



## DIGITAL GAMES AND ADVERTISING: A QUALITATIVE RESEARCH ON MONETIZING E-SPORTS ACTIVITIES

(Araştırma Makalesi)

Murat SAĞLAM (\*) - Mehmet KARANFİLOĞLU (\*\*)

### Abstract

*According to simulation theory, individuals live and work in hyperreality. Digitalization transforms the real into simulacra as the world morph into a virtual world. Individuals are represented by their digital twins in the digital world where new possibilities endure. Digital twins transport individuals to the digital world as virtual representatives of real ones. Life in the digital world is almost indistinguishable from reality. It is additionally conceivable to play games in this new environment. Playing games is a crucial determinant in educational life and meeting various needs such as training and relish in adulthood. With the acceleration of digitalization, playing games are transmuted to an actor. Digital gaming brings an opportunity for talented individuals to generate an income through social network broadcasting. It is an environment that has emerged in which individuals may meet digitally rather than physically. In this environment, individuals may mentally organize all sports activities as playing chess, face their opponents in the computer environment, and gather fans. In such digital platforms as Twitch and YouTube, gamers may demonstrate e-sports skills to the related audience. Furthermore, advertising in digital games is a win-to-win method to reach generation Z. Digital gamers who broadcast through the social network may monetize their online gaming activities. This research focuses on digital gaming and advertising. Results of the study in which is conducted with a qualitative method with eight interviewers are provided. Participants selected are among individuals who display and monetize their digital gaming skills on the Twitch platform. The findings briefly indicate that individuals who play digital games*

\*) Dr. Öğr. Üyesi, Karamanoğlu Mehmetbey Üniversitesi, Uygulamalı Bilimler Yüksekokulu, Yeni Medya Bölümü, Yeni Medya Anabilim Dalı, (e-posta: murat4081@hotmail.com)  
ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8036-7942>

\*\*\*) Dr. Öğr. Üyesi, İstanbul İbn Haldun Üniversitesi, İletişim Fakültesi Yeni Medya ve İletişim Bölümü, Yeni Medya ve İletişim Anabilim Dalı, (e-posta: mehmet.karanfiloglu@ihu.edu.tr)  
ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4895-4220>

are achievement-oriented, have a sense of competing, and seize opportunities. According to the results, it can be seen as the digital gamers and gaming industry are new to the Turkish gaming business and face some disadvantages along with opportunities.

**Keywords:** Digital game, Advertisement, Simulation, E-sports, Competition.

### **Dijital Oyunlar ve Reklamcılık: E-Spor Faaliyetlerinden Gelir Elde Etmek Üzerine Nitel Bir Araştırma**

#### **Öz**

Simülasyon teorisine göre, insanlar hiper-gerçekliğin içinde yaşamakta ve çalışmaktadır. Dijitalleşme, dünyayı sanal bir dünyaya dönüştürürken gerçeği simülakraya dönüştürmektedir. Bireyler bu yeni imkânların bulunduğu dijital dünyada dijital ikizleri vasıtası ile temsil edilmektedir. Dijital ikizler gerçek bireylerin sanal temsilcileri olarak bireyleri dijital dünyaya taşımaktadır. Dijital dünyada yaşam gerçeğinden adeta farksızdır. Bireyler tüm yaşamlarını bu sanal ortamlarda sürdürebilmektedir. Bu yeni ortamda oyun oynamak da mümkündür. Oyun oynamak bireylerin küçük yaşlardan itibaren hayatı öğrenmede ve yetişkinlik dönemlerinde öğrenme ve eğlenme gibi pek çok ihtiyacı karşılamada önemli bir faktördür. Dijitalleşmenin hız kazanması ile birlikte bu faktör bazı bireylerin hayatını değiştirecek bir aktöre dönüşmüştür. Dijital oyun, yetenekli bireylere sosyal ağlar üzerinde yayın yaparak gelir elde etme fırsatı sunmaktadır. Özellikle e-spor denilen bugüne dek bildiğimiz spor dallarından farklı olarak bireylerin fiziksel olarak değil de dijital ortamlarda karşı karşıya gelebildiği, müsabakaların organize edilebildiği bir ortam oluşmuştur. Bu ortamda bireyler satrançta olduğu gibi zihinsel olarak tüm spor aktivitelerini organize ederek bilgisayar ortamında rakipleri ile karşı karşıya gelmekte ve taraftar toplayabilmektedir. İzleyici kitlesi genişleyen e-sporcular daha çok kitleye erişebilmenin getirdiği birtakım avantajlara sahip olabilmektedir. Twitch ve YouTube gibi dijital platformlarda, oyuncular kitlelerine e-spor becerilerini sergileyebilmektedir. Dahası, dijital oyunlarda reklam verilerek Z kuşağına ulaşılabilen kazanç-kazan faydası sağlanabilmektedir. Sosyal ağ üzerinden yayın yapan dijital oyuncular, çevrimiçi oyun etkinliklerinden para kazanabilmektedir. Bu araştırma, dijital oyun ve reklamcılığa odaklanmakta ve bu doğrultuda sekiz katılımcı ile nitel bir yöntemle yürütülen araştırmanın sonuçlarını içermektedir. Katılımcılar, dijital oyun becerilerini Twitch platformunda sergileyen ve buradan para kazanan kişiler arasından seçilmiştir. Bulgular kısaca, dijital oyun oynayan bireylerin başarı/kazanım odaklı olduklarını, rekabet etme hissine sahip olduklarını ve fırsatları değerlendirdiklerini göstermektedir. Sonuçlara göre, dijital oyuncuların ve oyun endüstrisinin Türk oyun sektöründe yeni olduğu ve fırsatlar kadar bazı dezavantajlara sahip olduğunu görülmektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Dijital oyun, Reklamcılık, Simülasyon, E-spor, Müsabaka.

## 1. Introduction

As an often-heard term, the digitalization process has emerged effect on local children's games as well as the adult's leisure time. Thus, PC games to be played on devices such as computers and tablets took the plays from the street to the couches, and hold an essential place in the personal lives of children and adults.

