



## Session: eSports: The 'Next Big Thing' in Marketing

### Synopsis

If you didn't realise that gaming is already bigger than the film and music industries combined, you must have blinked. And after conquering the entertainment industry, the phenomenon is now clicking mainstream into sport – otherwise known as eSport – with nearly 500 million fans predicted by 2020.

This panel of major stakeholders in the eSports industry – representing leading international tournaments, sponsors and consultants – explain exactly why it is the 'next big thing' in modern marketing, and why global brands are racing to tap the opportunities it presents.

### Moderator

- **Ms Karen Koh**  
Founder, Intermedia

### Speakers

- **Mr Frank Sliwka**  
Chief Operating Officer, EPULZE GAMING  
Former Chief Operating Officer, ESL Asia
- **Mr Allan Phang**  
Head of Esports, AirAsia
- **Mr Clearence Cheung**  
Head of Business, Emperor Esports Stars
- **Ms Nicola Piggott**  
Co-founder, The Story Mob

### Summary

**Mr Frank Sliwka** opened the session with an overview of the gaming industry. It is growing very fast, and it is already beyond film and music together in terms of revenues. He had 300 seconds to summarize his 20 years+ of experience in gaming before engaging into the discussion with other panelists. He unveiled 4 predictions for 2019:

1. New game titles will enter the tournament rankings such as Apex Legend with over 80,000 followers;
2. More brands will invest into eSports;
3. Grassroots initiatives will drive eSports business (i.e. Epulze tournament platform to simulate live events);
4. Esports will drive hospitality and tourism business;

Mr Sliwka's already dealt with consulting based on those predictions, in addition to education programmes.



**Mr Allan Phang**, expert in eSports for Air Asia, a pioneer brand in investing in eSports as marketing tool, explained to the audience how the deployment of eSports for corporations could be declined into 4 pillars:

1. Employee engagement
2. Employer branding
3. Esports tourism
4. Supporting eSports, influencer teams, etc.

Air Asia applied the four of them. Alibaba has followed. Esports is business also for real estate as having a venue where to showcase a game and making it a destination can bring business. In countries like Thailand, Philippines, Malaysia, Taiwan, China, is already working.

**Mr Clearence Cheung** made a point regarding eSports players as the new influencers.

**Ms Nicola Piggott**, as eSports communication consulting and PR, also working for League of Legends, and lots of players as influencers.

She also shared her views on the future of eSports, and for her it is going to be characterized by:

1. Esports professionalizing and mainstream
2. Traditional brands and sports brands engagement
3. Not only sports but content
4. Team and players maximizing the power of brands

**Question: What brands should do to engage with esports players?**

Ms Piggott replied that engaging with esports players, if not the League of Legends, is every easy as they are very responsive, it is more about choosing the one suitable.

**Question: How about cosmetics as it seems to be a male dominated world?**

Ms Piggott explained that actually it is 50-50. Indeed, brands like Sephora and Gillette have already started using eSports as a platform to reach out consumers.

Mr Cheung highlighted though how recently having a man advertising, a female product, actually may work better.

Mr Sliwka also shared that working with live events such as Twitch TV might be different.

**Question: Why eSports instead of other marketing? How much is it?**

Mr Sliwka explained that it is not that expensive and it is not that popular yet.

Mr Allan Phang explained that eSports had its own ecosystem and specificities, and teams are super star, and people are willing to follow them around.

Ms Nicola Piggott explained that eSports knows its followers more than any to her type of platform. It is possible to understand who the users are, what they shop, where, and therefore tailoring content and know the ROI is much easier. Goldman & Sachs has recently released a report on eSports and this gives more visibility to such a trend.



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Ninja is a streamer, and he has a huge number of followers. He symbolizes the streamer potential it is a whole new entertainment arena

Mr Sliwka explained that streamers have a big social media audience, bigger than celebrities and it is possible to work with them at different levels:

- Teams
- Audience
- Community

**Question: After Google announced google Stadium, what is going to change?**

Ms Piggott talked about legitimacy, but also about democratization. The next step for eSports would be to engage in CSR to promote a healthy lifestyle, prevent violence, for instance. There is a lot of misconception on gaming, however eSports is now business. E-players have their own team looking after them.