

ESPORTS IN THE DIGITAL AGE: HISTORY, ECONOMY, MEDIA, AND GLOBAL POWER

Editors

Prof. Dr. Eren ULUÖZ

Assoc. Prof. Mehmet Cenk BELİBAĞLI



© Copyright 2025

Printing, broadcasting and sales rights of this book are reserved to Academician Bookstore House Inc. All or parts of this book may not be reproduced, printed or distributed by any means mechanical, electronic, photocopying, magnetic paper and/or other methods without prior written permission of the publisher. Tables, figures and graphics cannot be used for commercial purposes without permission. This book is sold with banderol of Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Culture.

ISBN

978-625-375-868-4

Page and Cover Design

Typesetting and Cover Design by Akademisyen

Book Title

Esports in The Digital Age: History, Economy,
Media, and Global Power

Publisher Certificate Number

47518

Editors

Eren ULUÖZ

ORCID iD: 0000-0002-4037-0634

Mehmet Cenk BELİBAĞLI

ORCID iD: 0000-0002-0074-4611

Printing and Binding

Vadi Printingpress

Bisac Code

SPO000000

Publishing Coordinator

Yasin DİLMEN

DOI

10.37609/akya.3984

Library ID Card

Esports in The Digital Age: History, Economy, Media, and Global Power / ed. Eren Uluöz,
Mehmet Cenk Belibağlı.

Ankara : Akademisyen Yayınevi Kitabevi, 2025.

159 p. ; 160x235 mm.

Includes References.

ISBN 9786253758684

GENERAL DISTRIBUTION

Akademisyen Kitabevi AŞ

Halk Sokak 5 / A Yenışehir / Ankara

Tel: 0312 431 16 33

siparis@akademisyen.com

www.akademisyen.com

PREFACE

Esports has emerged as one of the most defining phenomena of the digital age, reshaping how competition, media, economy, and culture are organized in contemporary societies. What began as experimental digital gameplay and informal competitive practices has evolved into a global ecosystem characterized by professional leagues, platform-based media systems, transnational sponsorship networks, and complex investment structures. This transformation cannot be adequately understood through a single disciplinary lens. Instead, esports demands an integrated analytical approach that situates digital games within broader processes of technological change, economic restructuring, media convergence, and globalization. This edited volume was conceived in response to that need. Bringing together ten original chapters by scholars working at the intersection of sports studies, media studies, digital economy, and sociology, the book offers a comprehensive and historically grounded examination of esports as a multidimensional field. Rather than treating esports merely as a form of entertainment or a derivative of traditional sport, the chapters collectively conceptualize esports as a digitally native competitive domain shaped by platform capitalism, media power, institutional innovation, and global cultural flows.

The volume opens by tracing the cultural, technological, and economic foundations of digital games, establishing the historical conditions under which competitive gaming became possible. From early laboratory experiments to mass-market commercialization, these chapters demonstrate that esports is rooted in long-term transformations of human–computer interaction and digital production. Building on this foundation, subsequent chapters examine the transition from localized, offline competitions to online tournaments, highlighting the role of internet infrastructure, networking technologies, and participatory cultures in reshaping competitive practices. A central contribution of this book lies in its sustained focus on the political economy of esports. Several chapters analyze the historical development of esports economics, financing models, and revenue structures, revealing how sponsorship, media rights, and platform-based monetization have become central to the sustainability of the sector. Particular attention is given to the industrialization of esports after 2018, when investment flows, franchise league systems, and corporate governance models transformed esports into a fully institutionalized industry. These analyses underscore that

Preface

esports differs fundamentally from traditional sports economies, as game publishers and digital platforms occupy unprecedented positions of power within the competitive ecosystem.

The global dimension of esports is another core theme of the volume. By examining the South Korean model and the broader East Asian experience, the book highlights how state policies, media integration, and institutional coordination enabled the early professionalization of esports and shaped global standards that later diffused to other regions. This perspective challenges Western-centric narratives of sports globalization and positions esports as a field in which non-Western models have played a foundational role. In addition to macro-level economic and institutional analyses, the volume addresses the structural and cultural dimensions of esports competition. Dedicated chapters explore genre formation—particularly the rise of MOBA games—as well as the transformation of media systems through live streaming platforms such as Twitch and YouTube. These contributions demonstrate how esports has redefined spectatorship by integrating interactivity, participatory culture, and continuous content production into the experience of competition. Media legitimacy, discursive power, and the construction of esports as a “sport-like” activity are examined through comparative and theoretical lenses, emphasizing the role of digital media in shaping public perception and authority.

Finally, the book offers an in-depth analysis of esports sponsorship models, digital activation strategies, and market dynamics, illustrating how brands engage with esports audiences through content-oriented and platform-specific practices. By situating sponsorship within broader debates on platformization and digital labor, the volume provides critical insights into the opportunities and vulnerabilities that characterize the contemporary esports economy.

Taken together, the chapters in this book present esports not as a marginal subculture, but as a central case for understanding how sport, media, and economy are being reconfigured in the digital age. The volume is intended for scholars, graduate students, and practitioners interested in esports, digital sports economies, media studies, and globalization. More broadly, it seeks to contribute to ongoing academic debates on the future of competition, cultural production, and power in an increasingly platform-driven world.

CONTENTS

Editors' Introduction	1
Chapter 1 The Age of Digital Games: Cultural, Technological, and Economic Foundations	5
<i>Çağlayan Adil CANSU</i>	
Chapter 2 The Transition to Online Tournaments: The Historical and Technological Evolution of E-Sports	15
<i>Çağlayan Adil CANSU</i>	
Chapter 3 The History of Esports Economics and Financing	25
<i>Fatma Pervin BİLİR</i>	
Chapter 4 The Historical Development of the Esports Economy (1990–2025).....	41
<i>Ergin KARINCAOGLU</i>	
Chapter 5 Reframing Esports Globalization: The South Korean Model, Far Eastern Institutionalization, And Global Expansion.....	57
<i>Eren TÜRKMEN</i>	
<i>Mahmut Çağatay NAZLICAN</i>	
Chapter 6 Moba (Multiplayer Online Battle Aren)	71
<i>SERHAT GÖKÇE</i>	
Chapter 7 The Era of Digital Broadcasting in Esports.....	85
<i>Mahmut Çağatay NAZLICAN</i>	
Chapter 8 Media, Legitimacy, and Power in Esports: a Global Comparative Perspective.....	97
<i>Serkan VAROL</i>	
Chapter 9 Esports Sponsorship Models: Theoretical Approaches, Digital Activation, and Market Dynamics.....	113
<i>Fatma Pervin BİLİR</i>	
Chapter 10 The Political Economy of Esports: Industrialization, Labor, and Platform Power	135
<i>Ergin KARINCAOGLU</i>	
Conclusion.....	149

AUTHORS

Fatma Pervin BİLİR

Faculty of Sports Sciences, Çukurova
University

Çağlayan Adil CANSU

Institute of Medical Sciences, Çukurova
University

SERHAT GÖKÇE

The Faculty of Ceyhan Engineering, Çukurova
University

Ergin KARINCAOGLU

Institute of Medical Sciences, Çukurova
University

Mahmut Çağatay NAZLICAN

Institute of Medical Sciences, Çukurova
University

Eren TÜRKMEN

Institute of Graduate, Baburt University

Serkan VAROL

Faculty of Sports Sciences, Bingöl University

EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

Over the past three decades, esports has evolved from a marginal practice within digital gaming cultures into a globally organized field of competition, media production, and economic value creation. This transformation has not occurred in isolation. Rather, esports has emerged at the intersection of broader structural shifts associated with digitalization, platform economies, media convergence, and the reconfiguration of sport in late modern societies. As such, esports constitutes a critical empirical site for examining how competition, labor, spectatorship, and institutional power are being reorganized in the digital age.

Despite its rapid growth and increasing visibility, esports remains conceptually under-theorized and frequently mischaracterized within both academic and public discourse. Popular narratives often frame esports either as a technologically enhanced form of traditional sport or as a transient entertainment trend driven by youth culture. Both perspectives risk obscuring the deeper structural dynamics that distinguish esports from established sporting systems. This volume starts from the premise that esports should be analyzed not merely as “sport plus technology,” but as a digitally native competitive field shaped by platform-based governance, media logics, and global political-economic relations.

From a theoretical standpoint, esports challenges several foundational assumptions within sports studies. Classical definitions of sport emphasize physical embodiment, federation-based governance, and territorially bounded competition. Esports destabilizes these criteria by foregrounding cognitive performance, virtual arenas, and publisher-centered control over competitive environments. At the same time, esports shares key characteristics with traditional sports, including professionalization, institutional regulation, fandom, and symbolic struggles over legitimacy. This tension makes esports a productive case through which to rethink what sport means under conditions of digital mediation. Equally important is the role of media in shaping esports as a legitimate and economically viable domain. Unlike traditional sports, which historically relied on television broadcasting to achieve mass visibility, esports developed within digitally native media ecosystems. Live-streaming platforms, algorithmic recommendation systems, and participatory audience practices have not merely transmitted esports competitions but have actively constituted their meaning,

value, and organizational form. Media platforms function simultaneously as broadcasters, labor markets, data infrastructures, and sites of cultural production. Any serious analysis of esports must therefore engage with theories of media convergence, platform capitalism, and digital labor.