The rapid development of technology has caused a great change in the lives of individuals. This change has been effective in many areas from health to education, from entertainment to transportation. One of the areas where change is experienced is the play of the child. Recently, the game, which is used for treatment, entertainment, and education purposes in the child's life and supports the development and health of the child, has gained a different dimension with screen-based applications (Benli, 2018). Studies convey that play is crucial in child development (Unal, 2009; Ulutas, 2011; Kocyigit, Tugluk, and Kok, 2007). It is known that digital games affect individuals not only in childhood but also in adulthood. Similarly, it reveals that studies have positive and negative effects on the lives of individuals (Tanriverdi and Yekelenga, 2019; Evren, 2020). Therefore, it appears that the place of the game in individual lives is significant.

Considering that games are important in both children's and adult lives, one of the effects of the game played on the screens as a result of digitalization today is to be exposed to the information bombardment that comes with learning. This situation becomes inevitable at a time when digital screens surround individuals. In the information process, information comes before individuals by coming out of thousands of data. An important part of this information consists of the promotional and advertising content created. In a study conducted for this purpose, it is possible to say that while 500 advertisements were exposed a day in the 70s, this number has reached 5000 today (Holmes, 2019). In such an environment, it may be difficult to distinguish between an advertisement and non-advertisement from the media content. Each day, a new type of advertisement is created on social networks. Non-evocative content tried to be created for the audience and/or made the ads' content less disturbing (eMarketer-Editors, 2019). However, studies show that 74 percent of users report that they see ad content too much, ads' effectiveness is increasing (Gitlin, 2020).

Similarly, this period where games played in digital environments, are also surrounded by (even it's uninterested) advertisements. As well as social networks, a period when digital games were full of commercials called in-game ads. It is a period where ads are used progressively in both online and offline games. In fact, according to Walnut Unlimited's (commissioned by Facebook Audience Network) mobile game monetization research, approximately 57% of mobile developers using a mixed monetization model believe that in-game ads can increase player retention without compromising the gaming experience. 79% of those same developers indicate rewarded videos are their most successful format (VB-Staff, 2020).

Digital game spheres, which can be seen as a modern socialization and consumption platform, meet individuals' needs of amusement, leisure time, and interaction. Games

are played by users/individuals to augment the interaction. Moreover, digital games are a space full of expression of individuals that race the talents more. In such platform's talents are demonstrated by individuals to gain more interest.

Further, these digital platforms bring individuals who distant from each other to meet physically in virtual environments. Avatars represent individuals in digital environments. Avatars are defined as virtual identities representing real individuals in virtual worlds created by computers and represented as three-dimensional virtual spaces (Bélisle and Bodur, 2010; Kang and Yang, 2006). These avatars have almost become a digital identity of individuals due to the widespread social networks today. Employing avatars, individuals blend in virtual environments, and activities can be organized independently of time and distance by eliminating borders. Yet, new identities can unite and create some social phenomena (e.g., Arab Spring, Gezi Park, Yellow Vests).

### **Digitalization, Digital Representation and Simulacres**

Some of the studies conducted in the context of digitalization focus on digital identity. In these studies; digital identity (Simmonds, 2015), digital citizenship, and legal ground (Sullivan, 2016), digitalization in shaping the future (Schmidt and Cohen, 2013), digital identification (Nagy Koles, 2014; McKinsey-Global-Institute, 2019), social networks and identity building (Kavut, 2018), trace in creating identity (Grassi, Garcia, and Fenton, 2017), digital identity creation, digital identity formation in education (Dostal, Wang, Steingartner, and Nuangchalerm, 2017), reproduction, protection of digital identities (Gill, Zampin, and Mehta, 2015), digital representation (Avcioglu, 2011), social networks, and threat (Fire, Goldschmidt, and Elovici, 2014) were studied. The digital presentation of identity and the individual and socio-economic issues that form the focus of these studies are aligned in digitalization.

The term simulation refers to the submission of something. It is also defined as fictionalizing an event by simulating something (Cambridge-Dictionary, 2021). Today, the reality of this fictional context can deceive individuals' perceptions of reality. Excursions, games played, and other readings that can be made in simulations generated through computers and the internet intensify the negotiations on this understanding of truth.

In the theoretical context, Castells, McLuhan, Debord, and Baudrillard's studies on simulation are encountered. Castells states that individuals in the new social form, which he refers to as a network society, unite through these networks on common goals and denominators with the spread of the Internet. Networks digitize the social norms that consolidate society and force change. He emphasizes that in the context of timelessness and spacelessness, individuals remove borders (Castells, 2004). Likewise, McLuhan is one of those who clarify that a more amorphous environment has been created in terms of boundary and time. McLuhan depicts a period in which individuals interacted on screens via networks as a result of the digitalization experienced, and the boundaries formed since the tribal period were lifted and acted as a global village (McLuhan and Powers, 2001).

On the other hand, Debord (2012) discusses society as "passive identification with the spectacle supplants genuine activity." The concepts of spectacle and consumption are associated with Debord's works. Debord postulated that alienation lends impetus through the invasive forces of the 'spectacle' in which is "a social relationship between people mediated by images" of mass media, advertising, and popular culture. Accordingly, individuals live in the form of a spectacle society. It is formed on consumption. New relationships are structured by consumption behaviors. He affirmed that daily life changes dimension and individuals focus on passively consuming and displaying this with the show. Based on McLuhan's concepts, Baudrillard explains the post-modern society as a simulation period in which symbols and codes come to the fore. Debord and Baudrillard based their theories on the concept of reality. Hence, Debord's key concept is demonstration. Debord emphasizes that the masses become passive in the consumer society and cease to be themselves, independent of their own decisions, within the rules determined from the outside, in a sculpted manner (Debord, 2021).

Baudrillard approaches the situation differently. He states that the audience emphasizes the image, not the message. According to what Susan Sontag quotes in her book, Sontag watches the landing of human beings on the Moon with other people around her. However, those around him do not accept it. When she asks them why they don't believe it, she replies, "We came to watch television." In other words, these people were more interested in the image than the message (Baudrillard, 2015b).

To understand Baudrillard's simulation theory in detail, it is necessary to know some suggested concepts. These are simulacra, simulate, simulation, hyper-reality, explosion of meaning, hot-cold event.

