E-sports Cluj: How to improve the activities of an e-sports organization

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With the e-sports phenomenon on the rise worldwide, an initiative was taken by several people from Cluj-Napoca, Romania in order to create a solid e-sports event in the local area, called E-sports Cluj (ESC). To further promote this event several measures had to be taken in order to increase the fan base, profile and profits of ESC.

The objective of this thesis project was to clarify the gaps in the organization which prevent ESC from expanding further from its current state. These gaps include the lack of competent people, the lack of good management and the need for better sponsorships.

A solid structure had to be determined for the organization, with key people in important roles who would coordinate the other members Discussions were held with local and international sponsors, which resulted in sponsorship proposals, with requirements from the sponsors which had to be met in order for the deal to be completed. The requirements range from extending ESC to cover a larger area of operations to proving that ESC can organize larger events with more varied attractions.

Based on observations conducted at an event, surveys and an interview, suggestions have been made as to how ESC's projects can be improved and boost the income generated through activities such as ticket, product and service sales, sub-leasing or donations.

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Elektronisen urheilun ollessa kasvussa maailmanlaajuisesti, useita ihmisiä Cluj-Napocasta, Romaniasta tekivät aloitteen luodakseen paikallisen elektronisen urheilutapahtuman nimeltä ESC. Taatakseen tapahtuman onnistumisen useita tekijöitä piti ottaa huomioon. Tapahtuman fanipohjaa ja tunnettavuutta tuli lisätä sekä ESC kannattavuus piti varmistaa.

Organisaatiolle piti kehittää vakaa rakenne, jossa avainhenkilöt tärkeillä alueilla ohjasivat muiden jäsenten toimintaa.

Neuvottelut paikallisten ja kansainvälisten sponsorien kanssa johtivat sponsorointi ehdotukseen, johon kirjattiin sponsorien vaatimukset. Nämä vaatimukset tuli täyttää sopimuksen syntymistä varten.

Opinnäytetyö käy läpi miten ESC:n projekteja voidaan kehittää ja kuinka tapahtuman tuottoja voidaan lisätä esimerkiksi lipun myynnillä, tuotteiden ja palveluiden myynnillä, alivuokraamisella tai lahjoituksilla.

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1   Introduction

This thesis is meant to provide suggestions and improvements for E-sports Cluj, or ESC as I will refer it throughout the report, an E-sports organization based in Cluj-Napoca, Cluj County, Romania, of which I am also a member. Applying those suggestions would turn ESC into a profitable business, benefiting both the organizers and the participants.

Since electronic sports is not a subject debated frequently in an academic environment, I have decided that the first main chapter of the thesis (chapter 4, E-sports) will describe the e-sports phenomenon, in order to familiarize the reader with terms, activities and other content which will be mentioned often in the chapter regarding ESC's improvements. It will cover a history of e-sports, since in order to promote ESC to a major level, it is important to learn from other major events and how they came to be.

Other important aspects of this chapter will be a comparison of electronic and traditional sports, a short description of some of the best known current major e-sports events, and other activities which are closely related with electronic sports, and are often coupled together.

The second main chapter (chapter 6, E-sports Cluj) of the report will present the structure of ESC, its projects and activities. I will turn the data I obtained from my personal research (observation, surveys, and interview) in improvement suggestions. These suggestions, if put in practice, would enable ESC to generate a steady income flow to be used for the following: support the expenses of organizing the event, allow ESC to continually expand the events and also provide a profit for the organizers.

2   Goals of ESC and the thesis

Currently, the only major e-sports events organized in Romania are Dreamhack Open (as mentioned in chapter 4.4.1) and the contests taking place within the Eastern European Comic Con.

The events organized within the EECC are under the supervision of Electronic Sports League (ESL) Romania. ESL is the largest gaming community in Europe, founded in 1997 with its headquarters in Germany under the name Deutsche ClanLiga. It has over 2.600.000 members across 37 countries. In 2007, on the 9th of November, ESL opened a branch in Romania as well. In the same year it also extended to the U.S.A and Asia. (Team Liquid 2014)

ESL also organizes occasional, minor events, but not on the level of Dreamhack or EECC. Those events are often online, under the supervision of a few moderators, and the prizes consist of small cash amounts (100-300), in-game item or premium memberships to different services. Besides those prizes, the winners receive an invitation or are qualified to play in the play-offs for a major event.

With ESL's expansion across Europe's borders, the most experienced members of the team departed to build up the community in the United States and Asia, so the European team was left crippled. In time, the members from the Romanian section of ESL moved over to fill the gaps left by their European counterparts. This left ESL Romania to be managed by a team of unprofessional and unprepared administrators, which caused a series of controversies.

One such controversy was at the recent 2014 East European Comic con, where the administrators denied access to some of the players, despite them wearing their badges, and changing the prizes of the contest after it was over by deducting money from the 1st place and adding to the 3rd.

Even though the controversies are many, ESL holds the monopoly on the e-sports scene in Romania. They have a long history behind them, an already established brand and the funding necessary to organize large scale events.

ESC's goal is to bring Romania closer to the level of the major e-sports areas through the events it organizes. The current controversies in which ESL Romania is involved should give ESC a window of opportunity to capture the attention of the Romanian market, and in time grow to the same level, and eventually expand even more.

This is already a work in progress, through events such as the National Battle Sessions, and the participation of ESC with its activities at various festivals throughout the country, such as music festivals, or technology expositions.

The only drawback of this ambitious project is the lack of consistent funding. The thesis aims at how the projects and activities ran by ESC can be improved in order to generate more profit to support ESC's expansion.

3   Research method

As mentioned in the introduction, the e-sports subject is not one to be discussed very often in an academic paper possibly limiting my list of available literature sources to online articles

and publications. This will mainly affect the theoretical part of the report, since the chapter regarding ESC would be constructed mostly out of how my research findings can be applied to ESC.

I will use both qualitative and quantitative methods in my research. The quantitative method consists of two surveys, while the qualitative method consists of an interview and a personal observation.