The economic structure of esports further differentiates it from conventional sports models. Rather than federations or clubs controlling competition, game publishers retain ownership of the intellectual property that underpins esports ecosystems. This arrangement concentrates regulatory, economic, and symbolic power in unprecedented ways, raising critical questions about governance, sustainability, and labor relations. Sponsorship, media rights, and investment flows have transformed esports into a high-growth industry, yet this growth is accompanied by structural vulnerabilities related to platform dependence, revenue volatility, and asymmetries between corporate actors and competitive labor.

Globalization constitutes another central axis of analysis in this volume. Esports did not globalize through the same pathways as traditional sports, which were largely institutionalized in Western contexts before spreading internationally. Instead, esports emerged as a global phenomenon through digitally networked infrastructures, with East Asia—particularly South Korea—playing a foundational role in early institutionalization. State policies, media integration, and coordinated governance models in the Far East established templates that later diffused globally. This trajectory complicates dominant Eurocentric narratives of sports globalization and invites comparative, non-Western perspectives. The chapters collected in this volume address these issues through a multi-layered analytical framework. Historical analyses trace the transformation of digital games into organized competitive systems. Economic chapters examine the evolution of financing, sponsorship, and industrialization processes. Media-focused contributions analyze broadcasting platforms, legitimacy discourses, and power relations. Genre-based studies explore how specific game forms—such as MOBAs—structure competition and spectator engagement. Taken together, these perspectives position esports as a hybrid field located at the intersection of sport, media, and the digital economy.

Importantly, this book does not seek to provide a definitive or closed account of esports. Rather, it aims to establish a robust conceptual foundation for future research by situating esports within broader theoretical debates on digitalization, globalization, and institutional power. By bringing together diverse yet complementary approaches, the volume argues that esports should be understood

not as an anomaly at the margins of sport, but as a paradigmatic example of how competitive practices are being reshaped in platform-driven societies.

In this sense, esports offers more than a new object of study. It provides a lens through which scholars can critically examine the future of sport, media, and economic organization in the digital age. This volume is intended as a contribution to that ongoing conversation.

CHAPTER 1

THE AGE OF DIGITAL GAMES: CULTURAL, TECHNOLOGICAL, AND ECONOMIC FOUNDATIONS

Çağlayan Adil CANSU¹

Introduction: The Digitizing Universe of Play

Since the second half of the 20th century, humanity has witnessed an unprecedented transformation, largely driven by technology that has resonated across the globe. One of the most prominent cultural outcomes of this transformation is the redefinition of play, which has been liberated from its traditional physical confines and reconstituted through digital interfaces and global networks. The wave of digitalization, accelerating after the 1980s, reduced the cost and increased the accessibility of computer technologies. By the 1990s, this momentum had carried the gaming industry to a powerful and central position in the international market (Ernkvist, 2008; Newman, 2008). This era, defined as “The Age of Digital Games,” did not merely introduce a new form of entertainment; it constituted a critical juncture that fundamentally altered the nature of human–computer interaction, cultural production practices, socialization patterns, and economic models.

The increasing significance of digital games in socio-economic and cultural interaction is directly linked to the widespread adoption across diverse demographics and geographies. Gaming is no longer an activity confined solely to children or teenagers; it has evolved into a heterogeneous structure encompassing adulthood. Research in Europe indicates that one in three adults regularly plays games (Boniel-Nissim et al., 2024), while in the United States, the rate of children who regularly play games has reached 91% (Granic et al., 2014). Data from Turkey presents a similar picture: 79% of adults are interested in mobile gaming, and 74% of children report playing games. Reports by the Information Technologies and Communication Authority (BTK, 2020) and the Turkish Statistical Institute (TÜİK, 2024) confirm that a substantial portion of internet usage (72.7%) is

¹ Institute of Medical Sciences, Çukurova University, adilcansu34@gmail.com,
ORCID iD: 0009-0003-2584-6950

into a global sector with organized, professional teams, coaches, and corporate sponsorships (Taylor, 2012). As indicated by data from BTK (2020) and TÜİK (2024), digital games are not merely a form of entertainment but one of the most dominant cultural and economic actors of the 21st century, holding increasing significance in national economies and global cognitive interaction (Granic et al., 2014). This ecosystem clearly demonstrates that even technological constraints can trigger creativity, transforming games into a field of high cultural legitimacy.

REFERENCES

- Boniell-Nissim, M., Adell, J. M., Rodes-Garau, N., & Vilar-López, J. (2024). Systematic review of digital game playing in adulthood: Is it a common and healthy activity? *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 21(3), 329.
- Brand, S. (1972). *Spacewar: Fanatic Life and Symbolic Death Among Computer Bums*. Rolling Stone.
- BTK. (2020). *Türkiye’de Dijital Oyunlar Raporu [Digital Games Report in Turkey]*. Bilgi Teknolojileri ve İletişim Kurumu.
- Ceruzzi, P. E. (2003). *A history of modern computing* (2nd ed.). MIT Press.
- Cohen, D. (1984). Video games. F. Watts.
- Der, V., & Martius, G. (2012). Learning to play Chess with Symbolic Input and Reinforcement Learning. *KI - Künstliche Intelligenz*, 26(4), 317–327.
- Donovan, T. (2010). *Replay: The history of video games*. Yellow Ant.
- Edwards, P. N. (1997). *The closed world: Computers and the politics of discourse in Cold War America*. MIT Press.
- Ernkqvist, M. (2008). Down many times, but still playing the game: The story of the Swedish games industry. In M. Wolf (Ed.), *The video game explosion: A history from Pong to Playstation and beyond* (pp. 159-173). Greenwood Press.
- Graetz, M. (1981). The origin of Spacewar! *Creative Computing*, 7(8), 56–67.
- Granic, I., Lobel, A., & Engels, R. C. M. E. (2014). The benefits of playing video games. *American Psychologist*, 69(1), 66–78. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0034857>
- Herman, L. (2016). *Phoenix: The fall & rise of home video game*. Third Edition Books.
- Kent, S. L., & Molyneux, P. (2001). *The ultimate history of video games: From Pong to Pokémon and beyond: The story behind the craze that touched our lives and changed the world*. Prima Pub.
- Kocurek, C. A. (2015). *Coin-op gaming’s transition to the golden age*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Levy, S. (1994). *Hackers: Heroes of the computer revolution*. Penguin Books.
- Lowood, H. (2009). The first competitive gaming event: The Intergalactic Spacewar Olympics. *IEEE Annals of the History of Computing*, 31(3), 85-88.
- Malliet, S. (2005). The History of the Video Game: A Chronology of Technical Developments and Important Milestones. *International Journal of Computer Game Research*, 5(2), 1–4.
- Montfort, N., & Bogost, I. (2009). *Racing the beam: The Atari Video Computer System*. MIT Press.
- Newman, J. (2008). *Playing with videogames*. Routledge.
- Petrović, M., & Sakal, M. (2025). Consumerisation of IT: Intersection of development streams of business and personal IT. *Strategic Management*, 30(2), 58–71. <https://doi.org/10.5937/Str-Man2400002P>
- Taylor, T. L. (2012). *Raising the Stakes: E-Sports and the Professionalization of Computer Gaming*. MIT Press.
- Turkle, S. (1995). *Life on the screen: Identity in the age of the Internet*. Simon and Schuster.

- Turner, F. (2008). *From counterculture to cyberculture: Stewart Brand, the Whole Earth Network, and the rise of digital utopianism*. University of Chicago Press.
- TÜİK. (2024). Survey on information and communication technology usage by children. Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu.
- Wolf, M. J. P. (Ed.). (2012). *Before the crash: Early video game history*. Wayne State University Press.
- Wolf, M. J. P. (Ed.). (2021). *Encyclopedia of video games: The culture, technology, and art of gaming* (2nd ed.). Greenwood. <https://doi.org/10.5040/9798216032120>
- Yadav, M. K., & Utreja, K. (2024). eSports on the Rise: A Statistical Odyssey Unveiling the Probability of Growth. 2024 International Conference on Electrical Electronics and Computing Technologies (ICEECT), 1–5. <https://doi.org/10.1109/ICEECT60485.2024.10543788>

CHAPTER 2

THE TRANSITION TO ONLINE TOURNAMENTS: THE HISTORICAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL EVOLUTION OF E-SPORTS

Çağlayan Adil CANSU¹

1. Introduction: The Transformation of E-Sports into a Global Phenomenon

Electronic sports (e-sports) represent the intersection of modern entertainment, technology, and competitive culture. Originating in the modest arcade halls of the 1970s and maturing through Local Area Network (LAN) parties in the 1990s, this competitive culture underwent a revolutionary transformation from the 2010s onward. Driven by the proliferation of broadband internet and online streaming platforms (Twitch, YouTube Gaming), e-sports evolved rapidly into a structure dominated by online tournaments. This transition elevated e-sports from a regional subculture to a borderless, global media and entertainment industry.

One of the most critical catalysts for this transformation was the COVID-19 pandemic. As physical arenas and stadiums temporarily closed from 2020 onward, all attention and competition shifted to digital platforms, accelerating the technical infrastructure and mass acceptance of online tournaments. Today, peak events like the *League of Legends World Championship* rival traditional sports viewing figures, reaching over a hundred million concurrent viewers. The global e-sports economy is projected to approach \$5 billion by 2025, underscoring that this shift represents not only a technological change but also a tremendous economic inflection point, supported by media rights, sponsorship deals, and new business models like franchise leagues (Scholz, 2019).

