

Development of e-Sport in Turkey and in the World

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Abstract

The extraordinary development of technology has caused to emerge some new improvements by affecting sport field as it has affected the other fields. The world which has become the huge market economically with the effects of globalization expanded including the-Sport with the developing of information and communication technologies. One of the developments related to the sport field is e-Sport. The history of e-Sport dating back 1970s in the world has started to build a foundation in Turkey's 2000s years. Although plenty of e-Sport players take part in the international contests in the national level, the studies related to the e-Sport and the developments of e-Sport between the countries are very few in the world, and scarcely any in Turkey. Sport has increased the capacity of viewers and being a big sector. Therefore, comparing the situation and improvement of e-Sport both in Turkey and the world is the main goal of this research. The research carried out as part of a scan study model. It has been done to understand the situation of our country in this field, and how to ameliorate it by considering the last improvements of e-Sport in Turkey and the world.

Keywords: E-Sport, Digital Gaming, Cybersports, Competitive Gaming

Introduction

In this new technological age, the world has moved more towards using the Internet as a medium for a variety of purposes. From finding information to set up businesses, the Internet has become a part of daily life for many people. This also comes to affect entertainment, giving rise to a new way to broadcast events, and with this ability, the Internet allows entrepreneurs and companies to reach millions of viewers. One of the largest growing forms of entertainment is e-Sport (Southern, 2017).

Most people have never heard of e-Sport, “a catchall term for games that resemble conventional sports insofar as they have playoffs, fans, superstars, uniforms, comebacks, and upsets. But all the action in [e-Sport] occurs online, and the contestants hardly move” (Segal, 2014). Welcome to the world of competitive gaming, also known as e-Sport.

While the study of computer games, in general, is slowly becoming accepted in the academic world, the scientific investigation of competitive computer gaming is still in its infancy. One of the main reasons appears to be that in western culture competitive gaming is usually only seen within the context of first-person shooting games. Almost any attempted academic discussion is immediately locked into a debate about game ethics. This debate, however, represents only a small part of the whole spectrum of competitive computer gaming that should be of interest to academia.

Development of e-Sport in the world

With an origin tracing to October 19, 1972, when the first video game competition occurred at Stanford University (Baker, 2016), electronic sports (dubbed e-Sport) steadily gained market space, with exponential growth happening over the last decade. Eight years later, the first large-scale video game competition attracted overall, 10,000 participants when Atari held the Space Invaders Championship in New York City (Players Guide, 1982).

The origin of e-Sport is said to rely heavily on the launching of the worldwide web (www) in 1989, and on the early 1990s software and hardware technologies with network and multiplayer functions. In the early 1990s, the history of e-Sport started and it became increasingly popular during this decade the number of players increasing considerably. Besides, e-Sport also created a new marketplace for both manufacture and service and organizational aspects (Samur, 2018).

The term “electronic Sports” or “e-Sport” dates back to the late nineties. One of the earliest reliable sources that use the term “e-Sport” is a 1999 press release on the launch of the Online Gamers Association (OGA) in which then Eurogamer evangelist Mat Bettington compared e-Sport to traditional sports (OGA, 1999). Around that time, the sport discussion was also fuelled by a failed attempt of the organization of the UK Professional Computer Gaming Championship (UKPCGC) 1999 to have competitive gaming recognized as an official sport by the English Sports Council (Knox, 1999).

In the United States and Europe, the history of competitive gaming is usually associated with the release of networked first-person shooting games, in particular, the 1993 released game “Doom” and the 1996 follow-up title “Quake” by id software (Kushner, 2004). During that time, teams of online players, also called “Clans”, started to compete in online tournaments. By 1997 several professional and semi-professional online gaming leagues had formed, most noticeably the still influential “Cyberathlete Professional League” whose business concept was modeled after the major professional sports leagues in the United States (Welch, 2002).