- “**Simulacra**: A view to be perceived as a reality” (Baudrillard, 2015a, p. 3).
- “**Simulate**: Present something that is not real and try to show it” (Baudrillard, 2015a, p. 3).
- “**Simulation**: Artificial reproduction of a tool, a machine, a system, a phenomenon-specific mode of operation by means of a model or a computer program for the purpose of examination, demonstration or explanation” (Baudrillard, 2015a, p. 3).
- “**Hyper-Reality**: According to Baudrillard, hyper-reality is the disappearance of the line between reality and fiction (Unlu-Dalayli, 2020, p. 90)”
- “**Explosion of Meaning**: According to Baudrillard, information swallows the content, communication, and society that it produces, destroys meaning, and, in contrast to social innovation, puts it into a truly hazy absence of knowledge (Unlu-Dalayli, 2020, p. 90)”
- “**Hot-Cold Event**: Television turns hot media events into cold events and these events become ordinary and become a means of entertainment. For example, the media selected images of the Gulf war and published them in a series of simulated images in a way that would not undermine the conscience of Americans (Unlu-Dalayli, 2020, p. 90)”

According to Baudrillard, simulacres replace and reproduce the truth. In today's society, reality has been replaced by "similar" (Oker, 2015). Baudrillard explains this with the example of the Lascaux cave. Since it is closed to visitors, they are directed to the replica cave called Lascaux 2, and most of them are not aware of which one is original or counterfeit (Baudrillard, 2015b, s. 64). As a product through simulation theory, the movie Truman Show demonstrates Baudrillard's theory. The film is about Truman, who was adopted by a television channel, being watched 24/7 by the masses in an artificial island city. The city shows the symbolized form of actuality reproduced in all aspects. Reproduction of everything except Truman himself is the representation of reality, that is, its simulation (The Truman Show, 1998).

With digitalization, the conditions mentioned and criticized in all these theoretical studies have become commonplace. Today, opportunities such as social networks, computer games, and augmented reality technology have become a direct reproduction of reality. Individuals live as citizens of worlds they reproduce in the virtual world for leisure and entertainment. Under the influence of the devices, a new digital identity is used.

Consequently, digitalization and virtualization of lives are inevitable. Digital games, which should be emphasized especially as a leisure activity of individuals, are essential in this context. The change in technology from the past to the present is also reflected in playing games. Games played in virtual reality began to replace games played in the "real" world. Players take part in a show, moving in an unreal world (on a simulated platform). This post-truth platform is similar to Baudrillard's concept of simulation.

### **Gaming, Digital Gaming and Advertising**

The concept of play has a decisive place in both child development and adult lives. There are genuine laws for playing games. Some elements are such as a goal and various obstacles and responsibility (Caillois, 2001). Playing games has a purpose. Some games have meanings such as gaining experience and management skills (Juul, 2010). Thus, the development of intelligence and ability of both children and adults who play games can be affected by the game played. Play, which is a meaningful endeavor for the child, is also a source of entertainment, development, and education. The children can express joy, hate, search for love, and aggression through the games. Play, which has an important place in a child's life, can help them to relate to the environment and reflect feelings and thoughts (Aral, 2000). Although the act of playing games progresses from childhood to adulthood, it is known to be used as an effective tool in many sectors.

Games can be played in physical circumstances as well as in digital environments. While a computer or its derivatives are required to play digital games, physical games require a suitable environment, toys, and possibly other players. "Game, it is carried out for a purpose with its rules, which are not serious, in a specific time, in a specified area. In this context, the main features of the game are; space, time, rule, and purpose. The work should be started by considering the game as leisure time activity and unspecified

activities” (Yengin, 2012). On the other hand, digital games require a digital platform. Digital games can be found since the late 40s (Kinc-Ozuolmez, 2019). Today, digital games can be played on game consoles, computers, and mobile devices. 2.69 billion people played digital games in 2020 (Gilbert, 2020).

The high number of users of digital games also draws the attention of brands and organizations. In a century where there are so many players, it is inevitable for digital games to be seen as an advertising and promotional medium along with conventional media. In this context, digital games are not only entertainment tools, but also transform into an environment with new opportunities for communicators. This effective communication environment has also changed the traditional advertising and promotion models. A new communication environment has emerged that uses the many-to-many communication process instead of the old advertising that uses the multiple communication processes. It is the interactive feature of the web that provides this. While there was no interaction between companies and consumers, an interaction between the receiver and the sender started, the message was changed instantly and the recipient had a chance to participate in the process (Altunbas, 2001).

### **Digital Games Advertisement and Income: E-Sports**

Individuals have choices containing digital career choices, socialization, lifestyles, and entertainment via earning money through digital games. However, how individuals with career goals reach a decision point with their desire to earn income becomes a study topic by giving important clues by the social environment they live in (Erdem and Kemiksiz, 2020). Many social and geographical factors can be efficient in selecting a profession. Additionally, enjoyment of the job can be a requirement for choosing a position. Another issue is technological opportunities, and factors can likewise be adequate. Technological developments and the digitalization process have created many new professions. New job opportunities in digital platforms can affect young generations, especially those who grow up with this technology, in job selection. As of 2020, there are 37 million active channels in total on YouTube (Funk, 2020). In a study conducted in the USA, 96 percent of YouTube users are between the ages of 18-24 (99firms-Content, 2021). According to Statista data, 77 percent of 15-25 and 26-36 age groups and 73 percent of 36-45 age groups use YouTube (Statista, 2020). Despite the fact that it is difficult to categorize, how many of these percentiles prefer this medium as a profession, the use of this medium more intensely than this age range indicates that people who work as YouTubers are also formed in this age range.

The connection between new media and digital technologies has made this matter of fact a global culture by revealing a common digital culture phenomenon in the globalizing world. People from different cultures in different typologies come together under the "network society" organization that includes digital technologies by sharing a common culture in technology, information, entertainment, and education (Erdem and Kemiksiz,

2020). In this context, generation Z provides learning by discovering technology with digital games, especially under the title of entertainment in this shared culture, acquires knowledge and needs to receive training in this field by showing interest even in educational digital game videos.