This chapter will thoroughly analyze the process of transition from the first sparks of digital competition to the contemporary colossal online tournament ecosystem, examining its historical, sociological, and technological dimensions.

¹ Institute of Medical Sciences, Çukurova University, adilcansu34@gmail.com,
ORCID iD: 0009-0003-2584-6950

Esports World Cup, to be held annually in Riyadh starting in the summer of 2024. Organized by the Esports World Cup Foundation, this event aims to establish Saudi Arabia as a leading global hub for gaming and e-sports, further enhancing the sport's legitimacy in the international sporting world (ITMAM Consultancy, 2024).

5. Conclusion

The competitive history of digital games represents a comprehensive technological, social, and economic evolution, beginning in the modest arcade halls of the 1970s and extending to today's billion-dollar online tournament industry. Early experiences like *Spacewar!* and *Space Invaders* institutionalized the high score challenge; organizations like Twin Galaxies paved the way for the birth of the first e-sports stars. Despite setbacks like the 1983 crash (Wolf, 2012), e-sports culture survived and transitioned into a community-based experience through LAN parties and internet cafes (as in Turkey) in the 1990s.

During this period, games like *StarCraft* and *Counter-Strike* laid the foundations for genres like FPS and MOBA, proving, through participatory culture (Jenkins, 2006), that game content could be redesigned by users. From the early 2000s onward, e-sports gained an international identity with the World Cyber Games and was elevated to stadium arenas through massive organizations like *League of Legends Worlds* and *Dota 2 The International*.

The biggest drivers of e-sports' professionalization have been low-latency streaming platforms like Twitch and new economic models such as franchise leagues (Scholz, 2019). These models attracted global corporate sponsorships (4.5) and media rights revenue, ensuring the sector's financial sustainability. Consequently, e-sports is positioned as one of the 21st century's most dynamic and global cultural transformations, facilitating the professionalization of the player identity, the strengthening of international fan culture (Pizzo et al., 2018), and the complete elimination of geographical boundaries via online platforms.

REFERENCES

- AliOğlu, M., & Algül, A. (2021). Türkiye'de Dijital Oyun Durumu: E-Spor Oyuncularının Değerlendirmeleriyle League of Legends Örneği [Digital Game Status in Turkey: Assessments of E-Sports Players with the Example of League of Legends]. *İstanbul Aydın Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 13(1), 121–154. https://doi.org/10.17932/IAU.IAUSBD.2021.021/iausbd_v13i1005
- Binark, & Bayraktutan, Öğr. Gör. G. (2008). Dijital Oyun Kültürü ve Türkiye'de Gençliğin İnternet Kafe Kullanım Pratikleri [Digital Game Culture and Internet Cafe Usage Practices of Youth in Turkey]. *Ütopya Yayınevi*.

- Binark, M., Sütcü, G. B., & Buçakçı, F. (2009). How Turkish Young People Utilize Internet Cafes: The Results Of Ethnographic Research In Ankara.
- Borowy, M. (2013). Pioneering E-Sport: The Experience Economy and the Marketing of Early 1980s Arcade Gaming Contests.
- Cheung, G., & Huang, J. (2011). Starcraft from the stands: Understanding the game spectator. *Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*, 763–772. <https://doi.org/10.1145/1978942.1979053>
- Cunningham, S., & Craig, D. (2018). Creator labour in the digital media economy. *Media International Australia*, 167(1), 16–29.
- Fung, A. Y. H. (2014). Online Games and Chinese National Identities. In H.-K. Lee & L. Lim (Eds.), *Cultural Policies in East Asia: Dynamics between the State, Arts and Creative Industries* (pp. 53–68). Palgrave Macmillan UK. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137327772_4
- ITMAM Consultancy. (2024). E-games in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (No. 3).
- Jenkins, H. (2006). *Convergence culture: Where old and new media collide*. New York University Press.
- Kent, S. L., & Molyneux, P. (2001). The ultimate history of video games: From Pong to Pokémon and beyond: The story behind the craze that touched our lives and changed the world. Prima Pub.
- Li, R. (2017). *Good luck have fun: The rise of eSports* (First paperback edition). Skyhorse Publishing.
- Liu, Y. (2022). An Aesthetic Study of Moba Games from a Historical Perspective. *SSRN Electronic Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4084577>
- Lowood, H. (2009). The first competitive gaming event: The Intergalactic Spacewar Olympics. *IEEE Annals of the History of Computing*, 31(3), 85–88.
- Nguyen Thanh Luan, L., & Nguyen Ba Long, K. (2022). eSports: From a competition to a billion-dollar industry: Tencent Ltd case study.
- Pizzo, A. D., Baker, B., Funk, D. C., & Zhang, J. J. (2018). Expanding the sportscape: A multi-site case study of the spectator experience at esports events. *Sport Management Review*, 21(3), 253–266.
- Rahmawati, D., Mulyana, D., Karlinah, S., & Hadisiwi, P. (2005). The Cultural Characteristics of Online Players in the Internet Cafes of Jabodetabek, Indonesia.
- Rusanen, J., & Gaponenko, E. (2024). The Impact of GetOnline LAN Party on Youth and Young Adults: A Case Study of Garde-Party in Kajaani, Finland.
- Saarikoski, P., Suominen, J., & Reunanen, M. (2017). The Gamification of Digital Gaming – Video Game Competitions and High Score Tables as a Prehistory of E-Sports in Finland in the 1980s and Early 1990s.
- Schmidt, G. B. (2015). The King of Kong: A Fistful of Quarters. *Journal of Management Education*, 39(6), 801–805. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1052562915587584>
- Scholz, T. M. (2019). *eSports is business: The rise of professional video gaming*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Strunk, T. (2021). *Story Mode: Video Games and the Interplay between Consoles and Culture*. Simon and Schuster.
- T. C. Gençlik ve Spor Bakanlığı. (2018). E-Spor Raporu [E-Sports Report].
- Taylor, T. L. (2012). *Raising the Stakes: E-Sports and the Professionalization of Computer Gaming*. MIT Press.
- Vasiliev, A., & Pechatnova, J. (2023). Regulatory Models in E-Sports. *Legal Issues in the Digital Age*, 4(4), 4–22. <https://doi.org/10.17323/2713-2749.2023.4.4.22>
- Wagner, M. G. (2006). On the Scientific Relevance of eSports.
- Wolf, M. J. P. (Ed.). (2012). *Before the crash: Early video game history*. Wayne State University Press.
- Yuzyk, M., & Seidner, P. (2022). E-Sports Competitions. In N. Kryvinska & M. Greguš (Eds.), *Developments in Information & Knowledge Management for Business Applications* (Vol. 421, pp. 671–716). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-97008-6_30
- Zhouxiang, L. (2022). *A History of Competitive Gaming* (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003095859>

CHAPTER 3

THE HISTORY OF ESPORTS ECONOMICS AND FINANCING

Fatma Pervin BİLİR¹

1. Digital Game Economies Before Esports (1970–1995)

To accurately understand the historical origins of the esports economy, it is necessary to examine the formation of digital game economies prior to the institutionalization of competitive gaming. The period spanning from the 1970s to the mid-1990s represents a phase in which the concept of “esports” had not yet emerged, yet the first economic value chains surrounding game production, distribution, and consumption began to take shape. This early period is critically important for understanding the technological, cultural, and commercial dynamics that would later form the infrastructure of the esports economy (Wolf, 2008; Newman, 2013).

During the 1970s, the digital game economy was largely confined to academic research laboratories and military-technological R&D environments. Early games such as *Spacewar!* emerged not as commercial products but as outcomes of technical experimentation and software expertise; consequently, gameplay had not yet generated a systematic revenue model (Kent, 2001). In this era, economic value was produced indirectly—not through the games themselves, but through hardware development, software engineering, and the broader diffusion of computer use.

With the advent of the 1980s, arcade halls constituted the first sustainable commercial ecosystem of digital games. This coin-operated model introduced an early form of micro-payment logic, directly linking gameplay duration to revenue generation. As such, arcade systems can be regarded as historical predecessors of time-based revenue models later observed in the esports economy (Wolf, 2008). Concurrently, game design became increasingly aligned with economic logic, with difficulty levels and replayability emerging as key revenue-enhancing elements.

¹ Faculty of Sports Sciences, Çukurova University, fatmapervinbilir@gmail.com,
ORCID iD: 0000-0001-5413-3712

evolving economic domain. An examination of the global esports market further reveals pronounced differences among regional economic models despite shared digital infrastructures. North America's investor- and franchise-oriented system, Europe's more fragmented and hybrid structure, and East Asia's early institutionalized and media-integrated approach demonstrate that esports cannot be reduced to a single economic template (Taylor, 2012; Reitman et al., 2020). While this multi-centered configuration enhances global growth potential, it simultaneously raises challenges related to regional adaptation and governance.

In conclusion, the esports economy and its financing mechanisms combine high visibility and rapid growth potential with structural challenges related to revenue stability, labor relations, governance, and long-term sustainability. The historical and analytical framework presented in this chapter suggests that the future of esports depends not solely on the size of prize pools or rising audience figures, but on the development of balanced revenue distribution, transparent governance structures, and context-sensitive financing models. Accordingly, esports should continue to be examined—both academically and in practice—as a dynamic economic industry requiring critical and holistic analysis.