Among the first CPL tournament events held in front of live audiences was the “The Foremost Roundup of Advanced Gamers” otherwise known as “The Frag” in 1997 (Frag Diary, 1997). In the philosophy of the CPL, Professional computer gaming was now considered an emerging spectator sport. In 1999, game development company Valve released the game “Counter-Strike” as a modification of their first-person shooter “Half-Life”. The game quickly replaced Quake in popularity in competitive gaming and has since then remained the central element in western e-Sport events (Wagner, 2006).

At the turn of the 21st century, e-Sport grew tremendously by increasing the number of global entities in competitions (e.g., the World Cyber Games, Intel Extreme Masters, and Major League Gaming); in the year 2000, there were 49 tournaments with the average professional player earning US\$3,061 annually through tournament awards (e-Sport Earnings, 2000). South Korea took the concept of e-Sport to new heights, embracing it within popular culture. In an attempt to grow the culture of e-Sport, the South Korean government created the Korean e-Sport Association in 2000 (2013), a department embedded in South Korea’s Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism agency and hastened by massive Internet bandwidth growth (Huhh, 2007). PC bangs, a place where South Koreans rent time to play on a computer, were fundamental in growing e-Sport, becoming social spaces where interaction and fandom could emerge (Huhh, 2007) by placing a human face to people from this virtual world (Huhh, 2007).

In the second decade of the 21st century, the popularity and emergence of online streaming software hastened rapid e-Sport growth. Twitch, launched in 2011, was the main provider for e-Sport competitions shown online, as it was (and is) free for everyone as well as the most common way everyone watched e-Sport (Twitch, 2016). In 2013, users spent over 12 billion min on Twitch watching e-Sport (O’Neill, 2014), most notably League of Legends (LoL) and DotA 2. Due to the success and profitability of Twitch, a variety of competitors emerged including Beam.pro, Azubu tv, and Hitbox.tv.

The most popular genres within e-Sport are first-person-shooter (FPS), real-time strategy (RTS) and sports games. In FPS games the player controls an avatar, the virtual representation in the game. The virtual environment of the game is approached from the perspective of the avatar. The only thing visible of the avatars on the screen is the hands and the weapons they handle. In contrast, in RTS games the player controls a whole army, which is seen from a ‘bird’s-eye view’, and the games include combat in different ways. One of the most popular FPS games is Counter-Strike, and its counterpart in RTS games is StarCraft. In sport games, naturally, traditional (or modern) sports are simulated. A popular title is the FIFA football series. E-Sport is always about defeating other contestants, by either destroying them, or, as in sport games, just racing the fastest, or scoring the most goals. Over time the number of different games in which competitions are held has increased and it is still increasing. A good e-Sport game is delimited in time and space where the players are competing individually or in a team. The competitions are carried out over the Internet or through so-called Local Area Networks (LAN). The most prestigious competitions are carried out in LAN, where both smaller and larger numbers of computers are linked together in one building (Jonasson and Thiborg, 2010).

Understanding e-Sport is complex because of the relative novelty of the industry as well as the convergence of culture, technology, sport, and business (Jin, 2010). Unlike traditional sports such as hockey, baseball, and soccer, e-Sport is an interconnection of multiple platforms. E-Sport, which is also synonymous with gaming, is computing, gaming, media, and sports event all wrapped up into one (Jin, 2010). Consequently, defining e-Sport is equally difficult.

It is imperative to first distinguish the difference between sedentary sport video games (SSVGs) and e-Sport. SSVGs are video games that emulate real-life-Sport but do not involve PA (Kim & Ross, 2006). Examples of SSVGs include, but are not limited to EA Sports UFC, NHL 15, MLB 14: The Show, NBA 2K15, Madden NFL 15, and FIFA 15. All of the previously mentioned games center on professional sports leagues. On the contrary, e-Sport is not bound by definition by a specific genre of game. In fact, top e-Sport competition games are not related to real-life-Sport but are more centered on fantasy worlds. LoL is described as a competitive game set in an imaginative world where players take the role of a “powerful Summoner” to call and control “brave Champions into battle” (GForce, 2015).