Digital video games also emerge as a new field of work for advertisers for these created cultures and needs. It is aimed to establish a connection between brands and target audiences, players, with the types of game advertisements that can be in-game advertisements or advergames. Consequently, it is possible to reach notably young target audiences who play games, to reach individuals who do not prefer and/or use conventional media, but rather spend time in online games. Contrarily, it is known that brands use game advertisements as the first step to gain a place in the minds of children who will become potential customers in the future and to turn them into loyal customers in the future. Brands strive to be in the minds of children as soon as possible to take advantage of their purchasing power and potential impact on their environment as they become adults (Kırgız, 2007). As a result of a survey conducted on children in 2010 about beverage preferences, 80% of children who hardly consume tea answered "yes" to the question of "Would you like to consume this product?" after playing the "Woman who knows everything" game in the questionnaire. These children, who want to consume a product they do not prefer, thanks to a game they play, are an example of how quickly children can be affected (Karabaglı, 2020).

Yet, gaming and advertising are not only a problem that marketers or advertisers have linked. Progressively digitalized processes, particularly in processes that require durable closure to homes such as the pandemic, have led young individuals and other age group adults who are already playing games using digital possibilities to earn revenue by associating games and advertisements on some social media platforms. In this context, it is necessary to touch upon this relationship, which constitutes the subject of research in this article. It is a developing scene to generate revenue by producing dissemination based on playing games on social networks. Besides, using advertisements in broadcasts is common. In this method, which is quite comparable to influencer marketing, which is among the new marketing strategies used by marketers, the owner of a social network account with a certain number of followers can promote the brands are full in cooperation with the publications. Similarly, especially young individuals who play games use the aforementioned game-advertising relationship to exhibit their talents, have a good time, and earn income through this.

The most popular social networks used for this purpose are YouTube and Twitch. YouTube is a popular social networking community that was founded in 2005, has over 2000 employees and 2 billion active monthly users as of 2020. There are about 1 million paying subscribers on YouTube (Aslam, 2021). Paying subscribers refers to users who join any YouTube channel for a fee. These users support the YouTubers they subscribe to by paying a certain amount of money (YouTube, 2021). Contrarily, Twitch is a video

game-oriented social network that was founded in 2011 and had 3 million broadcasters as of February 2020 (Smith, 2020; Perez, 2018). Both platforms are effective platforms that bring players and followers together through live broadcasts and earn money for their users through advertisements, collaborations, and memberships. Enes Batur, a YouTuber, who has the most followers in Turkey, has started his channel by playing games and has been included in the platform by posting this game session (YouTube, 2021). On Twitch, Games such as League of Legends (LoL), Counter-Strike: Global Offensive, Dota 2, Hearthstone: Heroes of Warcraft, and World of Warcraft are broadcasted (Erdinc, 2016). The publishers that make these broadcasts may collect money in such a way. Broadcasters collect revenue with sponsor support, advertising (companies that usually design game equipment for gamers), paid subscriptions, and donation boxes they create in live broadcasts. Broadcasters with an audience can merit income through sponsorships and advertisements by cooperating with gaming companies. These publishers may further be paid if they broadcast the advertisements determined by Twitch. A similar paid subscription system on YouTube is also available on Twitch. Some users can support publishers by subscribing or donating (Erdinc, 2016).

Especially E-sports events and broadcasts are made on Twitch. The dynamics of digital games (E-Sports) increase the interaction between individuals, contributes to socialization, and creates a collaborative competition environment. While talented individuals step forward, they want to develop and maintain their talent for the reward/gain. E-Athletes play a role in E-Sports development by raising satisfaction and motivation as it grows, although they want to collect the rewards and receive the profits by operating in personal or group partnerships (Topsumer and Saglam, 2019). In the "Effects of Global Quarantine Days on the Game World" report of Next-In-Game Gaming and Esports Agency, with the increasing interest in E-Sports and the game world in the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the game contents of live broadcasts on Twitch were (rate: 6 out of ten) on e-sports (Next-In-Game, 2020). Among the live broadcasts of these e-sports games, the most-watched games are as follows (Next-In-Game, 2020):

- League of Legends 1.364.834 hours
- CS: GO: 932,984 hours
- Call of Duty: Modern Warfare: 617,884 hours
- PUBG: 349.627 hours
- Teamfight Tactics: 226,076 hours
- FIFA 20: 141,808 hours

The augmented virtual reality offered to individuals who are active in the digital social field by receding from actual social life has contributed to the focus of attention on digital games and E-Sports. As E-Sports has developed into a big industry, it heightens the investments in the sector transferred. According to the supply and demand issue, E-Sportsmen desires to raise career goals and expectations. Depending on their skills in

digital games outside of social life, revenue amount to amplified in which is the subject of research.

## **2. Methodology**

As it is known, individuals playing digital games; see it as an entertainment tool, a means of having a pleasant time, and a way of socializing. However, individuals who play these games display these abilities (in the case of E-sports) from various platforms and earn income. Therefore, it is aimed to focus on the e-athletes who demonstrate their talents as an e-sports activity through social networks such as Twitch and YouTube and gain profit through advertisements, sponsorships, subscriptions, donations, and commercials. In this context, the purpose of this research is to understand how individuals who seek to earn income by playing digital games (including all game platforms) associate advertising, digital games, and social networks, along with discovering how they earn income. In this study, 8 Streamers and E-Sportsperson (2 women coded as: F1, F2 - 6 men, coded as: M1, M2, M3, M4, M5, M6) were consulted about how individuals who earn money by e-sports activities on Twitch make sense of advertising and digital games, platform preference reasons, and career goals (see. Ethic Committee Report numbered 04-2021/76 dated 26 May 2021).

## **3. Ethical Considerations**

The necessary permissions for the conduct of the research were decided at the meeting held on 26.05.2021 based on the application dated 18.05.2021 and numbered 14753 from the scientific research and ethics committee of Karamanoğlu Mehmetbey University (Annex-1). The participants of the research participated in the study named "digital games and advertising: a qualitative research on monetizing e-sports activities" on a voluntary basis. while conducting the research, the private information of the participants was kept confidential and coded as participants (Women: F1, F2; Men: M1, M2...), thus ensuring participant confidentiality.