REFERENCES

- Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In J. G. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of theory and research for the sociology of education* (pp. 241–258). Greenwood Press.
- Cornwell, T. B. (2019). *Sponsorship in marketing: Effective communication through sports, arts and events*. Routledge.
- Holden, J. T., Rodenberg, R. M., & Kaburakis, A. (2017). Esports governance and regulation: A global perspective. *Sports Law Review*, 26, 1–28.
- Kent, S. L. (2001). *The ultimate history of video games*. Three Rivers Press.
- Kline, S., Dyer-Witheford, N., & de Peuter, G. (2003). *Digital play: The interaction of technology, culture, and marketing*. McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Newman, J. (2013). *Videogames* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Nieborg, D. B., & Poell, T. (2018). The platformization of cultural production: Theorizing the contingent cultural commodity. *New Media & Society*, 20(11), 4275–4292. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444818769694>
- Pizzo, A. D., Baker, B. J., Na, S., Lee, M. A., Kim, D., & Funk, D. C. (2018). eSport vs. sport: A comparison of spectator motives. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 27(2), 108–123.
- Reitman, J. G., Anderson-Coto, M. J., Wu, M., Lee, J. S., & Steinkuehler, C. (2020). Esports research: A literature review. *Games and Culture*, 15(1), 32–50. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1555412019840892>
- Taylor, T. L. (2012). *Raising the stakes: E-sports and the professionalization of computer gaming*. MIT Press.
- Wagner, M. G. (2006). On the scientific relevance of eSports. In *Proceedings of the 2006 International Conference on Internet Computing* (pp. 437–442).
- Wolf, M. J. P. (2008). *The video game explosion: A history from PONG to PlayStation and beyond*. Greenwood Press.

CHAPTER 4.

THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE ESPORTS ECONOMY (1990–2025)

Ergin KARINCAOGLU¹

1. Introduction: From Digital Games to the Global Economy

Although esports initially emerged as a form of competitive entertainment centered around digital games, it has since evolved into a multilayered economic ecosystem. This transformation is too complex to be explained solely by the growth of the gaming industry; instead, it is positioned at the intersection of platform economies, creative industries, media studies, and sports economics literature. The institutionalization of esports in economic terms is regarded as one of the most visible examples of digitalization penetrating the realm of sports (Taylor, 2012; Seo, 2016).

In the early 1990s, esports consisted mainly of LAN tournaments organized by amateur communities with limited financial rewards. At that time, competition was more about in-game prestige, community recognition, and technical skills. However, as internet infrastructure improved, digital games spread globally, and online multiplayer structures became more robust, esports began to transform into a field of economic value production (Hamari & Sjöblom, 2017). The historical development of the esports economy has followed a different trajectory compared to traditional sports economies. While the economic structure in traditional sports is shaped largely through physical venues, federations, and long-term institutionalization processes, esports has created a global market directly through digital platforms. This has facilitated esports' early integration with media, advertising, and sponsorship revenues, while also positioning game developers and streaming platforms as central actors within the ecosystem (Nielsen & Tang, 2022).

¹ Institute of Medical Sciences, Çukurova University, antson13@hotmail.com,
ORCID iD: 0000-0002-5040-9272

revenue, they have also been criticized in academic literature due to market volatility and speculative valuation issues. The lack of balance between fan loyalty and financial risk is particularly highlighted (Dowling, 2022).

Beyond these technological developments, the academic institutionalization of esports is another key factor that will directly influence the future of the industry. In recent years, undergraduate and graduate programs in esports management, business, and digital sports studies have been established at universities. These programs have helped legitimize esports by supplying the industry with qualified human capital and supporting long-term sustainability (Jenny et al., 2021). Academic institutionalization also allows the esports economy to become more transparent and predictable through data-driven analysis. Research on performance analytics, viewer behavior, sponsorship ROI, and health–performance relationships is contributing to more evidence-based decision-making in the sector. This demonstrates that esports is now shaped not only by market dynamics but also by academic knowledge production (Holden et al., 2017). Another notable future trend is the integration of AI-supported decision-making systems into the esports economy. Artificial intelligence is being used for audience segmentation, sponsorship matching, and content recommendation systems to optimize revenue. However, the spread of these technologies brings about new areas of debate, including data privacy, algorithmic transparency, and ethical responsibility. Academic literature stresses the importance of addressing these issues for the long-term legitimacy of esports (Floridi et al., 2018).

In conclusion, the future of the esports economy will be shaped by the interaction between technological innovation and the search for institutional balance. Technologies like the metaverse and blockchain may generate short-term excitement, but the sustainability of esports will largely depend on strengthening education, governance, and ethical frameworks. In this respect, academic institutionalization stands out as a fundamental force turning esports into not only a growing market, but also an interdisciplinary field of research and practice.

REFERENCES

- Borowy, M., & Jin, D. Y. (2013). Pioneering eSport: The experience economy and the marketing of early 1990s competitive gaming. *International Journal of Communication*, 7, 2259–2277.
- Cunningham, S., & Craig, D. (2017). Being “really real” on YouTube: Authenticity, community and brand culture in social media entertainment. *Media, Culture & Society*, 39(1), 109–127. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443716665098>
- Cunningham, S., Craig, D., & Silver, J. (2019). *Social media entertainment: The new intersection of Hollywood and Silicon Valley*. New York University Press.

- DiFrancisco-Donoghue, J., Balentine, J., Schmidt, G., & Zwibel, H. (2019). Managing the health of the eSport athlete: An integrated health management model. *BMJ Open Sport & Exercise Medicine*, 5(1), e000467. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjsem-2018-000467>
- Dowling, M. (2022). Is non-fungible token pricing driven by cryptocurrencies? *Finance Research Letters*, 44, 102097. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.frl.2021.102097>
- Dwivedi, Y. K., et al. (2022). Metaverse beyond the hype: Multidisciplinary perspectives on emerging challenges, opportunities, and agenda for research. *International Journal of Information Management*, 66, 102542. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2022.102542>
- Floridi, L., et al. (2018). AI4People—An ethical framework for a good AI society: Opportunities, risks, principles, and recommendations. *Minds and Machines*, 28(4), 689–707. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11023-018-9482-5>
- Funk, D. C., Pizzo, A. D., & Baker, B. J. (2018). eSport management: Embracing eSport education and research opportunities. *Sport Management Review*, 21(1), 7–13. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.smr.2017.07.008>
- Hallmann, K., & Giel, T. (2022). eSports—Competitive sports or recreational activity? *Sport Management Review*, 25(3), 395–409. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.smr.2021.07.002>
- Hamari, J., & Sjöblom, M. (2017). What is eSports and why do people watch it? *Internet Research*, 27(2), 211–232. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IntR-04-2016-0085>
- Holden, J. T., Kaburakis, A., & Rodenberg, R. M. (2017). The future is now: eSports policy considerations and potential litigation. *Journal of Legal Aspects of Sport*, 27(1), 46–78.
- Holden, J. T., & Ehrlich, S. (2023). *eSports governance and regulation: A global perspective*. Routledge.
- Huettermann, M., Trail, G. T., Pizzo, A. D., & Stallone, V. (2020). Esports sponsorship: An empirical examination of esports consumers' perceptions of sponsors. *Journal of Global Sport Management*, 5(1), 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/24704067.2020.1846906>
- Hutchins, B. (2008). Signs of meta-change in second modernity: The growth of e-sport and the World Cyber Games. *New Media & Society*, 10(6), 851–869. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444808096248>
- Hutchins, B., & Rowe, D. (2019). From broadcast scarcity to digital plenitude: The changing dynamics of the media sport content economy. *Television & New Media*, 20(4), 354–370. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1527476418816099>
- Jenny, S. E., Manning, R. D., Keiper, M. C., & Olrich, T. W. (2021). Virtual(ly) athletes: Where eSports fit within the definition of “sport”. *Quest*, 73(1), 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00336297.2020.1738231>
- Jin, D. Y. (2010). *Korea's online gaming empire*. MIT Press.
- Jin, D. Y., & Chee, F. (2008). Age of new media empires: A critical interpretation of the Korean online game industry. *Games and Culture*, 3(1), 38–58. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1555412007309523>
- Johnson, M. R., & Woodcock, J. (2019). “It's like the gold rush”: The lives and careers of professional video game streamers on Twitch.tv. *Information, Communication & Society*, 22(3), 336–351. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2017.1386229>
- Macey, J., Hamari, J., & Sjöblom, M. (2022). The dynamics of eSports participation: Evidence from a large-scale survey. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 126, 106974. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2021.106974>
- Mystakidis, S. (2022). Metaverse. *Encyclopedia*, 2(1), 486–497. <https://doi.org/10.3390/encyclopedia2010031>
- Nieborg, D. B., & Poell, T. (2018). The platformization of cultural production. *Social Media + Society*, 4(3), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305118769694>
- Nielsen, R. K., & Tang, W. (2022). *The business of esports*. Oxford University Press.
- Parry, K. D., Rowe, D., & Karg, A. J. (2021). The impact of COVID-19 on sport: Reflections on lockdown and the future of sport. *Sport in Society*, 24(1), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17430437.2021.1874682>

The Historical Development of the Esports Economy (1990–2025)

