

## Exploring Esports from the Perspectives of Multiple Stakeholders: Introduction to the Esports Minitrack

Piotr Siuda  
Kazimierz Wielki University  
[piotr.siuda@ukw.edu.pl](mailto:piotr.siuda@ukw.edu.pl)

Lindsey E. Darvin  
Syracuse University  
[ledarvin@syr.edu](mailto:ledarvin@syr.edu)

David P. Hedlund  
St. John's University  
[hedlundd@stjohns.edu](mailto:hedlundd@stjohns.edu)

Emma Witkowski  
Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology  
[emma.witkowski@rmit.edu.au](mailto:emma.witkowski@rmit.edu.au)

### Abstract

*The esports research field continues to evolve rapidly, encompassing various interdisciplinary perspectives. For HICSS-58, we sought high-quality research across various methodologies examining diverse aspects of esports. We received 15 manuscripts spanning multiple disciplines and perspectives, and six were selected for inclusion. The papers cover player behavior analysis, environmental sustainability, fan experience technologies, sponsorship integration, public perceptions of esports in major sporting events, and character preferences in competitive games. These studies contribute to understanding the complex esports ecosystem, its leaders, technological innovations, and player behaviors shaping its future.*

**Keywords:** electronic sports, esports, video games, player behavior, interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary.

### 1. Introduction

Building on the success of the last two esports minitracks (Siuda et al., 2023; 2024), we are pleased to present another round of high-quality research exploring various facets of the rapidly growing esports industry at HICSS-58. The six accepted papers for this year's minitrack exemplify this growth and continue to examine important quantitative and qualitative research questions on various topics (Jenny et al., 2024).

### 2. The 2025 Esports Minitrack

For this year's minitrack, six manuscripts were accepted for presentation and publication, with the first two papers focusing on business and

environmental issues. In contrast, the last four papers examine individuals' and groups' perspectives. The themes thus explore esports from the perspectives of multiple stakeholders. The papers utilize a variety of research methodologies, including case studies, qualitative interviews, structural equation modeling, machine learning techniques, and thematic analysis.

### 3. HICSS-58 research review

The first paper, *Exploring Sponsor Integration and Networks in an Esports Competition: The Case of EA Sports' FIFA 23 Global Series* (Burton), investigates the complex relationships between sponsors and esports properties. Using network analysis, the study's authors examine the *FIFA 23 Global Series* sponsorship landscape, revealing unique integration and diversification patterns, or lack thereof, across traditional sports leagues and their esports counterparts. The findings highlight the potential for both synergies and differentiation between conventional sports and esports sponsorship programs.

The second paper, *Environmental Sustainability Efforts in Esports Organizations Toward Climate Action* (Ojala, Hasanovic, Hasan), examines the growing importance of environmental responsibility within the esports industry. Through a qualitative case study of seven esports organizations and expert interviews, the authors explore efforts made by esports leaders to address climate change and promote sustainability. The study stresses the potential for esports organizations to leverage their influence and promote greater environmental responsibility while identifying challenges and opportunities within the industry.

The third paper, *Player Behavior Analysis for Predicting Player Identity Within Pairs in Esports*

*Tournaments: A Case Study of Counter-Strike Using Binary Random Forest Classifier* (Zimmer, Irvan, Perera, Tamponi, Kobayashi, Yamaguchi), presents an innovative approach to analyzing and predicting player identities based on in-game behavior data. Utilizing a dataset from 119 *Counter-Strike: Global Offensive* esports tournament matches, the authors employ a binary random forest classifier to distinguish between players with up to 87% accuracy. This study demonstrates the potential for predicting player identities through in-game behavior.

The fourth paper, *Character Preferences in Competitive Games: A Study among League of Legends players* (Laato, Karaosmanoglu, Hamari, Brunnhofer, Kordyaka), investigates how players justify their champion preferences in the popular multiplayer online battle arena game *League of Legends*. Through a qualitative analysis of survey responses from 34 players, the authors identify three main themes influencing character preferences: champion mechanics, aesthetics and lore, and in-game culture. The study reveals that gameplay mechanics are paramount in players' preferences, while aesthetics and lore play a secondary role.

The fifth paper, *Esports' Debut as a Medal Event at 2023 Asian Games: Exploring Public Perceptions with BERTopic and GPT-4 Topic Fine-Tuning* (Qian, Yu, Li, Xu), examines public opinions of esports at the 2023 Asian Games using advanced natural language processing techniques, which were applied to data sourced from social media. The authors identify five major themes representing public perceptions and explore how stakeholders co-created value during the event. Key findings highlight the strategic use of social media marketing to influence public opinion, the importance of event logistics and infrastructure, and the role of non-traditional stakeholders in promoting national representation and performance.

The sixth paper, *Navigating Fan Reactions: The Role of Innovation Resistance and Acceptance in Smart Stadium Technology Use* (Anderski, Fortagne, Kapfer, Lis, Ströbel), investigates the factors influencing the adoption of Smart Stadium Technologies (SST) in esports venues. The authors develop a comprehensive framework for understanding drivers and barriers to SST adoption by integrating the Technology Acceptance Model and Innovation Resistance Theory. Based on a survey of 504 sports event attendees, the study's findings provide valuable insights for esports organizers and venue managers looking to enhance the fan experience through technological innovations.

## 4. Conclusion

Presenting at HICSS and publishing accepted manuscripts in the *Journal of Electronic Gaming and Esports* (see Hedlund, 2022) continue to demonstrate the opportunities and value of the Esports minitrack to global audiences. When the Esports minitrack first took place at HICSS-56 in 2023, curiosity abounded as a new connection between popular culture and system sciences was effectively demonstrated. In more recent years, the Esports minitrack and related minitracks (e.g., the Games and Gaming minitrack, the Metaverse minitrack) have all collectively continued to promote and display the opportunities for researchers from a variety of disciplines to utilize interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary perspectives, in combination with quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods research paradigms, in their esports research activities. While esports research is still in the early stages, the research questions explored, methods utilized, and findings produced all demonstrate the importance of the digital and increasingly connected world. At the same time, esports research continues to contribute to understanding and validating findings from other disciplines. The future continues to be bright for esports and related research endeavors.

## 5. Funding

This research is supported by the Polish Ministry of Science under "Regionalna Inicjatywa doskonałości" program.

## 6. References

- Hedlund, D. P. (2022). Introduction to the Journal of Electronic Gaming and Esports. *Journal of Electronic Gaming and Esports*, 1(1), 1–4.
- Jenny, S. E., Besombes, N., Cote, A. C., & Scholz, T. M. (Eds.). (2024). *Routledge Handbook of Esports* (1st edition). Routledge.
- Siuda, P., Behnke, M., & Hedlund, D. P. (2023). Towards a Future Esports Research: Introduction to Esports Minitrack. In B. X. Tung (Ed.) *Proceedings of the 56th Annual Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences, HICSS 2023* (pp. 3880–3881).
- Siuda, P., Behnke, M., & Hedlund, D. P. (2024). Popularizing and Connecting Esports Research: Introduction to the Esports Minitrack. In B. X. Tung (Ed.) *Proceedings of the 57th Annual Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences, HICSS 2024* (pp. 4441–4442).