## **4. Findings**

Digital games have matured a structure where time is spent on a virtual platform by leading games to digital environments. The game implements the players to appreciate and demonstrate their skills to achieve a goal within its rules. Individuals are not physically involved in these platforms. Instead, avatars represent individuals intervene in the virtual world. Utilizing these avatars, the players show their skills to other players again through avatars. "What is done" is still an act of playing a game, even if it is virtual. However, in this case, games are seen as an analogy of the actual and physical. As Baudrillard points out, this simulation now substitutes for reality. Virtual worlds contain numerous virtual objects that can be almost anything: A house, clothing, weapons, raw materials such as

iron minerals. These objects may have been created by the user and placed in the world by game designers.

According to interviews, the thought of participants detailly analyzed. What are the reasons for playing digital games, perceptions of digital games relations with advertisements, and career goals on the platform? Such kinds of questions are asked to participants in interviews, and the answers of the participants were systematically organized. The themes obtained at the end are shown in table 1.

**Table 1.** Themes Founded as a Result of Interview Data Analysis

Main Theme	Sub-Theme
Achievement Orientation	Talent Demonstration, Career on E-Sports
Sense of Competing	-
Seizing Opportunities	E-Sports is Popular but Fresh Area, Access to Technology

**4.1. The Theme of Achievement Orientation**

According to the data obtained from the participants, the first theme was determined as Achievement Orientation. Under this theme; The subthemes of Talent Demonstration and Career on E-Sports were formed.

Participants stated that they caught the freelance working atmosphere through the broadcasts made on Twitch, and thus, they were more successful. The comfort area provided by not working in any company allows them to focus more on success, and they can keep activities that can increase their income under more active control. The sub-themes show that individuals who play digital games and aims for a career-earning goal by displaying their talents are trying to increase their success and awareness and thus create a career.

The subject of talent is stated as a phenomenon that can be seen and owned in the literature. Talent refers to the ability of an individual to potentially do well in any subject (Altınöz, 2009). Talent is the potential for constructive interactions with one's experiences in different directions (Feldman and Goldsmith, 1986). Under the Talent Demonstration sub-theme, the participants expressed their thoughts as follows:

“... I am happier to find a space where I can show my talent. When the place where I worked before was closed due to the pandemic, I thought for a while what I would do. Then I realized that I could create a medium through these publications. Moreover, I also liked to play games. I played sports games very fondly from the very beginning. I always win. So, I seem to be lecturing on how to win. The audience is watching this too ... I am satisfied too.” (F2)

“Sports games require a lot of tactics. If you don't set up those tactics well, you can't dig. The goal is to win and be successful. I show you how to play, and thanks to me, new players learn new things about the game from me. It is important to know that you have it. Nobody else anywhere says, "A, you can do this?" In this way, we can show our abilities ...” (M1)

“I think the main thing is to be successful in a career. Success is only possible if you have the talent for that job. If you can show your skills and are appreciated, that job is meaningful ...” (M6)

Definitions made for E-Sports have emerged and/or intensified in the last 10-15 years. Some of the suggested definitions are as follows. Perhaps the oldest and clarifying definition of Wagner (2006) is mainly based on the traditional definition of sport provided by Tiedemann (2004): “an area of sports activity in which people develop and train their mental or physical abilities [...]” Wagner (2006) extends this general definition of the sport by adding the phrase “in the use of information and communication technologies” when defining eSports. Regarding the Career on E-Sports sub-theme, the participants stated the following:

“Well, I've been playing e-sports since I was 16. I started with Call of Duty. The internet was not as fast then as it is today. Then while playing Overwatch, I got into the top 500 on the ladder. A few teams contacted me then I joined HuB e-sport. When I saw the Fortnite prize money, I said, I have to win that tournament. I've managed to get into the top 10 a few times. No prize money in the top ten. We manage with what comes from the channel for now, but we can earn a lot of money from here in the future, I think ...” (M5)

“Tournaments are very effective. When he has success there, others hear his name. Ad revenue is higher then. The more viewers, the more shares. I'm preparing for one of those tournaments now. I don't even think of losing. I'll win for sure, I feel” (M2)

“I am discovering new ways in Creative Mode. I learn both practical and new tricks. Being able to move on this path gives happiness for now. If Allah allows me, I will proceed on this path. I collaborate with ...” (F1)

#### **4.2. The Theme of Sense of Competition**

The words "Competition" and "Challenge" are used frequently now. Issues such as competing in both the private and the public sector, competition can be brought to the agenda constantly, keeping in mind that human beings are in a constant race from birth to death. According to Stigler (1988), racing is defined as: "competition is a rivalry

between individuals (or groups or nations), and it arises whenever two or more parties strive for something that all cannot obtain". On the other hand, the challenge is one of the concepts frequently heard on social networks. According to the Oxford dictionary (2021), a challenge is "a call to someone to participate in a competitive situation or fight to decide who is superior in terms of ability or strength." What the participants convey under this theme is as follows:

"First of all, the feeling of competition is very satisfying. Most of the competing videos I stream are watched with a high population. In general, people support promising players. If the audience feels that you may win at the end, they will watch it. In this way, you both compete and earn money. If you could get one of the three ranks, you may earn a much higher income from ads. All these are a very good thing... Yes, but competition its self... Hmmm, that's the one." (M4)

"I am the happiest when I compete. It's both joyful, and viewers would enjoy it. We make challenges among ourselves (The other e-sporters). The challenge videos are also being watched. So that you can get the most donations and advertisements." (M2)

"... I would say, competing itself makes sense a lot to me. I accept challenges frequently. In this way, the rank you get is also rising. Once in a while, I fought against someone from America online who ranked the most. The match was very enjoyable both for me and the folks. The fight lasted for hours, but the folks watched till the end. They would come to that fighting excitement, not to the normal conversation at the beginning anyway." (M3)

"Well, they say women look like they can race, however, women also like to race. I think women are more successful than men in both challenges and competition. Men are very aggressive, most of them deviate from the aim. Women are more successful than men, I guess. To compete is important, they must see me on race then think again on women." (F2)

#### **4.3. The Theme of Seizing Opportunities**

The last theme to emerge is "Seizing Opportunities." The exploitation of opportunities is possible under certain conditions. The current situation shall have a benefit that is thought to provide to the individual/firm on an individual/institutional scale, and this benefit should be attainable. According to some researchers, seizing opportunities includes assessing existing and emerging capabilities and potential investments in related designs and technologies that are most likely to be accepted in the market (Teece, 2007; O'Reilly-III and Tushman, 2008).

