Research on the Influencing Factors of the ESports Being an Intense Societal Debated Topic

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Abstract: In recent years, the number of spectators has propelled the eSports industry's growth. However, no matter how popular it is, for many people, esports is still a pretentious word for video games and electric games with the addition of "competition". This lousy perception stems from outdated gaming venue clichés and a lack of understanding of the gaming business. What is eSports? How did eSports become such a prevalent issue in modern society? This paper mainly discusses how eSports has emerged and become an increasingly popular topic of discussion and interest, so as to offer some references of future studies about eSports industry.

Keywords: eSports, society, gaming, internet

1.   Introduction

In contemporary culture, the sport has become a vital element of people's lives. Research by Stichweh showed that the sports involvement in people's lives has expanded beyond leisure activities and health care [1]. Sports have become an effective economic system and a philosophy of life that impacts the communication and interaction of people daily. Traditional sports have a lengthy history, and societal and human developments continually shape their evolution. Esports, a symbiosis that blends video games with sports, is gaining widespread popularity as digitalization and computer networks continue advancing.

The notion of eSports emerged in the 1990s when single-player games still "dominated" players' lives and internet gaming was in its infancy. With the rapid development of the global internet in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the "online" genre of games, exemplified by Blizzard's Starcraft, entered players' minds and, through its popularity, pushed players away from traditional RPG (role-playing game) titles and toward multiplayer online tactical games (Moba). The game's popularity contributed to a move from classic role-playing games (RPGs) to multiplayer online tactical games.

In 1998, after the 1997 financial crisis, South Korea started to concentrate on the cultural sector, and Starcraft, the game of the year, captured the attention of the South Koreans, who were the first in Asia to organize Starcraft competitions. The game was televised and grew popular among teens at the time.

On 18 November 2003, the General Administration of Sports of China accepted the inclusion of eSports as the 99th official sporting event in China and classified eSports as a sport of intellectual competition between individuals using high-tech hardware and software mobile devices.

This paper mainly analyses in several parts how eSports has emerged and become an increasingly popular topic of discussion and interest, so as to offer some references of future studies about eSports industry.

2. E-sports Market Situation

Esports, which emerged from information technology, have a broad support base among the population. Due to its unique appeal of fair competition, it distinguishes itself from games that began and evolved relatively earlier. It is a human-to-human rivalry sport that uses information technology as the core hardware and software equipment as sports equipment and is conducted following sports rules [2]. Esports is the culmination of the evolution of video games and is distinct from traditional video games in that it elevates games to the "competition" level. On the other hand, regular games merely involve completing levels, experiencing the plot, enjoying the production, etc. Briefly, video games involve interaction with the game designer, whereas eSports involve interaction with other players, adding immediacy and the unknown. Online games were once referred to as "electronic heroin", and like most games, eSports are addictive because they satisfy a psychological need in the participants. However, human-to-human interaction is more addictive than human-to-machine interaction. E-sports emphasize fair play and a feeling of accomplishment and honour as the consequence of one's efforts to kill, pass, and win in identical scenarios from the same starting position.

From 2020, the market size of the Chinese esports industry has reached a volume of 100 billion. The NBA, the premier basketball league in the world, will have a market value of around 26 dollars billion in 2021[3], which is much less than our projection of the e-sports market in China in 2021 (Figure 1). First and foremost, the e-sports business in China has reached a volume of 100 billion and has a broad market and community.
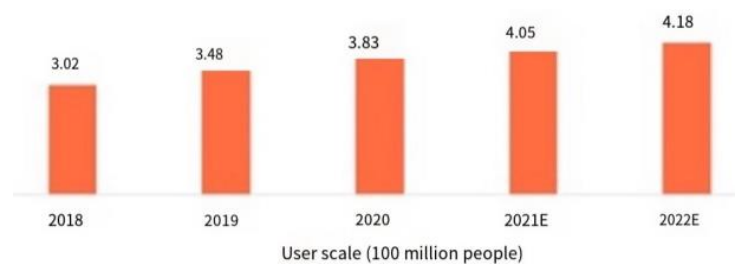