In 2006, Wagner argued that e-Sport is too narrowly defined if it is merely seen as “a competitive way of playing computer games within a professional setting”. Instead, Wagner developed a definition for e-Sport as “An area of sport activities in which people develop and train mental or physical abilities in the use of information and communication technologies”. Wagner’s expanded definition, though more encompassing, does not truly define e-Sport. One reason why the authors believe Wagner’s definition does not completely fit is because of the option of the sporting activity to be mental or physical. It is clearly accepted that one characteristic which separates a game from a sport is the physical application of skill (Coakley, 2008; Suits, 2007). For the sake of remaining analogies to the e-Sport industry, the authors will consider the definition of e-Sport to be physical. However, the use of physical skill in e-Sport is often questioned and will also be discussed later this article (Jenny at all, 2017).

Also, Wagner’s (2006) definition leaves ambiguity in how e-Sport is played. The statement that people develop and train with the use of information and communication technologies in e-Sport leaves out the aspect of competition. Competition is important to include in the definition because the foundation of the e-Sport industry is centered on competition. Moreover, Wagner fails to define the platform in which e-Sport is played, which is online. This is important to include in the definition because the growth and viewership of e-Sport are largely attributed to the accessibility of the contests being online and interactively independent of location.

Table 1. Top Games Awarding Prize Money in e-Sport

Games	Money	Players	Tournaments
1.Dota	\$132,213,754.64	2321	872
2.League of Legend	\$49,476,883.20	5219	1974
3.Counter-Strike	\$46,543,728.43	9174	3007
4.Starcraft	\$25,061,166.06	1740	4705
5.Heroes of the Storm	\$11,901,239.19	958	382

Source: <https://www.e-Sportearnings.com/gamesAccess> (Received on 24.01.2018)

This list represents the top 5 games in e-Sport with the most prize money based on information published on the internet. Sources include news articles, forum posts, live report threads, interviews, official statements, reliable databases, VODs and other publicly-accessible sources that preserve "historical" information.

Development of e-Sport in Turkey

In our country, e-Sport is an ever-developing sport. Dot A, Counter-Strike games which started with the cyberspace battles has lapsed into silence for a while. They were the beginning of the sector. People were trying to prove their power with the competition in these games. Probably, no one was thinking that e-Sport would develop and arouse interest. However, especially in the Far East and several areas in the world, e-Sport culture has begun to occur and teams started to travel between countries to play in tournaments. In our country, the big teams like Dark Passage have tried to show up by taking part in organizations like Dream hack. The eliminations that World Caber Games organized has founded the e-Sport in Turkey.

Turkey was always a follower of e-Sport, and it is still proceeding in this way. Particularly the opening of Riot Games Turkey office made a move in this field. Today the most played MOBA typed game is League of Legends. This game has become widespread rapidly and dragged people to play competitive games. In the beginning, players teamed up and went to tournaments. Now people are preparing for battles by practicing at homes that teams provide for them. Players do not start to practice when one week left to the tournament. They are practicing regularly during the season.

Turkish Digital Games Federation was established with the aim of serving to players who play in the digital environment and their communities in 2011. In 2013, this federation was included in Developing Sport Branches Federation's structure. League of Legends Championship and Rising has carried on the activities as official e-Sport league since 2013. Players who compete these leagues get an official license from the Ministry of Youth and Sports (Üçüncüoğlu and Çakır, 2017).

Table 2. Number of Players with License

Years	Female	Male	Total
2013 year	1569	3920	5489
2014 year	1863	6961	8824
2015 year	2100	8540	10640
2016 year	2170	9003	11173
2017 year	2321	9156	11477

Source: *The Ministry of Youth and Sport, Statistics*

Within the Developing Sport Branches Federation connected to The Minister of Youth and Sport, there are Korfball, Cricket, Offshore, Rafting, Squash and Digital Games which get into the act. Despite the failure to reach to the number of digital sports licensed players, it is a fact that a number of licensed players has increased day by day since 2013. Generally, in digital sports which men mostly take part in there is an increase of 80% from 2013 to 2014. The reason for this increase is that players get their licenses as part of Developing Sport Branches Federation.

