while eSports and exergames have become popular on individual basis, sports clubs seem to find it difficult to integrate technological innovation into their sports offerings (Hoeber et al., 2015). Hence, to help clubs with the strategic integration of technology, it is important to understand what influences eSports and exergames adoption and how clubs perceive its potential as a means to drive grassroots sports . This study aims to understand what determines technology adoption in sports clubs (e.g. club resources vs. club capacity vs. perceptions or attributes of the technology…), explain its antecedents (i.e. drivers, barriers) and explain how this technology is perceived.

# Theoretical Background and Literature Review

Few studies exist on the use of eSports and exergames by clubs for recreational offerings. Based on adjacent research, it can be assumed that such games can drive sports participation or prevent drop-out as (1) it stands close to the daily life of Gen-Z, (2) provides hedonic motivation (Westmattelmann et al., 2021), and (3) time, space or other restrictions can be a limiting factor (e.g., Covid lockdown, weather) (Tjønndal, 2021). In order to see if and how these individual benefits can manifest at organisational level benefits in a later stadium, it is before all vital to understand differences in determinants and perceptions about integrating eSports and exergames for recreational offerings and goals.

This research contributes to the stream of Organisational Innovativeness as it addresses determinants of innovation in organisations (i.e. sports clubs) while using findings from diffusion of innovations theory (Wolfe, 1994). This provides a model to predict technology adoption based on the perceived innovation-bound determinants (i.e., ease of use, trialability, compatibility, relative advantage, visibility, results demonstrability, image). In addition to perceived innovation-bound determinants, this study extends existing theoretical models by also integrating organisational-bound determinants including organisational capacity (Doherty & Cuskelly, 2019) and attitude towards newness (Winand & Anagnostopoulos, 2017). Our insights will answer the following research questions: (1) ‘What are the determinants for eSports and exergames adoption in Flemish community sports clubs?​’ and (2) ‘How do perceived innovation-bound determinants differ from organisation-bound determinants for adopting eSports and exergames?’.

# Research Design, Methodology and Data Analysis

A large scale survey will be distributed to two distinct populations (n>100) in Flanders to club board members and trainers in charge of club offerings for (1) Community soccer clubs and (2) Community cycling and triathlon clubs. Both surveys will measure aforementioned determinants (independent variables) and respectively cover soccer-specific eSport integration (e.g., FIFA) and cycling-specific exergame integration (e.g., Zwift) to measure adoption-attitude, -intention and extent of integration (dependant variables). Data analysis will make use of structural equation modelling (SEM) to analyse and compare determinants of eSports and exergames adoption by sport clubs, both within and between the two technologies.

# Results/Findings and Discussion \*\*

Results will be available by the time of the conference. For now, we expect that both innovation- and organisational-bound characteristics are indeed determinants of adoption attitude and intention. That is, the seven aforementioned perceived innovation attributes (i.e. ease of use, trialability, compatibility, relative advantage, visibility, results demonstrability, image) are expected to have a positive influence on adoption attitudes and adoption-intention. Likewise, a positive influence of organisation capacity and attitude towards newness is expected on adoption-attitude and -intention. Furthermore, we anticipate new and interesting results in the determinants’ relative importance in predicting adoption-attitude and -intention. By comparing each determinant’s effect size, our model will be able to reveal new insights and create an understanding in the relative (i.e. innovation- vs. organisational-bound) antecedents sport clubs experience when adopting eSports and exergames.

# Conclusion, Contribution and Implication \*\*

By considering organisational-bound determinants such as capacity and attitude in addition to perceived innovation-bound determinants, this work can empirically test an important extension to existing innovation frameworks in the context of community sport organisations. Moreover, this research makes an important contribution to finding new ways for sports clubs to reach Gen-Z, increase participation and accessibility, reduce or prevent dropout, or understand current factors that impede exergame and eSports integration. These future findings might bear implications for eSports and exergames developers and national and international federations. For example, policy can focus on those aspects that restrain eSport or exergame integration in clubs such as creating programs to increase visibility, offering ways for trialability or developing their organisational capacity.

# References (max 6)

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