

Research Focus

Volume 1, Issue 1, 2019, p. 45-51

ISSN: 2668-4675

www.researchfocus.org

Photo by Scott Webb on Unsplash

Esports - Introducing the Basics

Ivan Todorov CHUROV

Computer Science for Business, Romanian-American University

Abstract

Digital technologies have a tremendous impact on everyday life as well as in the business environment, at a global level. An example in this sense is the world of sport, which now combines two concepts, sport, and video gaming, becoming 'esports' in the online realm. 'Esports' is already present, and it will be a significant domain in the future – be it from a financial, marketing, entertainment, etc. point of view; this industry has shown that it can compete at all levels. The paper presents an actual literature overview of the most important concepts regarding 'esports'.

Keywords: digitalization; digital technologies; esports; video game

Introduction

The days of digitalization and technological modernization have brought many new opportunities and jobs on the horizon and have discovered areas we never thought possible. Such an example is “esports” (not e-sports, and not eSports) (Chaloner, 2018).

What once was just a hobby and a “waste of time” for most of us born in the last twenty-three years is now a gigantic on growing industry with huge potential worldwide.

The financial aspect of esports

Esports has existed in one way or another since the introductions of video games; however, their popularity has been on an exponential rise from the beginning of the 21st century. The big breakthrough in the esports industry can be set for the beginning of this decade (2010) when Activision organized their first “Call of Duty” (Wikipedia-a, 2019) tournament in 2011 with a prize pool of \$1,000,000 (Guzman, 2013). As of 2016, across the five biggest esports titles, the prize pool amounts to a total of more than \$140,000,000 (TechVibes) - a number that has exponentially risen in the past three years, with the prize pool of the latest big “League of Legends” championship having a prize pool of more than \$4,000,000 (Wikipedia-b, 2018). These numbers show that esports is not only a hobby or a waste of time but is a fully functional and well-paid industry for everyone involved.

Sponsors

Money is obviously a big part in this field, but where does it come from?

Back in 2009, when esports started to gain momentum, Red Bull was one of the first brands to jump in on the bandwagon. Nowadays they are one of the biggest brands in this industry, being sponsors of players, teams, tournaments while also being the organizers of various events in this field across different games (Kresse, 2016). But Red Bull is far from being the only ones involved in the financials of this industry. Coca Cola, Intel, and Audi are just some of the other big companies that are part of esports (Meola, 2018).

Publicity and exposure

How are these companies in touch with esports and how do they make their money back advertising their products?

Video games are becoming more and more popular by the day thanks to a site called Twitch¹ – where you can watch other people play video games live or if you feel like it, you can stream yourself playing. As absurd as this idea seems at first, it is the modern equivalent of watching people play sports on television. The most popular argument I have heard in my short career as a professional esports player is “Why would you watch other people play video games when you can just play them yourself?” (Churov, 2019). It is the same reason as to why we watch sports on television instead of practicing them ourselves – we do not have the opportunity to practice them ourselves; we want to see better players perform and learn from them; we see it as entertainment; we are fans of the players competing and want to support them... the list goes on.

For whatever reason it may be, Twitch (which is the property of the giant Amazon) is a platform where an unlimited quantity (and quality) of gaming can be found. As of 2018, Twitch has 15 million daily viewers on its site (Iqbal, 2019). With these numbers, it is understandable how this is a rapidly growing industry all over the globe, attracting all kinds of sponsors.

Gamers as the new form of marketing

The financial and marketing aspect is not only profitable for the companies involved. Aside from being indirectly benefitting from all the finances involved in this industry (by receiving salaries from teams, which get their money from sponsors), some gamers are the direct link between video game producers and consumers.

Some professional players are not only paid to play video games but are also “content creators” – they create content, be in on YouTube² or Twitch, which are watched by (hundreds of) thousands daily and bring sometimes a bigger income than competing. Such is the case with a

¹ <https://www.twitch.tv/>

² <https://www.youtube.com/>

Fortnite³ professional player 'Ninja', who was paid \$1,000,000 to play a newly released game for a week (Thier, 2019). This might sound like an absurd amount of money to pay someone to play a video game... for a week. However, as numbers show, a 20 second add on television can amount up to more than \$600,000 – put into perspective, paying someone two or three times as much to consistently advertise your product for a whole week on the biggest video game broadcasting site in the world seems like a very, very good deal.

Sports and esports

It is a matter of argument whether esports will replace traditional sports. In this paper, I will try and make the connection between football and esports football.

The football side of esports is not as big as the “traditional” esports, which are not based on real sports or games. It has, however, huge potential and this is being recognized by some of the biggest names in the *real* footballing industry. Football stars such as Mesut Özil, Christian Fuchs and living legends such as Ruud Gullit have created their own esports teams recruiting players competing only on FIFA (Needham, 2019). This means that they pay a monthly salary to their team to represent them on the virtual pitch.