Beşiktaş led the way as a sport team by entering e-Sport field in 2015. After that, Fenerbahçe entered the e-Sport with the name as 1907 Fenerbahçe by buying out the SuperMassive TNG team in 2017. Galatasaray also bought the Victorious Ace team and entered this field with the

name of Galatasaray e-Sport. There are three leader e-Sport teams out of the modern sport clubs: Dark Passage founded in 2003, HWA Gaming in 2008, and SuperMassive in 2016.

Turkey has become a region which can be accepted as worldwide thanks to the investment Riot Games had. Although it is not considered as big as the leagues in North America, Europe, China, Korea, it can be considered as a quadratic region. Wild Card tournaments entitle our teams to confront with senior regions in international organizations. Dark Passage deserved to compete in World Championship in this way and represented Turkey in 2014. That Beşiktaş incorporated Aces High and made a team of e-Sport becomes a first in the world.

The competitive environment increasing with the League of Legends also affected other games. People started to appear in worldwide arenas. One of the best examples is that Zerghamdi who is the Starcraft 2 player of HWA Gaming took part in Dreamhack Summer tournaments in Valencia in 2014. Besides, Space Soldiers which is the team of Counter-Strike: Global Offensive set up in 2015 establishes a game house and do practicing, also it is the first team that went abroad. This shows the improvement of e-Sport.

There are also important steps for our country in the DotA2 arena. During the last months of 2013, the tournament which Merlin Kazanı organized with sponsored by Turkcell Superonline has gained much interest and showed the potential of DotA2. Another important DotA 2 activity is a 21.000 TRY awarded tournament organized by ESL in GameX in December 2014, which Hearthstone was also sharing the same award pool.

Unfortunately, some e-Sport branches do not get succeed as others. Because of the inadequate attention which caused cancellation of tournaments and the low award, players left the game. Turkey has not got enough interest in Starcraft 2. Likewise, DotA 2 has not built community. There were players thinking that it is not profitable. However, the most important thing is that old DotA 2 player of HWA Gaming Elwind passed to League of Legends. He is playing in the top lane in Dark Passage which is the best second team of Turkey.

e-Sport is a sport branch came into existence with the awarded tournaments gained speed at the beginning of the 2000s and players maintain their life by playing games in official league and activities within professional teams. E-sport's age of onset is 13-14 years and players mostly retire before they are 30 years old. The most popular games in e-Sport field are League of Legends, DotA 2, Counter-Strike: Global Offensive, Overwatch, Hearthstone.

Table 3. Most Profitable Countries

Countries	Profit	Number of Players
1.China	\$69,100,319.18	2655
2.United States	\$64,019,893.42	9634
3.Korea Republic of	\$57,610,458.43	2553
4.Sweden	\$23,348,391.70	1915
40.Turkey	\$948,944.18	270

Source: <https://www.e-Sportearnings.com/countries>

According to above table, China, America, and Korea are seen as the countries that can get huge profit. However, Turkey is far behind these countries according to the number of players and profits gained.

Conclusion

In today's world, new generations are moving away from traditional sports and begin to play games which are more competitive and exciting. The award pool can be raised up to 20 million dollars and these tournaments called World Championships which almost have about one hundred million instant viewers.

It is possible that the investments in e-Sport both in the world and Turkey offer an insight into the future of sector which is taking its first steps. Besides, the contribution of football clubs to the sector in Turkey, America, and Europe's sport clubs has also increased the e-Sport teams. However, in countries like Korea and China e-Sport has already become a culture.

As it seems in table 3, people can get huge profits from e-Sport. Herein, with Turkey's rising from 40 to first ranks trade volume will grow and provide a return. E-Sport keeps developing day by day and it has become a job. Teams should have a broad vision and be encouraged to go after the success. The development of e-Sport in Turkey should not be with only League of Legends and other games should gain importance with tournaments and players should have enough opportunities. Besides, there should be eliminations by both state and private clubs between the players who play these games and determined the skilled ones. Skilled players should have a scholarship, office, and education from experts. The teams need to be motivated to take part in national and international tournaments. This is the only way Turkey can compete with other countries.

Conflict of Interest

The authors have not declared any conflicts of interest.

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