One survey is directed at the already existing fan base, and other people interested in e-sports. They are the main audience and the changes brought to ESC would have the biggest impact on them. The survey contains questions about their ideal e-sports event : what would they like to see in such an event, how would they improve the current format of events organized by ESC, and since the end goal is profitability, what would motivate them to spend money at such an event ? . Unfortunately, since the event planned by ESC for the period of 16-18th of May has been cancelled due to complications, I was not able to take a survey from the audience on the spot, and hear their opinions face to face.
Due to this, I have resorted only to Facebook groups and pages to complete my survey.

While ESC has already established a solid fan base in Cluj, it's still looking forward to expanding it. Thus, the second survey I have conducted was directed at people who have had little to no contact with any e-sports events so far. While the first group of people could offer more insight due to their already established opinions, the latter group could provide a fresh perspective and enable ESC to not only provide new services, but also increase its audience.

The surveys are directed at the public which attends those events for the show, and the players who participate in them.

Through the interview I got a more experienced opinion on how ESC's events can be improved. The interview was held with the current president of ESC, Alex "DexterFloy" Cornea. Unlike the groups targeted by the survey, Alex has a more hands-on view of the situation, since he experiences the services offered by ESC to the fullest.

In the period of 9-11th of May I have attended the East European Comic Con. While e-sports are not the main attraction of this show, it still consisted roughly 40% of it. I have tried to hold small interviews with some of the e-sports players there, to get their opinion on the subject. Unfortunately, I was unsuccessful, as they were busy with their respective contests. Despite that, I have conducted an observation on the way the event is organized and what services and activities are provided to the fan base, which can be implemented in ESC's events as well, to attract more viewers and players, which will boost ESC's popularity and profits.

4   E-sports

"E-sports, or competitive gaming, is where you compete either online or in real life against live opponents in a video-game, often for prizes, but also prestige" (Multiplay 2013). There are 3 main parties involved in e-sports: The players, the organizers, and the audience.

4.1   History of E-sports

Competitive play has existed as long as video games have existed. While at first it was in a room, between a couple of players sharing a console, playing against each other, or just to beat the other's high score, it was still a competition.

The earliest known public competition was organized by Atari on 19th October 1972, inside Stanford University. The students were invited to a so called "Intergalactic spacewar Olympics". Whoever won the championship for the game "Spacewar" would win the grand prize, consisting of a year's subscription to the Rolling Stone magazine. (Wikipedia 2014)

In 1980, Atari organized a massive competition, the Space Invaders Tournament. It attracted over 10.000 participants. This and the ones following closely in the next few years established the base of E-sports. (Adanai 2013)

The true rise of E-sports began with the ascension of PC gaming, between the 90's and the year 2000, notably FPS and RTS games and tournaments were already offering prize pools valued over 10.000$. "While shooters focus on twitch skills and fast reflexes, RTS games require careful though and long-term planning, and have been compared to a modern version of chess" (Adanai 2013)

With the new millennium, a few notable e-sports tournaments and associations sprouted, such as World Cyber games and Major League Gaming. E-sports tournaments started being televised, mostly in North America and in South Korea, but television has lost the favor to internet streams in the 5 years.

4.2   E-sports vs traditional sports

When people think about sports in general the following definition goes through their mind: "An activity involving physical exertion and skill in which an individual or team competes against another or others for entertainment" (Oxford Dictionaries). There are exceptions though, such as chess. It takes no physical effort to play it, it only requires the mind of a

player. Its governing body, the World Chess Federation has been recognized as a sports federation by the International Olympic Committee in 1999 (Fide 2009)

Since chess is recognized as a sport, what stops e-sports to ascend from their current status of games, to being officially recognized as sports, and their players as athletes? It would take a joint effort from the current players, fans and organizers, to promote this scene and bring enough recognition. There are still opposing parties. In an episode of HBO's "Real Sports", aired in December 2013, former professional tennis player Mary Carillo, before strongly arguing that e-sports are still a game, she admits that she was not aware of such large scale events.

There are several factors which make e-sports different from traditional sports:

1. Ever evolving gameplay – I will use hockey as an example. After watching a few games, the ground rules should be clear to the person watching. Eventually, the person will stop following hockey and six months later, will watch a game again. The team might have changed a few players, and they even have a different color set on their jerseys, but the gameplay stays the same. The penalties have not changed, the setting has not changed either. In a competitive video game, after 6 months of absence, the developers might have introduced a new patch. That patch can add new elements to the game, remove some of them or change them. A new playable champion with its own skillset has been introduced. The players have to learn how to avoid, counter and defeat that champion. The terrain of the map could have changed or new items might be available. The professional e-sport players have to constantly evolve and adapt their play style. (Kitguru 2013)

2. The audience is much easier to reach: Most televisions do offer certain sport shows , but only at certain dates and hours, and only depending on the audience's interest. It is quite difficult to watch a cricket game live on television in Romania. Some sport shows may only be seen if first the pay per view tax is paid, such as UFC (UFC 2014). E-sports removed this barrier by making almost all of the shows free of charge through internet streaming. Take Twitch.TV for example ; It's currently the most visited video game streaming service with more than 45 million unique viewers per month, 20 million more than in 2012. And it's free.

Figure 1 - Twitch numbers

When entering the webpage of Major League Gaming, the first item a user sees, is a player showcasing live events or streams of professional players.

3. It's easier and faster to become a professional – The accessibility of the games is at a high level due to the Internet. In video games people can randomly connect to a number of other players from around the world in a matter of minutes, whereas in traditional sports it would take time and effort to find a local football, hockey or any other sports club where they could hone their skills.

   People can boot up a video game client such as League of Legends or DotA right now and instantly jump into the action. They could form a team with friends and start playing matches on a ladder. Hypothetically talking, they would be very good players now. They would eventually stumble upon some of the high ranked players, which compete in international tournaments for thousands of dollars every month. This cannot be achieved in traditional sports; If someone is playing a playing a football game today in a high school field, that person will not be playing against Cristiano Ronaldo in 5 months. (Kitguru 2013)

4.3   Most popular video games and genres

There are several genres and games which are popular across the globe and have a continuously growing fan base. Each genre has its different audience and requires a distinct skill-set from the others.