- Pizzo, A. D., Jones, G. J., & Funk, D. C. (2023). Navigating the evolving esports ecosystem. *Sport Management Review*, 26(1), 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.smr.2022.05.002>
- Seo, Y. (2016). Professionalized consumption and identity transformations in the field of eSports. *Journal of Business Research*, 69(1), 264–272. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2015.07.039>
- Srnicek, N. (2017). *Platform capitalism*. Polity Press.
- Taylor, T. L. (2012). *Raising the stakes: E-sports and the professionalization of computer gaming*. MIT Press.
- Taylor, T. L. (2018). *Watch me play: Twitch and the rise of game live streaming*. Princeton University Press.
- Wagner, M. G. (2006). On the scientific relevance of eSports. In *Proceedings of the 2006 International Conference on Internet Computing*, 437–442.
- Woodcock, J. (2020). The precarious playbour of esports. *Games and Culture*, 15(6), 641–658. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1555412019855810>
- Woodcock, J., & Johnson, M. R. (2019). The affective labor and performance of live streaming on Twitch.tv. *Television & New Media*, 20(8), 813–823. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1527476419851077>

CHAPTER 5

REFRAMING ESPORTS GLOBALIZATION: THE SOUTH KOREAN MODEL, FAR EASTERN INSTITUTIONALIZATION, AND GLOBAL EXPANSION

Eren TÜRKMEN¹

Mahmut Çağatay NAZLICAN²

1. East Asia and the Global Transformation of Esports (2000–2010)

The first decade of the 2000s represents not merely a phase of quantitative growth in the historical development of esports, but a decisive period in which the field was fundamentally restructured in institutional, cultural, and economic terms. During this period, esports moved beyond fragmented and individual digital gaming practices and began to take shape as a global industry organized around professional leagues, regulatory bodies, media integration, and sustainable revenue models. At the center of this transformation stood East Asia, and South Korea in particular (Jin, 2010; Taylor, 2012).

The emergence of esports as a globally recognized competitive domain cannot be explained as a natural cultural evolution alone. Rather, it reflects a multilayered process shaped by specific historical conditions, state policies, investments in digital infrastructure, and the strategic orientation of youth culture. In this context, the South Korean case offers a distinctive “foundational model” that enabled the early professionalization of esports. While esports in Western countries was long perceived as a marginal form of digital entertainment, in South Korea it was framed as media content, a source of employment, a form of cultural representation, and an element of national competitive capacity (Jin, 2010). Examining this process through the lens of globalization theories is crucial for understanding why esports institutionalized more rapidly in certain geographical

¹ Institute of Graduate, Babur University, erenturkmenov@yahoo.com, ORCID iD: 0009-0009-7333-6561

² Institute of Medical Sciences, Çukurova University, mahmutnazlican01@gmail.com,
ORCID iD: 0009-0002-0688-5287

political, economic, and cultural conditions. At the global level, esports has evolved into a transnational field characterized by both convergence and fragmentation. While common competitive formats, media practices, and professional norms have become increasingly widespread, significant inequalities persist across regions in terms of access to resources, institutional stability, and labor protection. These asymmetries underscore the importance of analyzing esports not only as a form of digital entertainment, but also as a site of power relations embedded within the global political economy.

The chapter has further highlighted that the legitimacy of esports remains a contested and evolving process. Although esports has achieved substantial cultural recognition and economic scale, debates surrounding governance, regulation, labor rights, and social impact continue to shape its future development. The absence of unified global governance structures, combined with the dominance of platform-based and publisher-controlled models, presents ongoing challenges to transparency, accountability, and equitable participation. Looking forward, the future trajectories of esports will be shaped by how these tensions are addressed. The development of more coherent regulatory frameworks, greater attention to player welfare, and increased dialogue between state institutions, market actors, and civil society will be critical in determining whether esports can achieve sustainable and inclusive growth. In this regard, the experiences of East Asian esports ecosystems provide valuable insights—not as models to be replicated wholesale, but as historically grounded cases that illuminate the possibilities and limitations of different paths to institutionalization.

In conclusion, esports represents a distinctive arena in which broader transformations associated with globalization, digital capitalism, and cultural change become particularly visible. Understanding its development requires sustained critical engagement with issues of power, inequality, and governance across regional and global scales. As esports continues to expand and diversify, scholarly analysis will play a vital role in shaping informed debates about its social, economic, and cultural significance in the years to come.

REFERENCES

- Appadurai, A. (1996). *Modernity at large: Cultural dimensions of globalization*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Castells, M. (2010). *The rise of the network society* (2nd ed.). Wiley-Blackwell.
- Fung, A. (2022). The formation of esports culture in Korea. In A. Fung & J. S. Lee (Eds.), *Global esports: Transformation of cultural perceptions of competitive gaming* (pp. 15–32). Bloomsbury Publishing.

- Hamari, J., & Sjöblom, M. (2017). What is eSports and why do people watch it? *Internet Research*, 27(2), 211–232. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IntR-04-2016-0085>
- Holden, J. T., Rodenberg, R. M., & Kaburakis, A. (2017). Esports governance: A call for institutional oversight. *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, 9(3), 433–442. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19406940.2017.1349686>
- Hutchins, B., & Rowe, D. (2012). *Sport beyond television: The internet, digital media and the rise of networked media sport*. Routledge.
- Jin, D. Y. (2010). *Korea's online gaming empire*. MIT Press.
- Jin, D. Y. (2016). *New Korean Wave: Transnational cultural power in the age of social media*. University of Illinois Press.
- Jin, D. Y. (2017). *Digital platforms, imperialism and political culture*. Routledge.
- Nye, J. S. (2004). *Soft power: The means to success in world politics*. PublicAffairs.
- Oh, H., & Lee, H. (2013). The structure of StarCraft and the production of a cultural technology. *Games and Culture*, 8(6), 395–416. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1555412013496893>
- Oldenburg, R. (1999). *The great good place*. Marlowe & Company.
- Seo, Y. (2016). Professionalized consumption and identity transformations in the field of eSports. *Journal of Business Research*, 69(1), 264–272. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2015.07.039>
- State Council of the People's Republic of China. (2019). Notice on announcing new occupations including e-sports professionals. Government of the People's Republic of China.
- Taylor, T. L. (2012). *Raising the stakes: E-sports and the professionalization of computer gaming*. MIT Press.
- Zhang, Q., & Mao, Z. (2020). Esports in China: Development, regulation, and future prospects. *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, 12(3), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19406940.2020.1789696>

CHAPTER 6

MOBA (MULTIPLAYER ONLINE BATTLE AREN)

Serhat GÖKÇE¹

1. What is MOBA?

MOBA stands for Multiplayer Online Battle Arena. This abbreviation, which refers to the Multiplayer Online Battle Arena in the literature, is defined as a specialized subcategory of the Real-Time Strategy (RTS) video game genre (Yıldız, 2016).

Although its origins are a derivative of strategy-based games, the MOBA genre has, over time, developed its own structural dynamics and become an independent genre. This game type simplified the multi-focus structure of classic strategy games—”resource gathering, base construction, and army management”—by shifting the player’s attention to a “micromanagement”-based structure focused on a single unit (character) (Hussain & Al-Hajji, 2020). This transformation can be explained by the increasing prominence of dimensions like “instant decision-making, positioning, mechanical skill, and in-team coordination” in the player experience, rather than “macro-scale production and multi-unit control”. The fundamental dynamics of this game genre typically rely on two opposing teams, usually consisting of five participants each, struggling on a strategic map plane structured around three main lanes. The three-lane structure (top-mid-bottom) and the surrounding jungle area enable both the resource economy and team strategy to proceed within a framework that is “predictable but highly variable” (Lee et al., 2023; Xu et al., 2023). While in traditional RTS games, the player is responsible for simultaneously controlling numerous units and production facilities on the battlefield (macro-strategy) , in the MOBA genre, each player controls a single avatar, referred to as a “Champion” or “Hero”. This situation has shifted the cognitive load of the game from “strategic planning” to “tactical application” and “reflexive skills”. The necessity for players to act in a coordinated manner as a team grounds the genre in a collective effort rather than individual

¹ The Faculty of Ceyhan Engineering, Çukurova University, dogu_gokce51@hotmail.com,
ORCID iD: 0009-0005-1054-3564

In conclusion, the MOBA genre represents the turning point in the digital culture history of the 21st century where gaming evolved from passive consumption to an active form of production. Thanks to its constantly updated balancing structure, community-based competitive culture, and the evolution of the meta, it is foreseeable that MOBA games will continue their existence by changing form in the coming decades (Kica et al., 2015). In this context, the MOBA genre will maintain its importance as a forward-looking interdisciplinary field of study in digital culture research.