Under this theme, there are sub-themes of "E-Sports is Popular but Fresh Area" and "Access to Technology." Participants intensely mention that other social networks are now dominated by the influencers in the subtheme of E-Sports is Popular but Fresh Area. Further, the Twitch network is not as widespread as the other networks, and that all of these create an opportunity for gamers because E-Sports activities are not as broad as expected. Some of the participants' quotes are as follows:

"...e-sports are not prevalent enough in Turkey as it is in the United States. Because the tournament is usually made in the US, Far East, and Europe. Thank God, we have internet access, so that we can join it online. Recently, demand has increased due to COVID-19. Both E-sports and Twitch are popular now. Yeah, however, they are not as broad as they should be, yet. To me, this is an opportunity for me to gain more followers and income. Both I can develop myself until it gets widespread and they will ask us that "how we succeed it" in the future... Because there no enough gamers today." (M2)

"I was very hesitant when I was launching the Twitch broadcasts at first. I had questions such as whether they will watch or take attention. But then, after a few broadcasts, I saw that some audience was already looking for something like this. It was not very common yet when I started. Now it has increased a little with the pandemic. But it is still not broad enough. We are growing rapidly. ...I am trying to make use of this situation and turn it to my advantage. We will see!" (F1)

In the second sub-theme, the participants intensely stated that access to technology in Turkey is gradually troublesome, and the required hardware and equipment in which are sold expensive due to US Dollars and Turkish Liras exchange rate is instable. They stated that this situation complicates accessing the necessary technological facilities, and many people cannot play and/or broadcast because they do not have the equipment. Therefore, participants perceive certain conditions as an opportunity for the future. Some of the expressions of the participants regarding this issue are as follows:

"First of all, computers and equipment are so expensive. Right now, a couple of lights for a good broadcast, a microphone for good voice transfer that will make no ear disturbance, at least two HD cameras, a headphone to control broadcasting clarify for game noises, and finally a game computer will be required for the beginning. If I try to buy all of them now, it will cost, at least, 30-40 thousand (In Turkish Liras). So, everything is sold in dollars (Meaning the prices are determined according to the US Dollar/Turkish Liras exchange rate). This increases the prices every year due to the exchange rate. (Laughing)." (F2)

"You talk quite beautifully about it. However... have you ever tried to buy a gaming computer? ... The average installment would have a price

of around 20 thousand (In Turkish Liras). It is so expensive... I mean everything. Nobody can afford it. It suits my book... Well, who knows! Maybe there are better players than me. But they cannot afford even a computer. Thus, they have to watch us until they can buy one..." (M6)

"I also have a few tech needs. I shell out some of my revenue from advertisements to buy some of them. This business has a bright future. Our followers are increasing. I broadcast from other channels, too. However, I am mostly watched on Twitch. Without donations and advertisements, I could not get my needs. There are lots of talented kids. But they do not have the opportunity. I am sorry, but on the other hand, this is an opportunity in our hands. You know what they say: When the cat's away, the mice will play." (M3)

## 5. Discussion and Conclusion

As Baudrillard discussed, today's technology, digitalization, and new phenomena are increasingly transferring the world to virtual platforms where representations replace reality. In addition to topics such as the internet of things, big data, artificial intelligence, cloud computing, cyber-physical systems, autonomous systems, 3D printers, blockchains, cybersecurity, augmented reality, virtual reality, and simulation technologies come to the fore in the digitalization process. Considering all of these technologies are transforming the physical world into a virtual world gradually.

Acknowledging the research and interview findings, the participants stated that they played games from an early age, and their skills improved over time. The game industry, which has grown in the developing technology over time, has become a sector in which these individuals who play games from an early age provide spontaneous participation. In the E-Sports culture, which has become widespread with the development of the competitive environment of gaming, the Twitch platform, which emerged as an alternative television and followed by individuals who are closely related to the game industry, who do not enjoy the conventional TV programs, has created a separate sector for individuals interested in digital games.

Addition finding obtained in the study is that individuals with digital game skills now set their career goals on E-Sports and broadcasting on Twitch/YouTube. Individuals focus on the industry after realizing that digital games, which they have played as a hobby since a young age, can be an opportunity. Since there are many income-generating areas in digital games such as E-Sports tournaments, international tournaments, and broadcasting, as individuals develop their skills, they begin to take part in fields suitable for the masses they can reach.

Another finding is that the technology market in Turkey has a foreign exchange (US Dollars) indexed. Therefore, access to technology is generating a limitation for game-

players. Nevertheless, the participants perceive this situation as an opportunity. Because other talented players have difficulty in accessing technology, and they are not included as a broadcaster. That paves the way for the participants.

In conclusion, individuals believe that they can earn money by engaging in E-Sports activities with their digital gaming skills. The digital game industry expands, and it is an opportunity for talented individuals to have gaming careers. Individuals with digital gaming skills will be future opinion leaders for a gaming audience accordingly.

Digitalization and new possibilities, together with the effect of an unexpected situation such as a pandemic, have forced the rapid digital transformation everywhere. The digital game industry, which advertisers and marketers see as an opportunity to reach new generation customers in the digitalization process, has turned into a door of earning for many young talents with the influence of social networks. With digitalization and its effects, it has been possible for individuals who like to play games with their computers to earn income from this leisure time activity tool at the same time. In the future, it seems that the realities of the future will replace today's realities with the presence of more people in virtual environments.