4.3.1 First Person Shooters (FPS)

The game which is considered the first official e-sports game is Quake, an FPS game developed by ID software. Despite its success on the PC scene in the 90s, the year 2000 saw the release of Valve's Counter-Strike, a simple game pitting two teams, the terrorists and the counter terrorists, against each other. Each player could customize their arsenal at the beginning of the round and whichever team was the last one standing or achieved the game's objective was declared the winner.

Figure 2- Counter-Strike's popular background image

Due to the game's fast action and intense pacing, it rapidly gained popularity and is current attraction in the FPS e-sports scene. In 2011, the franchise had 25 million units sold worldwide.

4.3.2 Real Time Strategy (RTS)

1998 was the year when Blizzard's StarCraft was released. It has sold roughly 9 million copies worldwide, out of which 4.5 million in South Korea. Its release saw the growth of e-sports in South Korea and the elevation of the pro-gamers in the country to media celebrities. 12 years later, in 2010 the sequel was released, which sold 1.8 million copies within 48 hours from release. The SC2 players can reach sums of 6 digits yearly out of cash prizes and endorsements, as was the case of Lim YO-Hwan, aka BoxeR, which had a salary reaching 400.000$ (Escapist Magazine 2010)
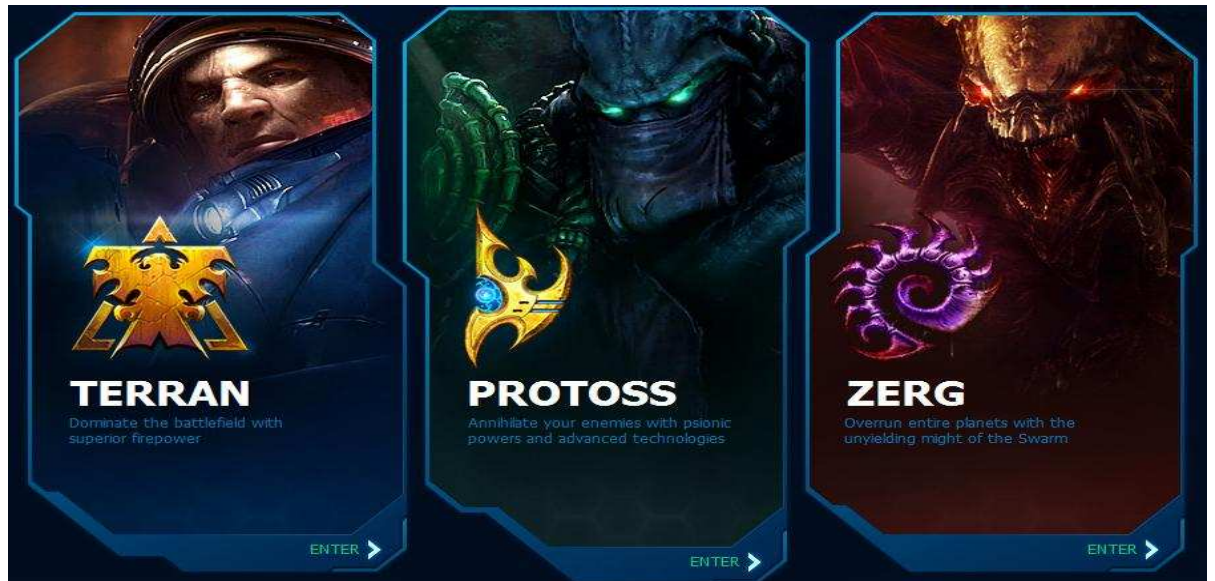
Figure 3 - The three races in StarCraft: Terrans, Protoss and Zerg

4.3.3   Multiplayer Online Battle Arena (MOBA)

The first game belonging in this genre was actually a fan created modified map for a popular RTS game. While there were earlier attempts to create this genre, by modifying StarCraft maps, in 1998, it gained popularity with the release of DotA, short for Defense of the Ancients, in 2003, as a map mod for Warcraft 3.

Figure 4 - A loading screen depicting some of the heroes of DotA

The concept was simple: 2 teams of 5 players each, trying to destroy the other's main base, while fighting each other and AI controlled opponents at the same time.

As the map mod became popular, tournaments started being organized and a new genre flourished. In 2009, Icefrog, one of the main developers took DotA away from the rest of the team, which started working on a project called League of Legends. It would have the same gameplay, but different units and art style. This project would later become known as the world's most played video game, with over 32 million unique users logging in each month, as of July 2012 (Cnet 2012).

In 2011, Valve, the creators of Counter-Strike, revealed DotA 2, a standalone game, identical in gameplay to the Warcraft 3 map mod, but different in visuals and nomenclature. Currently, the 2 games vie for supremacy as the best MOBA on the e-sports scene.

Figure 5 - A collage depicting some of the champions in League of Legends.

4.4   Major E-sports events

E-sports events are being organized on a weekly basis globally, whether they are online or at LAN events. But across the world there are several events which have set the levels for prize pools, audience and popularity at all-time high, levels which continue to grow with each iteration of those events. Below there is a description of only 4 of those major events.

4.4.1   Dreamhack

Dreamhack is organized twice a year, with a summer and winter edition, in Jönköping, Sweden. Dreamhack currently holds the record for the world's largest LAN party with 22810 unique visitors which have attended Dreamhack Winter 2013 (Dreamhack 2013). The main focus of the event is the LAN party where everyone can sit down and play games together with their friends or the other attendees of the event.

There are e-sport tournaments running during the whole event, an exposition showcasing the latest innovations in hardware, software and computer accessories, a store where the attendees can purchase merchandise, hardware and other accessories. It's a common sight to see major brands releasing or unveiling their products within a Dreamhack event.

There are scenes which host creativity and technical contests, such as photography, cosplay or programming. Live concerts and entertainment are offered throughout the festival. (Dreamhack 2014)

4.4.2   Intel Extreme Masters

Intel Extreme Masters is the Electronic Sports League's flagship competition, with its main sponsor being Intel. The event is split across a yearly season. Multiple smaller offline events held around the worlds as qualifiers, and they lead up to the grand final. IEM debuted in 2007, promoting only Counter-Strike and Warcraft III, and each season the final was held in Hannover, Germany at CeBIT, a computer exposition.