REFERENCES

- Alioğlu, M., & Algül, A. (2021). Türkiye’de dijital oyun durumu: E-spor oyuncularının değerlendirmeleriyle League of Legends örneği [The state of digital games in Turkey: The case of League of Legends with evaluations of esports players]. *İstanbul Aydın Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 13(1), 121–154.
- Bányai, F., Griffiths, M. D., & Demetrovics, Z. (2019). The role of relationship status, motivation, and time spent playing in online game-specific social capital: A study with League of Legends players. *International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction*, 17(4), 841–853.
- Chen, C. L., Liang, Y. C., & Chen, Y. S. (2021). Examining the impact of game role classification on team performance in MOBA games using machine learning. *IEEE Access*, 9, 76097–76106.
- Gao, J., Ge, Y., & Liang, H. (2018). The snowball effect in League of Legends: Analysis of economic advantage and victory probability. *International Journal of Computer Games Technology*, 2018, 6938209.
- He, Y., Rzeszutowski, J., & collaborators. (2021). Heterogeneous effects of software patches in a multiplayer online game. *Proceedings of the ACM on Human-Computer Interaction (CSCW)*, 5(CSCW2), 1–23.
- Hussain, J., & Al-Hajji, S. (2020). MOBA games: Classification and analysis. *International Journal of Computer Games Technology*, 2020, 6173059.
- Hutchins, B., & Rowe, D. (2019). The audience commodity in the age of esports: Twitch and the industrialisation of participatory media. *Media, Culture & Society*, 41(7), 996–1013.
- Junior, J. B. S., & Campelo, C. E. C. (2023). League of Legends: Real-time result prediction. *arXiv preprint arXiv:2303.02144*.
- Kica, A., La Manna, A., O'Donnell, L., Paolillo, T., & Claypool, M. (2015). Nerfs, buffs, and bugs: Analysis of the impact of patching on League of Legends. Worcester Polytechnic Institute Technical Report.
- Kou, Y., & Nardi, B. (2013). Regulating anti-social behavior on the Internet: The example of League of Legends. In *iConference 2013 Proceedings* (pp. 616–622).
- Kwak, H., Blackburn, J., & Han, S. (2015). Exploring cyberbullying and other toxic behavior in team competition online games. In *Proceedings of the 33rd Annual ACM Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI '15)* (pp. 3739–3748).
- Lee, J., Choi, D., & Park, S. (2023). Machine learning-based indicators for League of Legends strategy analysis. *Electronics*, 12(8), 1743.
- Müller, L., Lautenbach, F., & Perreault, C. M. (2020). Effects of acute mental fatigue on cognitive performance and competitive gaming (esports) performance. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 17(8), 2841.
- O'Donnell, C. (2017). *Developer stories: Behind the scenes of games people play*. MIT Press.
- Pignatiello, G. A., Martin, R. J., & Hickman, R. L. (2018). Decision fatigue: A conceptual analysis. *Journal of Health Psychology*, 25(1), 123–135.

- Postigo, H.(2007). Of mods and modders: Chasing down the value of fan-based digital game modifications. *Games and Culture*, 2(4), 300–313.
- Rezaei, S., Voola, R., & Vahid, Y.(2023). Games as a service (GaaS): The evolution of the video game industry business model. *Journal of Business Research*, 156, 113470.
- Seo, Y., & Jung, S. U.(2016). The rise of e-sports and its impact on sports business. *Journal of Business Research*, 69(12), 6049–6056.
- Sweller, J.(1988). Cognitive load during problem solving: Effects on learning. *Cognitive Science*, 12(2), 257–285.
- Taylor, T. L.(2012). *Raising the stakes: E-sports and the professionalization of computer gaming*. MIT Press.
- Taylor, T. L., & Jenson, J.(2017). *Esports in the making*. MIT Press.
- Witkowski, E.(2012). On the digital playing field: How we “do sport” with networked computer games. *Games and Culture*, 7(5), 349–374.
- Witkowski, E., & Hutchins, B.(2013). E-sports on the rise? Critical considerations on the growth and erosion of organized digital gaming competitions. In *Proceedings of the 9th Australasian Conference on Interactive Entertainment: Matters of Life and Death (IE '13)*.
- Wolf, M. J. P.(2012). *Encyclopedia of video games: The culture, technology, and art of gaming*. ABC-CLIO.
- Yıldız, T.(2016). Dijital oyun türlerinin tanımı ve MOBA kavramının analizi [Definition of digital game genres and analysis of the MOBA concept]. *Bilişim Teknolojileri Dergisi*, 9(3), 150–165.
- Yue, Y., Liu, Y., & Wei, R.(2021). The genre features of Multiplayer Online Battle Arena (MOBA) games and their implications for game design. *Multimedia Tools and Applications*, 80(3), 4317–4334.

CHAPTER 7

THE ERA OF DIGITAL BROADCASTING IN ESPORTS

Mahmut Çağatay NAZLICAN¹

1. The Rise of Twitch, YouTube, and Digital Broadcasting (2011–2015)

The rapidly growing structure of the esports ecosystem has transformed traditional media models, placing digital broadcasting at the center of both viewer interaction and the sector's economic sustainability. Several key platforms occupy this growing center. In the field of digital broadcasting, Twitch holds a pioneering position in terms of both its historical background and developmental processes (Mao, 2022). In addition to its popularity in the field of video games, which includes esports competitions, Twitch also offers music broadcasts, chat streams, and creative content. This presence of real-life-focused streams indicates that the platform is not solely a virtual environment. Twitch was introduced in June 2011 as a spin-off of Justin.tv, a general broadcasting platform (Twitch, n.d.). Content on the platform can be watched in both live stream format and as video-on-demand (VOD). The games displayed on Twitch's current homepage are ranked according to viewer preferences and cover various genres such as real-time strategy, fighting, racing, and first-person shooter games (Doğaner et al., 2024).

Twitch's rise eventually surpassed the popularity of Justin.tv. In October 2013, the platform reached 45 million unique viewers and was cited as the fourth largest source of Internet traffic in the United States by February 2014 (Ewalt, 2013). Following these developments, Justin.tv's parent company rebranded as Twitch Interactive to reflect the strategic shift, subsequently shutting down the original platform in August 2014. By 2015, Twitch's monthly viewer count exceeded 100 million (Wall Street Journal, 2015; Twitch, n.d.). With these developments, Twitch gained a crucial position, surpassing other digital broadcasting platforms.

¹ Institute of Medical Sciences, Çukurova University, mahmutnazlican01@gmail.com,
ORCID iD: 0009-0002-0688-5287

In conclusion, cultural globalization and the power of platforms are among the fundamental factors determining the future of the esports ecosystem. Digital broadcasting in esports should be viewed not only as a media practice but as a cultural space where global culture is produced, circulated, and reshaped.

REFERENCES

- Alsaleh, A. (2024). The impact of technological advancement on culture and society. *Scientific Reports*, 14(1), 32140.
- Apaydın, Ş. C. (2023). Dijital yayın platformları ve değişim geçiren diziler: On Bin adım dizisi örneği. *Akdeniz Üniversitesi İletişim Fakültesi Dergisi*, (40), 1-22.
- BBC. (2025, February 13). YouTube at 20: A computer that drunk-dials online videos reveals statistics that Google doesn't want you to know.
- Bilgili, C. (2023). Yapay Zekâ ve Algoritmik Kültür Bağlamında Sosyal Medya Deneyiminin Geleceği Üzerine Bir Değerlendirme. *Yeni Medya Elektronik Dergisi*, 7(3), 216-237.
- Budak, N. (2021). Geleceğin meslekleri ve dijital beceriler. In *Çalışma Ekonomisi ve Endüstri İlişkileri Seçme Yazılar-V* (pp. 283-312).
- Choudhary, A. (2014). Smartphones and their impact on net income per employee for selected U.S. Firms, *Review of Business and Finance Studies*, 5(2).
- Connectivity UK. (2013, June 10). BitTorrent use drops as innovations in video on demand re-shape traffic stats.
- Doğaner, S., Ünal, Ö., Öcal, Y. K., & Başar, Ü. (2024). Spor Bilimleri Fakültesinde Görevli Akademisyenlerin Espora Yönelik Yaklaşımlarının İncelenmesi. *Uluslararası Güncel Eğitim Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 10(2), 151-173.
- Ewalt, D. (2013, November 13). The ESPN of video games. *Forbes*.
- Johnson, M. R., & Woodcock, J. (2019). 'It's like the gold rush': The lives and careers of professional video game streamers on Twitch. *Information, Communication & Society*, 22(3), 336-351.
- Küçükkıralı, Z., & Afşar, K. E. (2022). Dijital Verinin Finansallaşması Ve Platform Kapitalizmi. *Öneri Dergisi*, 17(58), 665-690.
- Kuyucu, M. (2017). Gençlerde akıllı telefon kullanımı ve akıllı telefon bağımlılığı sorunsalı: "Akıllı telefon (kolik)" üniversite gençliği. *Global Media Journal TR Edition*, 7(14), 328-359.
- Mao, E. (2022). The effectiveness of event marketing in an attention economy: Findings from Twitch live-stream esports tournament events. *Journal of Media Economics*, 34(3), 194-211.
- Ölçekçi, H. (2020). Dijital iletişim ve küresel kültürel etkileşimin homojenleşme, kutuplaşma ve melezleşme süreçleri. *İletişim Kuram ve Araştırma Dergisi*, 2020(50), 146-163.
- Schwab, K., & Zahidi, S. (2020). The Global Competitiveness Report-How countries are performing on the road to recovery. *World Economic Forum*.
- Sjöblom, M., Törhönen, M., Hamari, J., & Macey, J. (2019). The ingredients of Twitch streaming: Affordances of game streams. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 92, 20-28.
- Srnicek, N. (2017). *Platform capitalism*. Polity Press.
- Taylor, T. L. (2012). *Raising the stakes: E-sports and the professionalization of computer gaming*. MIT Press.
- TubeFilter. (2019, May 7). Number of hours of video uploaded to YouTube per minute.
- Twitch. (n.d.). Twitch (service).
- VentureBeat. (2011, March 10). Justin.tv launches new eSports channel.
- Vera, J. A., & Ghosh, S. (2025, April). "They've Over-Emphasized That One Search": Controlling Unwanted Content on TikTok's For You Page. In *Proceedings of the 2025 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems* (pp. 1-8).
- Videa.tv. (2016, May). *Advertising terminology: A primer for the uninitiated or confused*.