### References

- 99firms-Content. (2021). *YouTube Demographic*. Web: <https://99firms.com/blog/youtube-demographics/#gref> adresinden 07 Temmuz 2021'de alınmıştır.
- Altınöz, M. (2009). *Yetenek yönetimi*. Ankara: Nobel Yayınevi.
- Altunbaş, H. (2001). Yeni medya ve interaktif reklamcılık. *Kurgu dergisi*, 18, 369-384.
- Aral, N. (2000). Çocuk gelişiminde oyunun önemi. *Çağdas Eğitim Dergisi*, 25(265), 15-17.
- Aslam, S. (2021). YouTube by the numbers: Stats, demographics and fun facts. Web: <https://www.omnicoreagency.com/youtube-statistics/> adresinden 10 Temmuz 2021 tarihinde alınmıştır.
- Avcıoğlu, G. S. (2011). Yapısal kimlikten seçimlik kimliğe; kimliğin medya aracılığıyla yeniden üretimi. *Uluslararası İnsani Bilimleri Dergisi*, 8(2), 359-370.
- Baudrillard, J. (2015a). *Sessiz yığınların gölgesinde*. (2nd Ed). (Trans. O. Adanır). Ankara: Doğu Batı Yayınları.
- Baudrillard, J. (2015b). *Şeytana satılan ruh ya da kötülüğün egemenliği*. (4th. Ed). (Trans. O. Adanır). Ankara: Dogu Bati Yayinlari.
- Bélisle, J. F. and Bodur, H. O. (2010). Avatars as information: Perception of consumers based on their Avatars in virtual worlds. *Psychology & Marketing*, 28(7), 741-765.

- Benli, U. (2018). *Sunuş (Introduction)*. Dijital oyun bağımlılığı çalıştayı. Web: <https://www.guvenliweb.org.tr/dosya/usxdh.pdf> adresinden 15 Temmuz 2021'de alınmıştır.
- Caillois, R. (2001). *Man, play and games*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
- Cambridge-Dictionary. (2021). Definition of simulation. Web: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/tr/s%C3%B6z%C3%BCk/ingilizce/simulation> adresinden 12 Nisan 2021'de alınmıştır.
- Castells, M. (2004). *The network society: a cross cultural perspective*. Northampton: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited.
- Debord, G. (2012). *Gösteri toplumu*. (5th Ed). (Trans. O. Taşkent ve A. Emekçi) İstanbul: Ayrıntı Yayınları.
- Debord, G. (2021). *The society of the spectacle*. Cambridge: Unredacted Word. Web: <https://unredacted-word.pub/spectacle/> adresinden 15 Temmuz 2021'de alınmıştır.
- Dostal, J., Wang, X., Steingartner, W. and Nuangchalerm, P. (2017). *Digital intelligence-new concept in context of future of school education*. 10th International Conference of Education, Research and Innovation (p. 3706-3712). Sevilla, Spain: ICERI2017 Proceedings.
- Emarketer-Editors. (2019). which types of ads annoy consumers most? insider-intelligence. Web: <https://www.emarketer.com/content/why-consumers-avoid-ads> adresinden 29 Temmuz 2021'de alınmıştır.
- Erdem, B. K. ve Kemiksiz, R. C. (2020). Çevrimiçi dönüşümün mesleki tezahuru e-spor faaliyetleriyle “dijital oyuncular kuşağı”. *Journal of Economy Culture & Society, (Özel Sayı)*, 315-336.
- Erdinç, I. (2016). *Twitch: Oyun oynayarak para kazandıran platform*. Web: <https://journocom.tr/twitch-oyun-oyunayarak-para-kazan> adresinden 17 Haziran 2021'de alınmıştır.
- Evren, C. (2020). Oyun bağımlılığı yetişkinleri de buluyor, <https://yesilay.org.tr/tr/makaleler/oyun-bagimlilik-yetiskinleri-de-buluyor>, Received On: 17 Temmuz 2021'de alınmıştır.
- Feldman, D. H. and Goldsmith, L. (1986). *Nature's gambit: child prodigies and the development of human potential*. Basic Books.
- Fire, M., Goldschmidt, R. and Elovici, Y. (2019). *Online social networks: threats and solutions*. IEEE Communication Survey & Tutorials (Fourth Quarter), 2019-2036. Web: <https://ieeexplore.ieee.org/stamp/stamp.jsp?arnumber=6809839> adresinden 17 Temmuz 2021'de alınmıştır.
- Funk, M. (2020). How many YouTube channels are there?. Web: <https://www.tubics.com/blog/number-of-youtube-channels/> adresinden 17 Temmuz 2021'de alınmıştır.

- Gilbert, N. (2020). Number of gamers worldwide 2021/2022: Demographics, statistics, and predictions. Web: <https://financesonline.com/number-of-gamers-worldwide/> adresinden 20 Temmuz 2021’de alınmıştır.
- Gill, C. B., Zampin, M. A. and Mehta, B. N. (2015). Digital identity: Develop one before you're given one. *Urology*, 85(6), 1219-1223.
- Gitlin, J. (2020). 74% of people are tired of social media ads—but they’re effective, <https://www.surveymonkey.com/curiosity/74-of-people-are-tired-of-social-media-ads-but-theyre-effective/>, Received On: 20 Temmuz 2021’de alınmıştır.
- Grassi, A. P., Garcia, E. M. and Fenton, L. J. (2017). Digital identity guidelines. *National Institute of Standards and Technology, NIST. Special Publication (800)*, 63-70, [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/324845045\\_Digital\\_Identity\\_Guidelines](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/324845045_Digital_Identity_Guidelines), Received On: 20 Temmuz 2021’de alınmıştır.
- Holmes, R. (2019). We now see 5,000 ads a day- and it's getting worse. Web: <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/have-we-reached-peak-ad-social-media-ryan-holmes/> adresinden 17 Temmuz 2021’de alınmıştır.
- Juul, J. (2010). *A casual revolution: Reinventing video games and their players*. London: The MIT Press.
- Kang, H. S. and Yang, H. D. (2006). The visual characteristics of avatars in computer-mediated communication: Comparison of internet relay chat and instant messenger as of 2003. *International Journal of Human & Computer Studies* (64), 1173-1183.
- Karabağlı, O. (2020). *Advergame: Dijital oyun reklamcılığı*. Web: <https://dijitalmedyavecocuk.bilgi.edu.tr/> adresinden 15 Temmuz 2021’de alınmıştır.
- Kavut, S. (2018). Goffman’ın benlik sunumu kuramı bağlamında sosyal medyada kimlik inşası: Instagram üzerine bir araştırma. *Nosyon: Uluslararası Toplum & Kültür Çalışmaları Dergisi*, 1, 1-12.
- Kırgız, A. (2007). *The advergames: Latest weapon of brands towards children*, 4th International Children & Communication Congress “Children Under Risk”, İstanbul Üniversitesi, October 22-24, 143-152, İstanbul.
- Koçyiğit, S., Tuğluk, M. N. ve Kök, M. (2007). Çocuğun gelişim sürecinde eğitsel bir etkinlik olarak oyun. *Atatürk Üniversitesi Kazım Karabekir Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi*, 0(16), 324-342.
- Mckinsey-Global-Institute. (2019, April 17). *Digital identification: A key to inclusive growth*. Web: <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/mckinsey-digital/our-insights/digital-identification-a-key-to-inclusive-growth#> adresinden 15 Temmuz 2021’de alınmıştır.
- Mcluhan, M. and Powers, B. R. (2001). *Global koy*. (2. Ed). (Trans. B. Ö. Duzgoren). İstanbul: Scala Yayıncılık.