With the expansion of e-sports in the last years, season 8, which concluded on the 16th of March 2014, was the first to change from its traditional location at CeBIT. It was held in Katowice, Poland, with an entire arena dedicated to the event. (IEM 2014)

4.4.3   The International

The first International took place at Gamescom, in Cologne, France, and it was also the first public showcase of the game, DotA 2. With it, Valve released DotA 2 for closed public beta testing. Since then, it takes place on a yearly basis, every summer. The first 2 editions, had fixed prize pools of 1.6 million $, with the grand prize winner going home with 1 million $.

With the 2013 edition, Valve released an in-game item, the compendium, which would follow the progress of the teams participating in the International, and offer in-game items in turn to the players which have bought it. 25% of the sales would go to the total prize pool, which once again started at 1.6 million $. The compendium was a success and the total prize went up to 2.8 million $ by the start of the International. (Polygon 2013)

The 2014 edition is set to start on 18 July, in Seattle, Washington, USA. Using the same crowd funding method from last year's edition, the compendium, Valve and the players managed to get the prize pool up to 6.6 million $ (Dota2 2014). With 2 months to go until the start as of today, 24.05.2014, the prize is expected to grow even more.

4.5   Activities associated with E-sports

While e-sports is one of the most important aspect of the whole "geek culture", there are others which rival its size. The ones which stand out the most beside it are comic books, co-splay and board games. Those four are often brought together at events.

4.5.1   Comic Books

The "Golden Age" of comics debuted in 1938, with the debut of the iconic hero Superman. With the launch of Batman in 1939 a rise in the popularity of superheroes begun, and characters such as Captain America, The Flash or Wonder Woman surfaced.

While the main purpose of comic books is the story to be read, they are mostly regarded as collector's items in the modern times. Rare comic books in mint condition can fetch prices equal to those of coins or postal stamps.

The comic book industry has grown into a full blown entertainment industry, with movies and video games being created using the characters and stories depicted in the traditional comic book. (Randomhistory 2008)

4.5.2   Cosplay

"Cosplay is the practice of portraying a fictional character – at times completely identifying as that character while in costume" (Ifanboy 2012). Cosplay is linked to comic books, video games or anime shows. I have met several cosplayers at the events I have attended. Some of them do it for social reasons, as meeting new people, some do it for the connection they feel with the characters they cosplay, and others do it for the challenge. Many cosplayers build their own costumes, which can be a very difficult task, depending on the level of the complexity the character has.

Figure 6 – Two cosplayers at an ESC event.

4.5.3   Board Games

A board game is a game where pieces are moved on a specially designed board, to be used for the sole purpose of that game. They date from ancient times, for example Senet, an Egyptian game which dates from 3,500 B.C. (Listverse 2013)

Board games in their current iteration either hold the traditional model, using some pieces to complete a certain objectives, or they can take a newer approach, one preferred by the attendees of e-sports conventions. The modern approach is built upon the older one, in the way that there are still pieces in the form of statues or cards, and a set of rules, but there is a fantasy environment created, in which the player takes the place of a character.

5   Research results

As I have mentioned in the beginning of the report, I have conducted several different kinds of research, more specifically, an observation at an event, two surveys and an interview. This section contains the results of the above mentioned processes.

5.1   Observation at Eastern European Comic Con

I have attended EECC for three consecutive days, 9, 10 and 11 May 2014. It has the same structure as ESC, offering the same activities, e-sports, board games, comic books and co-splay, so I decided that I would observe the way it is organized, and what sparks the interest of the attendees more.

5.1.1   Sponsors

First of all, such an event is heavily dependent on sponsors. Throughout the location the main sponsors of the event were scattered and promoting their products and/or services. For ex-ample BenQ, a PC monitor manufacturer had a booth in which participants could experiment with their newest releases. BenQ also provided equipment for the scene where the tourna-ment matches were taking place. Without this equipment, EECC either had to supply its own, or the competitors would have had to come equipped from home.

In March 2014, EECC posted an announcement on Facebook, asking the future attendees to buy their tickets in advance. The reason for this was because the main sponsors coming main-ly from the telephony and food/beverages industry did not accept to sponsor EECC this year, despite its growth from the previous iteration in 2013. (Facebook 2014).

5.1.2   Attendees

There were an estimated of 20.000 attendees this year at EECC (About EECC,2014). In my opinion, the age average was under 18 years. While there were several principal attractions, two of them stood out as having a permanent crowd surrounding them. The first were the invited special guests, which were famous actors from television series such as "Game of Thrones" and "Supernatural". Those who paid extra when acquiring their tickets could get a signed picture together with the actor and attend their interview panel.

The second attraction was one of the games, League of Legends. The fans were crowding each time there was a giveaway for in-game items. The main gaming hall was also filled when League of Legends or Hearthstone games were being played, as opposed to DotA 2 or Counter Strike matches, where the hall was half filled. This comes from the popularity and accessibil-ity of the games.

5.1.3   Volunteers

An event on such a scale could not be managed efficiently by a handful of people, so they enlisted the help of local volunteers which were picked after a careful selection process. Volunteers would help in arranging the stages and booths in the halls before the event. During the event they were tasked with the ticket sales, access wristband distribution and checking, to ensure that all the attendees which were there, paid for their ticket. After their event they helped to pack up the stages and booths for transportation. As compensation, they were rewarded with free entrance during the event and a t-shirt.

5.2   First survey

The first survey was targeted at gamers, people who are familiar with e-sports events, whether they have attended one or not. It was posted on a Romanian Facebook group which contained only gamers. The survey had 8 questions, (page 39, Appendix 1) and I have collected 136 results.
Below there is a list with the questions, their results, and my personal interpretation of the results.

When asked if they have participated in an e-sports event before, 54% of the respondents said "Yes" while 46% said "No". The large number of negative answers comes from the lack of e-sports events in Romania until recently, and possibly due to the lack of accessibility for some of the people to attend such events.

98 people have answered that they either attended or are interested in Dreamhack. The high number of people is due to Dreamhack's recent growth in Romania (the 2014 edition had over 20.000 visitors (Hotnews 2014)) The latter 3,Intel Extreme Masters, Major League Gaming and The International, have not been organized in Romania as of today, and unless the person answering the survey went abroad to attend the event, the answers come only from people which are interested in those events.