As well as professional football players being involved, the biggest football league in the world in terms of viewership and money – the Premier League, recently had its analogy on the video game. A virtual league was running for months and in the end released its first-ever ePremier League champion (ESPN, 2019). The event was broadcasted live on television on Sky Sports and the site Twitch. This new industry attracts not only teams and players but also the biggest leagues in the world with their sponsors and some of the biggest television companies.

Conclusion

Esports is part of the future – be it from a financial, marketing, entertainment, etc. point of view, this industry has shown that it can compete at all levels. It is competitive in many aspects – Twitch competes with traditional television in terms of viewership, marketing through Twitch is

³ <https://www.epicgames.com/fortnite/en-US/home>

far more beneficial than a traditional advertisement, viewership at esports events is bigger than most of the biggest sports events in history (Goslin, 2018).

Esports opens an equal opportunity from people of all age, race, religion, and location to be able to transform their hobby into a profession or the very least into entertainment for others.

I am myself a professional esports player and can confirm that the feeling of competing on the virtual pitch brings the same feeling like the one you experience when playing traditional sports. The competitiveness, fans, and stakes – they all add to the pressure, relief and disappointment one feels week in-week out.

Esports may seem like a weird concept at first – just like it was for my parents and the parents of every single player that has gotten into this field. However, it became apparent that it is not as simple as playing video games all day, but requires time, effort, sacrifices, and dedication, as well as intellect, skill, reflexes and maturity (to name a few) (Hagander, 2016). Once you get involved in esports at a personal level, there is no going back.

References

- Chaloner, P. (2018). *Esports or esports*. Retrieved from Twitter: <https://twitter.com/PaulChaloner/status/1047158527398215682>
- Churov, I. (2019). *Night_Watch*. Retrieved from Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/n.watch.96/?modal=admin_todo_tour
- ESPN. (2019). *TekKz, 17, wins inaugural ePremier League title*. Retrieved from ESPN: https://www.espn.com/esports/story/_id/26391989/tekkz-17-wins-inaugural-epremier-league-title
- Goslin, A. (2018). *The 2018 League of Legends World Finals had nearly 100 million viewers*. Retrieved from Rift Herald: <https://www.riftherald.com/2018/12/11/18136237/riot-2018-league-of-legends-world-finals-viewers-prize-pool>
- Guzman, J. N. (2013). *Get Introduced to eSports*. Retrieved from RedBull: <https://www.redbull.com/gb-en/an-introduction-to-esports>
- Hagander, H. (2016). *What characteristics and mindset make up the best competitive video game players?* Retrieved from Quora: <https://www.quora.com/What-characteristics-and-mindset-make-up-the-best-competitive-video-game-players>
- Iqbal, M. (2019). *Twitch Revenue and Usage Statistics (2019)*. Retrieved from Business of Apps: <https://www.businessofapps.com/data/twitch-statistics/>
- Kresse, C. (2016). *Brands in Esports – Red Bull: King of Content Marketing*. Retrieved from Esports Marketing Blog: <https://esports-marketing-blog.com/red-bull-esports-marketing/>
- Meola, A. (2018). *The biggest companies sponsoring eSports teams and tournaments*. Retrieved from Business Insider: <https://www.businessinsider.com/top-esports-sponsors-gaming-sponsorships-2018-1>
- Needham, J. (2019). *A league they can own: why pro footballers are signing up star video gamers*. Retrieved from The Guardian: <https://www.theguardian.com/games/2019/jan/29/esports-virtual-football-champions-league-pro-footballers-sign-star-video-gamers>
- TechVibes. (n.d.). *Electronic sporting*. Retrieved from TechVibes: <https://techvibes.com/2016/06/21/how-videogames-became-a-sport-and-why-theyre-here-to-stay-hint-money>
- Thier, D. (2019). *Report: EA Paid Ninja \$1 Million To Play 'Apex Legends', Which Is Way Too Little*. Retrieved from Forbes: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/davidthier/2019/03/14/report-ea-paid-ninja-1-million-to-play-apex-legends-which-is-way-too-little/#4559661e27f3>

Wikipedia-a. (2019). *Call of Duty*. Retrieved from Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Call_of_Duty
Wikipedia-b. (2018). *2018 League of Legends World Championship*. Retrieved from Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2018_League_of_Legends_World_Championship#Ranking

Please cite this article as:

Churov, T.I. (2019). Esports – Introducing the Basics. *Research Focus*, 1(1), 45-51. doi: <https://doi.org/10.36068/1.8>

Research Focus. International Open-Access Scientific Journal for Students and Graduates Research



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International Licence](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/). Articles are free to use, with proper attribution, in educational and other non-commercial settings.

ISSN: 2668-4675