Figure 1: User scale and forecast of China Mobile esports in 2018-2022 [4].
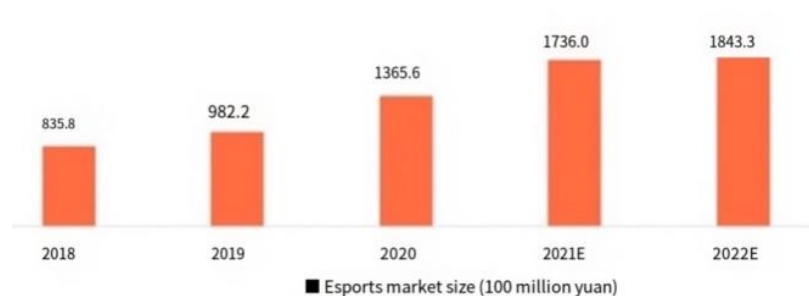

Figure 2: Market size and forecast of China's esports industry in 2018-2022 [5].

It is expected that China's e-sports user base will reach over 400 million individuals, representing up to 2/7 of the country's population [6]. The Chinese e-sports business has achieved a new level of

growth in market value and audience size (Figure 2). With such a large user base and significant economic rewards, it is not surprising that each game night has become a carnival for the whole town.

In 2021, the proportion of female users will reach 45% [7], mainly due to the rise of gaming, which has brought more female users into contact with and attention to the gaming industry. Gaming has become one of the primary forms of entertainment for many female users, with the proportion of female users reaching 45% in 2021. In the following years, it is anticipated that the share of female user groups will continue to rise. In addition to the entertaining character of the games themselves, the continually developing e-sports system has created the circumstances for the expansion of female users, with women starting to participate on the playing field and attending e-sports events as spectators. This is the female gaming community's true "coming out". In addition, gaming has broken age boundaries, enabling it to be more than a single age group, allowing the complete growth of all age groups, and establishing a significant presence. Moreover, the growth and development of gaming have made it possible for gaming, formerly confined to the first and second-tier cities, to flourish in third and fourth-tier cities, allowing even residents of small towns to engage fully in the large group of gamers.

3.　Internet Development and Its Enhancement

Social interaction in the age of the Internet: The evolution of contemporary media technologies has had a profound effect on social contact. The internet has become an increasingly essential medium for human interaction, and a new kind of interpersonal connection has emerged: the network relationship. As a forum for information sharing and exchange, Weibo has grown increasingly time sensitive. People are searching for information of interest on Weibo, and the earliest fans of eSports also gathered at this time to promote knowledge about eSports. So that more people would understand and care about eSports, thereby dispelling the misconception that eSports is merely a game and increasing the name's popularity. It has also offered young people more excellent room to follow their interests and a means of self-expression. E-sports has continued to generate its distinct subculture that draws many young people. Whether it's the different playful pop-ups during live gaming events or the emoji packs and entertaining films that swept social media following the event, they have all become a means for young people to express themselves.

4.　Chinese EDG Wins the 2021 League of Legends Championship

The triumph of EDG has helped the public progressively embrace the e-sports business. It has brought about a shift in people's perceptions and increased their knowledge of the gaming business. For most individuals, e-sports = gaming and is only a pastime, yet some are hooked and unable to stop.

The worldwide nature of e-sports enables it to acquire a feeling of national pride as it expands. Previous research has shown that e-sports individuals and teams may gain influence for various reasons and that whoever defeats their opponents has the right to represent and bring honour to their nation, area, or group [8]. EDG being a Chinese team was another important reason. Because EDG is a Chinese team, it represents China on the international scene and has been a source of pride for millions of Chinese. Therefore, even though many of us are unfamiliar with EDG and do not engage in gaming, the fact that they represent China is a huge component in our hearts.

In addition, this championship has spurred the growth of adjacent businesses and facilitated the formation of an industrial chain. China's e-sports game market revenue in 2020 was 136.557 billion RMB, an increase of 44.16% year-over-year, with the expansion of mobile e-sports being the primary driver and e-sports-related businesses reaching 21,900 [9]. E-sports-related companies primarily focus on the leasing and business services, culture, sports, entertainment, wholesale and retail,

information transmission, software, and information technology services sectors. Once developed, the e-sports business chain will give China enormous economic advantages.