Romania had the lowest known minimum wage in Europe in 2013, 157.50 EURO (Eurostat 2013). This can explain why almost half of the respondents wouldn't pay more than 10 euros for a ticket.

As I mentioned in the subchapter regarding the EECC observation, the Romanian public is a fan of League of Legends, a MOBA game. The 3 "Other" answers all regarded sports games.

Typically, at such events merchandise can be bought for lower prices than the usual stores and may come in different bundles. For example, at EECC, if one subscribed for a year to a comic book magazine, (s)he would get a board game for free. Since the main attraction is e-

sports though, the majority of answers resulted in an interest in video game accessories and peripherals, such as keyboards, mice or headsets.

When discussing merchandise, up to 50 EURO will be enough to buy either a couple of t-shirts or 1 solid gaming accessory. Over the limit of 50 EURO, the merchandise consists of either professional gaming accessories or collectibles, such as statues.

Most major events are taking place over the span of 2 or 3 days. Dreamhack Bucharest 2014 was held during 2 days, while EECC lasted 3 days. A major event which contains more than 2 games will need time for qualifiers as well. Most respondents would want to see the whole process, so they are willing to spend at least 3 days on the scene.

5.3   Second survey

The second survey was targeted at people who had little to no experience with gaming or e-sports. It was posted on several Facebook groups for exchange students. Unfortunately this survey gathered only 33 answers. Nevertheless, it still provides some insight into what the new audience might want. The survey had 9 questions. (page 40, Appendix 2)

The first question asked if people have participated in an e-sports event before. Here, 73% of the respondents answered "No" and 27% answered "Yes". This is the proportion of answers I was hoping for. Many "No" answers grants that the respondents don't have an already established opinion of such events and could bring a fresh view into the field.

Most of the respondents answered with "Other", which referred mostly to local events in their home towns or countries, but one answer was also for World Cyber Games, a major event.

When it came to tickets and merchandise prices, the new public would be willing to spend more on them.

While this second survey has provided some insight into what new visitors would want to see at an e-sports event, more than 100 answers would have been considered a truly fruitful survey considering ESC's size and current audience. Out of the 33 people who answered the survey, a third of them were answering with "None" if there was that option in a question, so that narrows down the survey even more.

5.4   Interview with ESC president

On 13 May 2014, I have met with the co-founder and president of ESC, Alex "DexterFloy" Cornea. It was not a formal interview, but more of a free discussion targeting certain areas of ESC, with me steering the conversation and Alex providing the answers.

5.4.1 Lack of personnel and proper training

The first subject we touched was the current structure of ESC. He explained that while the structure is well sorted, with all the activity areas being covered by a certain department, there is a lack of dependable people who can fill the administrative positions. Some of the members who joined ESC are participate in the organization as a hobby, doing it for fun, neglecting any responsibilities they might have. Others while handling their current responsibilities successfully are either too burdened or don't want to take extra responsibilities. This brings all the major responsibilities on him, causing him to visibly stress, and makes other members think that doing work for ESC would cause them to stress as well.

His proposal for this was that the human resources department, which is currently empty, should be manned immediately. Three people would suffice, one coordinator and two team members. They would actively recruit more people into the organization, brief them regarding ESC's background, projects, activities and upcoming tasks. HR would occasionally organize test projects internally, to prepare the new members for the real projects and events.

5.4.2 Sale of services and products

The second subject discussed was generating profit through the direct sale of services and products to the fan base, and even members.

While ESC does not generate products on its own, it can act as a reseller for others. During its existence, ESC formed different relations with shops from Romania. As a result, before organizing an event, merchandise is acquired from those shops. It is later sold at the event with a slightly higher price, which covers the initial investment and also creates profit for ESC. Merchandise includes t-shirts, comic books, board games, and stickers.

The sale of services is a work in progress, but an outline has been already drawn. There are members in ESC which are professionals in their field. For example, one of ESC's former members is a Quality Assurance Manager at an IT company in Cluj. Members such as this could hold training courses on different levels (junior, intermediate or advanced) for who is interested. The courses could cover different areas such as programming (Java, C), communication or game design.

In order for this to happen, the above improvement regarding the training and allocation of people would first have to be met, and ESC's fan base increased, in order to attract at least 10 people to an iteration of such a course.

5.4.3   ESC's sponsors

We concluded the interview by talking about the current and possible future sponsors of ESC. While ESC was growing it established connections with various sponsors, both in Romania and abroad.
The current sponsors and ESC's relation with them is below:

- Ubisoft Romania agreed that in exchange for promoting them as a potential employer, they would provide ESC with their newest releases in video games, to use as prizes in the events.
- Riot Games agreed that in exchange for promoting their game, League of Legends, they would grant in-game items to offer as prizes, and a fixed amount of money to use in the event.
- PcMadd electronics agreed that for promoting their products and services as an electronics repairer, they would grant ESC the technical equipment needed at the events. This includes cables, computers, screens, mice, keyboards, and a video projector.
- Lex Shop agreed that for promoting their board games, they would provide ESC with board games to use at the events.
- The Town hall of Cluj-Napoca agreed to offer directions to different people and organizations where we the necessary legal actions and papers could be completed, in exchange for promotion at ESC's events. This would benefit them, as the city council of Cluj aspires to become Europe's youth and culture capital.
- Imposing Gaming : As an e-sports team they have various sponsors of their own. While the money they receive they keep for they own, they often receive technical equipment and gaming accessories. Since Imposing Gaming is also part of ESC, the equipment they do not need, they donate it to ESC.

ESC is also in talks with two major sponsors, Ubisoft Paris and Valve Software. They have imposed strict requirements on ESC in order to grant the sponsorship. The requirements and ways to fulfill them will be discussed later in the report.

6   E-Sports Cluj

The e-sports scene in Romania has been on a rise in the past 7 years, since Electronic Sport League opened a section there (ESL, 2007), but it still has a long way to go in order to reach

the level of other areas, such as Sweden , South Korea or the United States. ESC aims to help Romania reach that level.