- Visual Capitalist. (2021, December 10). The 50 most visited websites in the world.
- Wall Street Journal. (2015, January 29). Twitch's viewers reach 100 million a month.
- Wikipedia. (n.d.). Video on demand.
- Yavaş, N. (2025). Yeni Etnografide Maddi Dönüş ve Arjun Appadurai'nin Nesne Merkezli Yaklaşımı. *UFÜ Sosyal ve Beşeri Bilimler Dergisi*, (2), 176-193.
- Yavaşçalı, A. H., & Uğurhan, Y. Z. C. (2019). Neden Kullanıcılar Twitch Tv Üzerinde Yayıncılara Bağış Yapar? Twitch Tv Kullanıcıları Üzerinde Ampirik Bir Araştırma. *Gümüşhane Üniversitesi İletişim Fakültesi Elektronik Dergisi*, 7(2), 646-678.
- YouTube. (2020, August 6). You know what's cool? A billion hours.
- Zhao, Q., Chen, C. D., Cheng, H. W., & Wang, J. L. (2018). Determinants of live streamers' continuance broadcasting intentions on Twitch: A self-determination theory perspective. *Telematics and Informatics*, 35(2), 406-420.

CHAPTER 8

MEDIA, LEGITIMACY, AND POWER IN ESPORTS: A GLOBAL COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

Serkan VAROL¹

1. Introduction

Esports has undergone a profound transformation over the past two decades, evolving from a niche form of digital gameplay into a globally organized, economically significant, and media-driven sporting phenomenon. This transformation cannot be understood solely through technological innovation or the growing popularity of competitive video games. Rather, esports must be examined as a socio-cultural formation that has emerged at the intersection of media systems, digital capitalism, youth culture, and contemporary sport (Taylor, 2016).

From a media studies perspective, esports represents a critical site for analyzing how sport itself is being redefined in the digital age. Traditional sports have historically relied on mass media—particularly television—to achieve legitimacy, visibility, and commercial value. Esports, by contrast, has developed primarily within digitally native media environments, such as live-streaming platforms, social media networks, and algorithm-driven content ecosystems. These platforms do not merely transmit esports competitions; they actively structure audience engagement, economic models, and cultural meanings associated with esports (Jenkins, 2006; Hutchins, 2016). The growing visibility of esports within global media has reignited longstanding debates surrounding the definition of sport. Classical conceptions of sport emphasize physicality, institutional regulation, and embodied competition. Esports challenges these criteria by foregrounding cognitive skills, digital interfaces, and virtual arenas. Media discourses play a decisive role in mediating this tension. Through narratives emphasizing professionalism, discipline, training regimes, and global

¹ Faculty of Sports Sciences, Bingöl University, varolserkan1274@gmail.com,
ORCID iD: 0000-0002-0013-5736

REFERENCES

- Billings, A. C. (2011). *Sports media: Transformation, integration, consumption*. Routledge.
- Funk, D. C., Pizzo, A. D., & Baker, B. J. (2018). eSports: Tapping into the emerging sport industry. *Sport Management Review*, 21(1), 1–4. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.smr.2017.11.001>
- Hallmann, K., & Giel, T. (2017). eSports—Competitive sports or recreational activity? *Sport Management Review*, 21(1), 14–20. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.smr.2017.07.011>
- Hamilton, W. A., Garretson, O., & Kerne, A. (2014). Streaming on Twitch: Fostering participatory communities of play within live mixed media. In *Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems* (pp. 1315–1324). ACM. <https://doi.org/10.1145/2556288.2557048>
- Heo, J., Kim, J., & Yan, Z. (2020). Understanding viewers' motivations to watch live streaming games. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 104, Article 106153. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2019.106153>
- Hilvert-Bruce, Z., Neill, J. T., Sjöblom, M., & Hamari, J. (2018). Social motivations of live-streaming viewer engagement on Twitch. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 84, 58–67. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2018.02.013>
- Hu, M., Zhang, M., & Wang, Y. (2017). Why do audiences choose to keep watching on live video streaming platforms? *Computers in Human Behavior*, 75, 594–606. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2017.06.006>
- Hutchins, B. (2016). Sport on the digital edge: The rise of e-sport and new media governance. *Media International Australia*, 161(1), 67–75. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1329878X16665177>
- Jenkins, H. (2006). *Convergence culture: Where old and new media collide*. New York University Press.
- Jenny, S. E., Manning, R. D., Keiper, M. C., & Olrich, T. W. (2017). Virtual(ly) athletes: Where eSports fit within the definition of “sport.” *Quest*, 69(1), 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00336297.2016.1144517>
- Johnson, M. R., & Woodcock, J. (2019). The impacts of live streaming and Twitch.tv on the video game industry. *Media, Culture & Society*, 41(5), 670–688. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443718818373>
- Li, R. (2017). *Good luck have fun: The rise of eSports*. Skyhorse Publishing.
- Mosco, V. (2009). *The political economy of communication* (2nd ed.). Sage.
- Qian, T. Y., Zhang, J. J., Wang, J. J., & Hulland, J. (2020). Beyond the game: Dimensions of esports online spectator motivation. *Communication & Sport*, 8(6), 825–851. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2167479518819482>
- Scholz, T. M. (2019a). *eSports is business: Management in the world of competitive gaming*. Palgrave Pivot. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-11199-1>
- Scholz, T. M. (2019b). *The esports industry: Economic growth, professionalization, and media convergence*. Springer.
- Sjöblom, M., & Hamari, J. (2017). Why do people watch others play video games? *Computers in Human Behavior*, 75, 985–996. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2016.10.019>
- Smith, T., Obrist, M., & Wright, P. (2013). Live-streaming changes the (video) game. In *Proceedings of the 11th European Conference on Interactive TV and Video* (pp. 131–138). ACM. <https://doi.org/10.1145/2465958.2465971>
- Taylor, T. L. (2016). *Raising the stakes: E-sports and the professionalization of gaming*. MIT Press.
- Wohn, D. Y., Freeman, G., & McLaughlin, C. (2018). Explaining viewers' emotional, instrumental, and financial support provision for live streamers. In *Proceedings of the 2018 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems* (pp. 1–13). ACM. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3173574.3174044>
- Wohn, D. Y., Jough, P., Eskander, P., Siri, J. S., Shimobayashi, M., & Desai, P. (2019). Understanding digital patronage: Why do people subscribe to streamers on Twitch? In *Proceedings of the Annual Symposium on Computer-Human Interaction in Play* (pp. 99–110). ACM. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3311350.3347160>

CHAPTER 9

ESPORTS SPONSORSHIP MODELS: THEORETICAL APPROACHES, DIGITAL ACTIVATION, AND MARKET DYNAMICS

Fatma Pervin BİLİR¹

1. Introduction

Over the past fifteen years, esports has evolved from a marginal subfield of digital gaming culture into a multi-layered industry with significant economic, cultural, and media-related impacts on a global scale. Today, esports is regarded as a complex ecosystem encompassing professional leagues, clubs, players, broadcasting platforms, media organizations, and brands (Hamari & Sjöblom, 2017). One of the core revenue streams underpinning this transformation is sponsorship. Indeed, the sustainability of the esports economy largely depends on sponsorship and media rights revenues (Newzoo, 2019, 2021, 2022).

As in the traditional sports industry, sponsorship in esports is not merely a financial support mechanism; rather, it functions as a strategic marketing and communication tool that enables brands to establish symbolic, emotional, and cultural connections with their target audiences (Meenaghan, 1983; Cornwell, 2015). However, structural characteristics that distinguish esports from traditional sports—such as its digital nature, a predominantly young and global audience profile, the central role of live-streaming platforms, and the concentration of intellectual property rights in the hands of game publishers—have led sponsorship models to evolve in distinctive ways (Cornwell, 2019; McKinsey & Company, 2020).

Industry reports indicate that sponsorship has consistently represented the largest share of esports revenues over an extended period. According to Newzoo, sponsorship constituted the single largest revenue category within the esports ecosystem in 2019; even during the COVID-19 pandemic, sponsorship and

¹ Faculty of Sports Sciences, Çukurova University, fatmapervinbilir@gmail.com,
ORCID iD: 0000-0001-5413-3712

of sponsorship effects, and systematic examinations of how regulatory frameworks influence sponsorship performance. Such efforts will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of esports sponsorship and its evolving role within the global sports economy.