- Nagy, P. and Koles, B. (2014). The digital transformation of human identity: towards a conceptual model of virtual identity in virtual worlds. *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*, 20(3), 276-292.
- Next-In-Game. (2020). Global karantina gunlerinin oyun dunyasi uzerine etkileri, next-in-game. Web: <https://iabtr.org/UploadFiles/Reports/Global%20Karantina%20Gunlerinin%20Oyun%20Dunyas%c4%b1%20uzerine%20Etkileri%20%20Sekte%cc%88rel%20Makale%202020%20Nisan842020205722.pdf> adresinden 15 Temmuz 2021'de alınmıştır.
- O'reilly-III, C. and Tushman, M. L. (2008). Ambidexterity as a dynamic capability: Resolving the innovator's dilemma. *Research in Organizational Behavior*, 28, 185-206.
- Öker, Z. (2015). *Kurgusal dünyanın gölgesinde bir unutkan Jean Baudrillard, 21. yüzyıl iletişim çağını aydınlatan kuramcılar, kadife karanlık*. İstanbul: Su Yayınevi.
- Oxford-Dictionary. (2021, April 12). Oxford English dictionary, <https://languages.oup.com/dictionaries/>, Received On: 18 Temmuz 2021'de alınmıştır.
- Özüölmez, P. (2019). Yeni iletişim ortamı olarak dijital oyunlarda deneyim içerikli yeni bir reklam uygulaması: Skillful finger örneği. *Erciyes İletişim Dergisi*, 6(2), 1383-1404.
- Perez, S. (2018). Twitch solidifies its lead with viewership up 21% in q1, while YouTube gaming drops. Web: <https://techcrunch.com/2018/04/26/twitch-solidifies-its-lead-with-viewership-up-21-in-q1-while-youtube-gaming-drops/> adresinden 15 Temmuz 2021'de alınmıştır.
- Schmidt, E. and Cohen, J. (2013). *The new digital age-reshaping the future of people, nations and business*. New York: Alfred A. Knoff.
- Simmonds, P. (2015). The digital identity issues. *Network Society*, 8-13.
- Smith, C. (2020). Twitch stats, player counts, facts and news. Web: <https://videogamesstats.com/twitch-stats-facts/> 15 Temmuz 2021'de alınmıştır.
- Statista. (2020). Percentage of U.S. Internet users who use YouTube as of 3rd quarter 2020. Web: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/296227/us-youtube-reach-age-gender/> adresinden 18 Temmuz 2021'de alınmıştır.
- Stigler, G. (1988). Competition. J. Eatwell, M. Milgate, and P. Newman inside of *The New Palgrave: A Dictionary of Economics* (p. 531-536), Palgrave Macmillan.
- Sullivan, C. (2016). Digital citizenship and the right to digital identity under international law. *Computer Law & Security Review*, (32), 474-481.
- Tanrıverdi, M. ve Yekelenga, S. (2019). Genç yetişkinlerde dijital oyun bağımlılığının sağlıklı yaşam parametreleri üzerine etkisi. *Bağımlılık Dergisi*, 20(4), 224-231.

- Teece, D. (2007). Explicating dynamic capabilities: the nature and micro foundations of (sustainable) enterprise performance. *Strategic Management Journal*, 28(13), 1319-1350.
- Tiedemann, C. (2004). Sport (and culture of physical motion) for historians, an approach to precise the central term(s). IX International CESH-Congress. Crotona, Italy. Web: <http://kulturwiss.info/tiedemann/documents/VortragCrotona2004Englisch.pdf> adresinden 15 Temmuz 2021'de alınmıştır.
- Topsumer, F. ve Sağlam, M. (2019). Üniversite öğrencilerinin dijital oyun oynama nedenlerine ilişkin nitel bir çalışma. *Akdeniz Üniversitesi İletişim Fakültesi Dergisi*, 32(2), 485-504.
- Ulutaş, A. (2011). Okul öncesi dönemde drama ve oyunun önemi. *Adıyaman Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 4(6), 233-242.
- Ünal, M. (2009). Çocuk gelişiminde oyun alanlarının yeri ve önemi. *İnönü Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi*, 10(2), 95-110.
- Ünlü-Dalaylı, F. (2020). Representation of robots in the social media with the simulation universe: social media influencers and influencer robot miquela sousa. *Uluslararası Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 3(2), 87-102.
- Vb-Staff. (2020). In-game ad revenue will reach \$56b in 2024, but getting your share depends on genre (VB live). Web: <https://venturebeat.com/2020/11/09/in-game-ad-revenue-will-reach-56b-in-2024-but-getting-your-share-depends-on-genre-vb-live/> adresinden 20 Temmuz 2021'de alınmıştır.
- Wagner, M. (2006). *On the scientific relevance of e-sport*. J. Arreymbi, V. A. Clincy, O. L. Droeghorn, S. Joan, M. G. Ashu, J. A. Ware, . . . H. R. Arabia inside of Proceedings of the 2006 International Conference on Internet Computing and Conference on Computer Game Development (p. 437-440). Las Vegas: CSREA Pres.
- Weir, P. (1998). *The Truman Show* [The Movie].
- Yengin, D. (2012). *Dijital oyunlarda şiddet*. İstanbul: Beta Yayınları.
- YouTube. (2021). youtube.com. Web: <https://www.youtube.com> adresinden 25 Temmuz 2021'de alınmıştır.