5.   External Competitors in Esports

Several well-known companies and conventional sports teams have joined the eSports industry, mainly to capitalize on the purchasing power of the younger population. Significant offline events are well-liked by the eSports audience and may increase the tourist value of the places where they occur.

Today, however, live streaming services are more likely to be utilized to earn more direct income from fans through rewards. The eSports audience is comparable to conventional sports in that they build an affection for the champions of their favourite sport and want to demonstrate their allegiance to their favourite player or club via consumption-based behaviors. Some studies have shown that e-sports-related consumption has surpassed traditional sports consumption motivations [10]. With e-sports audiences spending money on virtual elements such as rewards in live streams, which can eventually become gambling, e-sports betting is a legal grey area in many jurisdictions.

Whether the consumption is created actively or passively, participating in eSports is seen as a method to boost one's personal well-being via a unique experience. In the process, the gaming audience might become moderately enthusiastic or obsessive, with the former being the foundation for potential bad outcomes and the latter leading to gaming disorders.

The word 'consumption' in this context also relates to the time and everyday lives of the gaming audience. While these behaviors are "driven" by the corporations involved, the person makes the ultimate decision. Even though modest spending for enjoyment is beneficial, the adverse effects of excessive fixation are evident.

6.   Social Interaction in Esports

From an academic perspective, eSports are often seen as a new type of digital gaming that needs participants to watch [11], gather information, compete, and collaborate. Simultaneously, eSports mix entertainment, engagement, competitiveness, and collaboration, where participants collaborate based on a clear objective, such as to win, and where the process needs fast decision-making by the players. There has been a significant amount of study on the direction of communication, such as motives for engagement in eSports, the creation of novel interaction models, and communication/live streaming technology. However, the consequence of social contact is often overlooked.

The emotional connection with team members while playing the game, whether it be friendships or romantic relationships, is an essential component of the social support that the eSports audience gets through collaboration.

As university students make up the bulk of the eSports audience [12], creating teams and in-game conduct leads to friendships, which directly affect their engagement in eSports activities. They make new acquaintances via eSports, and due to the collaboration and concentration on the game, they develop a new social circle and thus feel less alone.

The collaboration of eSports, which was correlated with the outcomes of numerous interaction behaviors, facilitated the expansion of social ties beyond the house for these amateur gamers. E-sports became social support for each other, a way to adjust to a new and unfamiliar environment and fulfil their need for care and dependency.

The e-sports pros, on the other hand, remark that they do not just seek new emotional connections but also reinforce the bonds they have already formed via their e-sports team.

"eSports is something that brings my buddies and me together. Even if we stopped playing games, I believe we would still be friends, but I do not believe that our relationship would have progressed as far without gaming", said by male professional player, 22 years old.

Through informational and meaningful assistance, the e-sports audience gains steady self-improvement, not just as e-sports participants but also as part of building their personalities and identities.

The poll also revealed that participants exhibited learning experiences in certain collaboration behaviors. Some gamers stated how they grew more kind compassionate after learning to monitor their colleagues and pay close attention to their emotional condition [13].

Most eSports players believe that the effort required for success in eSports is comparable to the commitment necessary for success in other fields. They acquire patience, resilience, and endurance via competition and teamwork in the game, which may help them achieve their objectives in other areas. They grow more receptive, tolerant, and courteous due to their interaction with various cultures via e-sports, which provides a platform for them to engage in intense competition and experience the disappointment of failure.

7. Conclusion

What eSports currently represent transcends ordinary competitiveness. It has grown to rule the life of the majority of people via communication. In eSports, people develop their interpersonal and collaborative abilities. Even non-gamers watch eSports contests to determine whether or not their national team will win the title.

Certain misunderstandings regarding eSports, such as the assumption that girls do not have the same gaming talents as males or that eSports is a waste of time and not a severe vocation, have yet to be debunked.

In the future, the stereotype that women are inferior to males in eSports may be addressed more effectively by increasing the number of female players.

It is challenging to dispel the misconception that eSports are a waste of time. However, as the gaming business expands and eSports become more well-known, and as more individuals promote the benefits and potential of eSports, more people will comprehend and accept it.

Future studies must concentrate on how to make eSports more accessible and inclusive, as well as how to strengthen the eSports community.

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