REFERENCES

- Anderson, S. (2020). *Sponsorship-linked marketing: Image transfer and co-creation* (Master's thesis). University of Guelph.
- Burton, N. (2024). Activational imbalance: Sponsees' roles in esports sponsorship marketing. *International Journal of Business in Sports, Tourism & Hospitality Management*, 5(1), 1–22.
- Cornwell, T. B. (1995). Sponsorship-linked marketing development. *European Journal of Marketing*, 29(4), 8–19. <https://doi.org/10.1108/03090569510190633>
- Cornwell, T. B. (2008). State of the art and science in sponsorship-linked marketing. *Journal of Advertising*, 37(3), 41–55. <https://doi.org/10.2753/JOA0091-3367370304>
- Cornwell, T. B. (2015). *Sponsorship-linked marketing*. Routledge.
- Cornwell, T. B. (2019). Less “sponsorship as advertising” and more sponsorship-linked marketing as authentic engagement. *Journal of Advertising*, 48(1), 49–60. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.2019.1588809>
- Cornwell, T. B., Weeks, C. S., & Roy, D. P. (2001). Sponsorship-linked marketing: Opening the black box. *Journal of Advertising*, 30(1), 21–42. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.2001.10673634>
- Elasri-Ejjaberi, A. M., Rodríguez-Rodríguez, S., & Aparicio-Chueca, P. (2020). Effect of esports sponsorship on a new food brand. *Journal of Physical Education and Sport*, 20(1), 858–867.
- Freitas, B. D. A., Contreras-Espinosa, R. S., & Correia, P. Á. P. (2020). How sponsors should bring relevant-added value to esports. *Scientific Annals of Economics and Business*, 67(3), 363–387. <https://doi.org/10.47743/saeb-2020-0020>
- Hamari, J., & Sjöblom, M. (2017). What is esports and why do people watch it? *Internet Research*, 27(2), 211–232. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IntR-04-2016-0085>
- Heitner, D. (2017, October 3). More than 600 esports sponsorships secured since start of 2016. *Forbes*.
- Huettermann, M. (2023). Esports sponsorship: An empirical examination of esports consumers' perceptions of non-endemic sponsors. *Journal of Global Sport Management*, 8(4), 524–549. <https://doi.org/10.1080/24704067.2021.1886556>
- Infront. (2023). *The future of esports sponsorship: Trends and opportunities*. Infront Sports & Media.
- Javalgi, R. G., Traylor, M. B., Gross, A. C., & Lampman, E. (1994). Awareness of sponsorship and corporate image: An empirical investigation. *Journal of Advertising*, 23(4), 47–58. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.1994.10673457>
- Joseph, D. J. (2025). Towards a geopolitical economy of esports: Making sense of digital globalisation. *Geoforum*, 151, 103–114.
- Kearney. (2022). *Esports: Leveling up*. Kearney.
- Kholodov, I. (2025). *Future of esports and the development of related industries* (Master's thesis). LAB University of Applied Sciences.
- McKinsey & Company. (2020). *Esports and the next frontier of brand sponsorships*. McKinsey & Company.
- Meenaghan, J. A. (1983). Commercial sponsorship. *European Journal of Marketing*, 17(7), 5–73. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EUM00000000004821>
- Meenaghan, T. (1991). The role of sponsorship in the marketing communications mix. *International Journal of Advertising*, 10(1), 35–47. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.1991.11104447>

- Naidenova, I., Parshakov, P., & Chmel, A. (2024). Sponsorship, sustainability, and social responsibility in sport. *Sport, Business and Management*, 14(2), 145–162. <https://doi.org/10.1108/SBM-06-2023-0074>
- Newzoo. (2019). *2019 global esports market report*. Newzoo.
- Newzoo. (2021). *Global esports & live streaming market report 2021*. Newzoo.
- Newzoo. (2022). *Global esports & live streaming market report 2022*. Newzoo.
- Nielsen. (2017). *2017 year in sports*. Nielsen Sports. <https://www.nielsen.com/insights/2018/2017-year-in-sports-media/>
- Nielsen. (2018). *Esports: Jump in or miss the mark*. Nielsen Sports.
- Noh, Y. (2025). Esport consumption and sponsor brand equity: The mediating role of sponsor–esport congruence. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 16, Article 1594068. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2025.1594068>
- Novák, P. (2025). The legal and economic aspects of the “esports illusion”. *Frontiers in Sports and Active Living*, 7, Article 1636823. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fspor.2025.1636823>
- Polyakova, O. (2023). Antecedents and outcomes of sponsorship in the context of esports. *International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship*, 24(3), 451–472. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSMS-03-2022-0046>
- Shikenso Analytics. (2025). *The complete guide to esports sponsorship ROI*. Shikenso Analytics.
- Zhu, P. (2025). Mapping sponsorship portfolios in esports: Implied strategic patterns. *Journal of Business Research*, 174, 114469. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2024.114469>

CHAPTER 10

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF ESPORTS: INDUSTRIALIZATION, LABOR, AND PLATFORM POWER

Ergin KARINCAOGLU¹

1. Industrialization and Commercial Transformation of Esports

The period between 2018 and 2024 represents a decisive phase in which esports evolved from a competitive digital gaming practice into a fully institutionalized industry with economic, media, and organizational dimensions. During this transformation, esports partially adopted the structural characteristics of traditional sports while simultaneously internalizing the logics of the digital platform economy. Esports organizations are no longer limited to producing competitive performance; instead, they operate as hybrid media enterprises that generate value through content production, community management, and brand partnerships (Taylor, 2018; Scholz, 2022).

This shift has fundamentally redefined the meaning of the “esports club.” Competitive success remains important, but it is no longer sufficient as a standalone source of value. Visibility, audience engagement, and digital storytelling have become equally central to organizational sustainability. As Partin (2025) argues, the platformization of esports has repositioned clubs within an institutional logic closer to that of media companies than traditional sport organizations. Consequently, esports occupies a hybrid position between the sports industry and the digital content economy. A critical driver of this industrial transformation has been the hybridization of team–brand relationships. Leading organizations such as G2 Esports, FaZe Clan, and T1 have integrated competitive identity with lifestyle branding and digital narratives, particularly through documentaries, social media campaigns, and influencer-driven content strategies (Scholz, 2022). In this environment, content functions not merely as a promotional tool but as

¹ Institute of Medical Sciences, Çukurova University, antson13@hotmail.com,
ORCID iD: 0000-0002-5040-9272

control. These forces collectively underscore that esports sustainability cannot be secured through market expansion alone.

Against this backdrop, governance reform emerges as a central prerequisite for institutional maturity. The literature increasingly converges around the need for hybrid governance models that balance efficiency with legitimacy. Such models would preserve publishers' control over intellectual property and competition design while introducing independent oversight mechanisms for labor standards, health protection, revenue transparency, and ethical regulation. Multi-stakeholder participation—including clubs, players, and public institutions—constitutes a critical component of this reform agenda. Future pathways for esports therefore depend on the deliberate construction of institutional balance. Economic growth must be aligned with labor protections, platform power with regulatory accountability, and global expansion with ethical responsibility. Health-oriented performance management, standardized labor policies, and transparent governance frameworks are not obstacles to innovation; rather, they are conditions for sustainable value creation.

In conclusion, esports should no longer be understood merely as a digital activity or entertainment product, but as an emerging institutional field with economic, social, and political dimensions. Its long-term viability rests on the capacity to reconcile market logics with public responsibility and stakeholder inclusion. The sustainability of esports will ultimately be determined not by how fast it grows, but by how equitably and responsibly it is governed.

REFERENCES

- Bayle, E. (2024). Governance, regulation and management of global sport organizations. OAPEN.
- Cunningham, G. B., Fairley, S., Ferkins, L., Kerwin, S., Lock, D., Shaw, S., & Wicker, P. (2018). eSport: Construct specifications and implications for sport management. *Sport Management Review*, 21(1), 1–6. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.smr.2017.11.002>
- De Moor, W., Terrien, M., & Durand, C. (2023). The French professional esports industry: Institutionalization and governance. *European Sport Management Quarterly*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/16184742.2022.2148793>
- DiFrancisco-Donoghue, J., Balentine, J., Schmidt, G., & Zwibel, H. (2019). Managing the health of the eSport athlete: An integrated health management model. *BMJ Open Sport & Exercise Medicine*, 5(1), e000467. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjsem-2018-000467>
- Funk, D. C. (2022). Esports business management. *Human Kinetics*.
- Hallmann, K., & Giel, T. (2018). eSports – Competitive sports or recreational activity? *Sport Management Review*, 21(1), 14–20. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.smr.2017.07.011>
- Huettermann, M., Trail, G. T., Pizzo, A. D., & Stallone, V. (2023). Esports sponsorship: An empirical examination of esports consumers' perceptions of non-endemic sponsors. *Journal of Global Sport Management*, 8(2), 524–549. <https://doi.org/10.1080/24704067.2020.1846906>

- Holden, J. T., Kaburakis, A., & Rodenberg, R. M. (2017). The future is now: Esports policy considerations and potential litigation. *Journal of Legal Aspects of Sport*, 27(1), 46–78.
- Joseph, D. J., Brock, T., & Partin, W. C. (2025). Towards a geopolitical economy of esports: Making sense of Saudi Arabia's investments. *Journal of Public Management & Social Policy*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/TPM-09-2024-0111>
- Newzoo. (2021). Global esports & live streaming market report. <https://www.newzoo.com>
- Partin, W. C. (2025). *The E in sports: Platformization of professional gaming*. University of North Carolina Press.
- Pizzo, A. D., Funk, D. C., & Zhang, J. J. (2022). Esports business models and institutional development. *Sport Management Review*, 25(2), 179–192. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.smr.2021.07.002>
- Scholz, T. M. (2022). *eSports is business: Management in the world of competitive gaming*. Springer.
- Taylor, T. L. (2018). *Watch me play: Twitch and the rise of game live streaming*. Princeton University Press.
- Xiang, J., & Yuan, S. (2025). Esports and gaming: China's quest for global soft power. *Asia Europe Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12140-025-09459-x>
- Zhao, Y., Li, Q., & Lin, Z. (2023). The Chinese esports business ecosystem. *Journal of Cultural Economy*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17530350.2022.2144517>
- Zolides, A. (2022). Who owns the game? Esports, labor, and power. *New Media & Society*, 24(3), 678–695. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444820941208>