6.1   ESC's background and structure

ESC was formed in February 2013 by Alexandru "DexterFloy" Cornea, Andreea "Nekshu" Necsulescu and Alexandra "Sandy" Petrusan out of their passion for e-sports and board games.

Over time, due to the increase of the fan base and the recruiting process, more people have joined ESC, and it is now counting 34 members. Due to this it managed to increase its events and the activities it can offer to the attendees. This also required a more careful and responsible structuring of the organization.

ESC is currently split across 2 containers, with a 3rd to follow in 2015.
The first container has been created in 2013, and is filled by the the core departments with their specific divisions.
The second container has been created in 2014, and is filled by the Imposing Gaming team.
The third container is planned to house the future instructors and teachers. They would hold professional training courses in various technologies (e.g. Java, ASP.net) to members of ESC and interested outsiders.

6.1.1   Container A

There are 10 departments, making it the bigger out of the two containers.
1.   Public Relations – Social media, musical events,
2.   Financial – Accounting, marketing, the fund raising and the negotiations with the sponsors
3.   Human Resources – Recruiting and training new members
4.   Barcraft – Events where bars are booked to watch e-sports tournaments live
5.   Outdoor – Outdoor activities for when ESC attends other festivals with their own stand
6.   Board games – Any activities, events or contests related to board games
7.   Comics – Any activities, events or contests related to comic books
8.   E-sports – Activities, events or contests involving video games and streaming them to the public. The video games promoted at events are League of Legends, StarCraft II, Hearthstone
9.   Support – Logistics, general and technical support
10. Pixel – Photography, video recording and editing

6.1.2 Container B

This container houses Imposing Gaming, ESC's own e-sports team. Imposing helps ESC by promoting it at the events they participate, providing some of the sponsorships they receive from their own sponsors and the clubhouse, which is used for their practice sessions and ESC's meetings. In return ESC helps Imposing by connecting them with new sponsors.

Imposing Gaming has 5 e-sports teams, 1 for DotA 2, 1 for League of Legends and 3 for Counter Strike, consisting of 5 members each. Some of the team members also have administrative roles within Imposing.

6.2 ESC's projects

Projects are the events created by ESC or where ESC is present with various activities. There are 3 types of projects defined by ESC. I will later present in detail one of each kind of projects.

- One-shot: These events have happened in the past only once.
    - o Leisure Days
    - o ESC @ Atelier Cafe
    - o Silent Regis
- Recursive: These started out as one-shot projects, and due to positive feedback from the attendees, it was decided that the event will repeat itself after a set amount of time indefinitely.
    - o Cluj Battle Sessions (CBS)
    - o Barcraft
    - o ESC @ Peninsula
- Continuous : These are internal projects which are related to ESC's administration
    - o Human Resources
    - o Webpage development
    - o ESCtube

During the projects, several activities take place. The activities are ESC's source of income. While the Romanian legislation allows the gain of income from all the legal activities stated by the National Financial Administration, activities which are also listed in ESC's association status, only the ones listed below are being used.

1. Ticket sale
2. Product sale
3. Sub renting

4. Partnerships
5. Sponsorships
6. Donations
7. Saving accounts
8. Sale of services

As mentioned in chapter 6.2 , ESC's third container would consist of people teaching various professional courses, for a charge.
These activities will be discussed in their own subchapter later on.

6.2.1   One-shot project: Silent Regis

On the 13th of April 2013, ESC hosted a large social event, where local music artists Silent Strike and Kazi Ploae launched their material "Silent Regis". ESC first organized a board game event, the musical event being the after party. It was considered a success, due to the fact that 1000 people attended the event. (E-sports Cluj 2013)

This event was a partnership between ESC and the two artists and thus it had mutual bene-fits. ESC, being still at the beginning, gained notoriety on the entertainment scene in Cluj. Due to the successful marketing both before and during the event, the after party of the art-ists was a hit and they too gained fame. While the artists and the club in which the event took place took the most out of the profits, ESC was also given a share, for promoting the event and gathering such an amount of people.

6.2.2   Continuous project: ESCtube

The e-sports department in ESC has a section which covers video game streaming. This in-cludes both streaming during the week by members of the team and streaming of the compe-titions during other projects, for example, Cluj Battle Sessions.

The streaming is done using Twitch, the most popular free to use internet streaming service, where players, teams, or organizations can create their own channel and customize it.
There are 2 members in the streaming department, thus they each stream several hours, one day per week, Tuesday and Friday respectively.

When an e-sports tournament is organized by ESC, the stream is on as long as games are being played during that event, and people who could not attend, can watch from the comfort of their homes.

A common habit across Twitch channels is donation. If a streamer has an interesting and stable enough stream to attract large amounts of people and keep them hooked, he can add a donation button to his channel, which the audience can use to donate a sum of money to the channel's owner. ESC has also adopted this activity and it has been profitable during both weekly and event specific streams.

6.2.3   Recursive project: Cluj Battle Sessions/National Battle Sessions

ESC's biggest current project is Cluj Battle Sessions, CBS for short. Each CBS brings an approximate of 200 total participants, counting both visitors and players, with 60 participants being there permanently, as they come and go during the day. These are feeble numbers, compared to the thousands at EECC and Dreamhack Open, but the plan is to increase them, along with the profits.

Due to the scale of the project, CBS brings together the most activities, as such, is the most profitable for ESC.

A joint decision has been taken inside ESC to organize a CBS every 1-2 months, over the span of 3 days, (Friday, Saturday and Sunday) this period being influenced by the events of the month. For example, a CBS could not be organized in April due to the dates coinciding with the Easter Holiday, which would severely diminish our attendees. A CBS event was planned for May, but due to issues with the upper management, and the e-sports event coordinator leaving suddenly, the event had to be postponed for June and renamed to NBS, or National Battle Sessions.

The NBS is a project which was initiated after the success of the previous CBS events. The plan is to expand ESC to a national scale, in order to not only increase its exposure, but also fulfill sponsor requirements. Within ESC, talks have been held for almost 2 months in order to decide on the new locations and structure, and it has been decided to be held also in Bucharest and Iasi, beside Cluj.

This year there will be 4 NBS events, 1 for each city, Cluj in June, Iasi in August and Bucharest in September, culminating with the final at Cluj, in October, where the winners of the previous 3 editions will battle for the grand prize. The emphasis at the events shall be put on the League of Legends and Hearthstone tournaments, as those bring in the most attention and fans to e-sports events.

6.3   ESC's activities and suggested improvements

As mentioned above, ESC's income is generated by activities held at events. This subchapter will contain a detailed description of each activity. As a result of my research, I have produced several improvement suggestions. Applying those suggestions to the activities would boost their efficiency. The table below contains a summary of which activity is affected by improvements and to what degree. The impact degree is measured on a scale from 1 to 5, with 5 being the highest positive impact, while 1 being the lowest positive impact. The activities not listed in the table are not covered by any improvement suggestions

Human Resources	Tickets	Products	Sub renting	Sponsorships.	Services	Volunteers
5	2	1	4	5	3	4

Table 1 – Impact of improvements on ESC activities

6.3.1   Ticket sale

In order to enter at events organized by ESC, attendees have to pay a one-time fee. They will receive a wristband which will grant them entrance to the rest of the event. For example, at the last two CBS events, the fee was 3 euros for the visitors and 5 euros for the competitors. The money resulted in the ticket sale is first divided into two amounts, 70% is split across the winners, and 30% remains with ESC.

The results from the surveys I conducted point that people are willing to pay even more than 5 euros for a ticket. Keeping in mind that ESC's events are not on the same scale as major events, the ticket price should not be increased by a large amount. The visitor ticket could go up to 5 euros, while the competitor ticket could be increased to 10 euros.

6.3.2   Product sale

When it came to product sale and what type of merchandise would the people acquire, the results of the surveys were balanced, showing an equal interest for clothing, gaming accessories and collectibles.

The contacts that ESC already has in terms of reselling of merchandise are in the area of comic books, board games and minor collectibles. Extending the contact list to include shops for both clothing and gaming accessories, would increase the diversity of ESC's products and provide a greater window of profitability.

Since ESC's sale, is reselling another dealer's products, unless the demand for merchandise grows considerably, this activity will not provide enough profit to compare itself to the other activities.

6.3.3 Sub renting

It was agreed with a local comic book shop, Comics Mania, that they could come to CBS with their own stand and sell their own merchandise, for a share of their profits. Instead of a fixed amount paid for each event, they would give ESC a percentage of their total sales at the end of that event. This is heavily dependent on the available space of the event. While more organizations could come and promote their own activity at ESC's events, too many would suffocate the flow of the event. A balance has to be found in order to bring a steady amount of income from sub renting, while not perturbing ESC's own activity.

Another point which has to be considered when sub renting, is that the organizations sub renting from ESC, should have different activities from what ESC has to offer. For example, both Comics Mania and ESC sells comic books which affects both parties. Either a different lessee should be found, enabling ESC to sell comic books, or ESC should stop selling comic books, which would result in Comics Mania generating more profits, and the share of the profits going to ESC would be greater.

A financial analysis has to be done in order to see which case would be more profitable, allowing more outside merchandise booths and lowering product sales, or reducing the number of outside influence and increase ESC's product sales.

6.3.4 Partnerships

Partnerships are formed when ESC couples together with another entity and create an event together. Such an example is the Silent Regis event organized together with music artists. These are beneficial to both parties as they can both gain profits based on the activities they perform, and their respective fan bases can also increase.

6.3.5 Sponsorships

Sponsors are one of the main sources of income of ESC. ESC has already established solid connections with its sponsors, yet it's still looking to expand. Some of the members of ESC, which are employed in various IT companies in Cluj are holding talks in order to create a sponsorship agreement with them. In turn for their financial or technical support, ESC would be willing to

promote the company as a service provider or employer. This can be done through roll-ups displayed at ESC's events, the company's logo posted on ESC's website and member's t-shirts.

Following the sponsorship agreement between ESC and Ubisoft Romania, discussions started also with Ubisoft Paris. They agreed that for promoting the company as an employer, and the video games they produce, they would grant ESC a fixed amount of money to use in organizing the Battle Sessions. An additional requirement was that the Battle Sessions must be extended to a national level. As mentioned in subchapter 6.2.3, plans are that by the end of 2014, ESC would have organized events in Cluj, Iasi and Bucharest, covering the main areas of Romania. If the National Battle Sessions are a success, then the deal between ESC and Ubisoft Paris will be struck.

ESC is trying to introduce a new game, DotA 2. Through it, ESC can capture the attention of Valve Software, its developers. A short discussion was already held with a member of Valve. For the first event, they cannot provide any sort of sponsorship beside their DotA 2 e-ticket service. If the first event is successful, and the interest for DotA 2 is clear in the fan base, more discussions will be held to establish an agreement.

The e-ticket system in DotA 2 works like this . ESC submits their tournament format, suggested ticket price and other details to Valve. Valve answers with a confirmation of the ticket price and a set of instructions. On the day of the event, ESC will begin streaming the DotA 2 games, which can be watched from within the game client, anywhere in the world, as long as the one using the client has purchased the ticket. A share of the ticket sales go to ESC. This system brings income to ESC and also increases its notoriety worldwide by promoting the tournament to all DotA 2 players.

6.3.6   Donations

So far ESC has had 2 sources from which it received donations. One of them is Imposing Gaming, its own e-sports team which provided ESC with gaming accessories which they received as sponsorships.
The other source is ESC's Twitch.tv channel. The channel gathers donations on three occasions. The first occasion, and the most profitable is the stream coming from a CBS event, as there is a variety of games being showcased over a 3 day period. The other two occasions happen on a weekly basis, Tuesday and Friday, when one of the two available casters stream their own gameplay sessions. When viewers watch the streams, they have the options to donate to ESC.

While ESC has received donations through both Imposing and Twitch.tv, this is not a reliable source of income, as the moments when donations are received are not fixed and the amounts cannot be estimated.

6.3.7 Savings account

After the revenues from an event are accounted for, and all expenses are paid, what's left of the profits is deposited into a savings account. This account generates income through an interest rate every month.

6.3.8 Sale of services

As mentioned in subchapter 5.4.2, a future plan is for ESC to offer training services through its members. The main issue with this is the shortage of members that ESC is going through. In order for ESC to start offering courses, more members, preferably qualified in their field, have to join ESC.

6.3.9 Volunteers

Expanding ESC and its events would mean that there would be more attendees, more activities to manage and a larger venue to care for. While the current members of ESC can handle the organization of the current format, issues are beginning to appear. The issues can attendees entering without purchasing a ticket or the time for deploying and packing up the technical equipment being too long.

Large events such as EECC or Dreamhack Bucharest have proven that such issues can be tackled with the help of volunteers. Volunteers would be selected and would help throughout the event with the logistics and the support tasks, and in turn they would receive free entrance and a compensation for their work. Having volunteers help with this would free the other members of ESC so they can focus on the more important tasks, such as coordinating the tournaments or the sale of products.

6.3.10 Human Resources

Based on the discussion with Alex Cornea, the president of ESC which presented the problem of the current members an improvement was found.

As soon as the HR department, which Alex Cornea proposed, would be up and running, five ESC members should be chosen to fill the gaps in the upper management. This includes the following areas:

1. Secretary general: responsibilities relating official papers and signatures, making sure that all the documentation is up to date.
2. Marketing : responsibilities related to promoting ESC and its projects through various media channels in order to increase the fan base
3. Financial : responsibilities related to the income of the organization, taxes, pricing of services and products
4. Support : responsibilities related to transportation, props and logistics
5. E-sports : responsibilities related to the organizing, promoting and coordinating e-sports events

If one of the upper management members would decide to leave ESC, they would leave behind a solid knowledge transfer plan on how they performed their activity, so that their follower can immediately pick up where they left off.

Having coordinators on those areas would ensure a smoother flow of operations within ESC. There would be a considerable positive impact on ESC's activities as soon as proper coordination would be in place. The efficiency would be increased, which in turn would increase the profits.

7   Conclusion

In the end, ESC can be a profitable business, as long as it keeps its fans entertained and sponsor requirements are met constantly. It should first focus on creating a solid internal structure with reliable people which are willing to learn ESC's methodology. The upper management should be established, in order to bring continuous improvement to ESC and mold the projects and activities according to the fan's and market's desire.

The next step for ESC is to prove that it is able to organize events on a national scale, as this will contribute to its notoriety and how attract more members, sponsors and attendees. Having contacts in the related areas such as IT, marketing or local government would help smoothen out the events and activities of ESC.

As soon as the team is established and has proven itself able to conduct projects and activities smoothly, a plan has to be drafted to prepare the third container of ESC, containing the teachers which are to offer the training services.

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Figures

Tables

Appendixes

Survey 1

1. **Have you ever participated in an e-sports event?** One answer, mandatory.
   a. YES - 73
   b. NO - 63
2. **Which events have you attended, or are interested in attending?** Multiple answers, not mandatory.
   a. Dreamhack – 98
   b. Comic-con – 39
   c. Intel extreme Masters – 14
   d. Major League Gaming – 14
   e. The International – 36
3. **How much would you be willing to pay for the entrance ticket?** One answer, mandatory. Prices are in EURO
   a. Between 0 and 5 - 27
   b. Between 5 and 10 - 53
   c. Between 10 and 25 - 34
   d. Over 25 – 22
4. **What game genre attracts you at such an event?** Multiple answer, not mandatory
   a. MOBA (Multiplayer online battle arena) - 97
   b. FPS (First person Shooter) - 73
   c. RTS (Real time Strategy) - 34
   d. Fighter - 10
   e. Other -3
5. **Are you interested by other activities at an e-sports event?** Multiple answer, not mandatory
   a. Cosplay – 68
   b. Comic Books – 30
   c. Board games – 48
6. **What objects would be willing to buy from such an event?** Multiple answer, not mandatory
   a. Clothing - 75
   b. Collectibles - 63
   c. Gaming accessories - 89
   d. Nothing – 9
7. **How much would you be willing to spend on the objects above?** One answer, mandatory. Prices are in EURO
   a. 0 – 9
   b. Up to 10 - 5
   c. Between 10 and 25 – 42
   d. Between 25 and 50 – 45
   e. Between 50 and 100 – 17
   f. Over 100 – 17
8. **How many consecutive days would you be willing to participate at such an event?** One answer, mandatory.
   a. 1 - 21
   b. 2 - 43
   c. 3 or more – 73

Survey 2

1. **Have you ever participated in an e-sports event?** One answer, mandatory.
   a. YES – 9
   b. NO -24
2. **If you have never participated before, would you be interested in participating in one?** Multiple answers, not mandatory
   a. YES – 23
   b. NO - 10
3. **If you have participated in such an event, which one is it?** Multiple answers, not mandatory
   a. Dreamhack - 2
   b. Comic-con - 2
   c. Intel Extreme Masters - 1
   d. Major League Gaming - 1
   e. Other -6
4. **How much would you be willing to pay for the entrance ticket?** One answer, mandatory. Prices are in EURO
   a. Between 0 and 5 - 12
   b. Between 5 and 10 - 7
   c. Between 10 and 25 - 12
   d. Between 25 and 50 – 2
   e. Over 50 – 0
5. **Are you familiar with any of the game genres below?** Multiple answers, mandatory.
   a. MOBA (Multiplayer online battle arena) - 14
   b. FPS (First person Shooter) - 21
   c. RTS (Real time Strategy) - 17
   d. Fighter - 13
   e. None - 9
6. **At most e-sports events there are some other activities present. Are you interested by any of the ones below?** Multiple answer, mandatory
   a. Cosplay – 8
   b. Comic Books – 10
   c. Board games – 10
   d. None - 12
7. **What objects would be willing to buy from such an event?** Multiple answer, mandatory
   a. Clothing - 10
   b. Collectibles - 14
   c. Gaming accessories - 11
   d. Nothing – 12
8. **How much would you be willing to spend on the objects above?** One answer, mandatory. Prices are in EURO
   a. 0 to 10 – 10
   b. Between 10 and 25 – 6
   c. Between 25 and 50 – 11
   d. Between 50 and 100 – 5
   e. Over 100 – 1
9. **How many consecutive days would you be willing to participate at such an event?** One answer, mandatory.
   a. 1 - 17
   b. 2 - 11
   c. 3 or more – 5