



Review Article

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E-Sports Events as a New Trend in Tourism

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ABSTRACT

Since the concept of tourism has a multifaceted structure, many activities could be evaluated within the scope of tourism activities. Electronic sports events could also be evaluated in this context. E-sports events such as Call of Duty, Counter-Strike, Valorant and Dota 2 bring users together through many gaming platforms. Thus, when e-sports events are considered as event tourism, these events could lead to tourism movements. It is seen that e-sports players and e-sports viewers travel to the destinations where the event is held. Especially the destinations where these events are organized could provide an advantage in terms of touristic recognition. This study is a conceptual study that predicts that e-sports events will be among the new trends of tourism. This study has been carried out in order to reveal an idea on the effects of e-sports events on the tourism sector. Therefore, systematic literature review has been applied in this study. As a result of the literature review, it has been concluded that e-sports activities could have positive effects on the tourism sector.

Introduction

With the development of technology in the 21st century, it is seen that the demand for video games is increasing worldwide. The demand for video games by people is increasing by about 10 to 15 percent each year (Zackariasson & Wilson, 2010). E-sports, or esports, has become a multi-million dollar industry (Cunningham et al., 2018; Hayward, 2019). The growth experienced in the field of e-Sports could extends far beyond the number of participants. This growth has been driven by events held in major arenas and televised esports competitions for several years. (Keiper et al., 2017). In fact, the acceleration and development of eSports' popularity may come as no surprise. Because as early as 2013, the League of Legends Season 3 World Championship was watched by 32 million, more than the Major League Baseball World Series with 14.9 million viewers and the NCAA Basketball Final Four events with 15.7 million viewers (Takahashi, 2019). In 2019, this number reached 380 million viewers, an increase of 13.5% compared to 2018 (Reynolds, 2019). Esports growth for 2020 was estimated to exceed approximately \$1.1 billion, representing an increase of over 15.7% over the previous year (Newzoo.com., 2020). In fact, this estimate was reduced by \$41 million in 2020 due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which led to the cancellation of many events (Newzoo.com, 2020).

E-sports generally means using electronic equipment as a carrier to participate in games developed by various game developers for compete with other participants and so participate in projects similar to traditional competitive games such as Go and Badminton (Hwang, 2022). Therefore, e-sports refers to games in which various electronic devices such as computers, ipads and mobile phones are used as sports equipment to participate in physical, mental

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and other confrontational sports among electronic sports players (Lu et al., 2022). In this sport, if there is a team activity, the team spirit in individuals can be greatly improved. On the other hand if it is an individual activity, the various coordination, control and willpower abilities of the gamers could improve continuously (Hou et al., 2020).

Since the tourism sector is a multifaceted sector, it can be said that e-sports events are also within the scope of this sector. Multiple e-sports stakeholders and game genres provide an overview of what might influence esports fans' visit intentions to live esports events (Jiménez-Barreto et al., 2020). Therefore it can be said that e-sports events are full of activities that connect the online environment and tourism destinations (Farmaki et al., 2021).

This study covers the place of e-sports events within the scope of tourism. The main problem of study is as follows: Could e-sports tourism events contribute to the tourism sector? This study has been conducted to find the answer to this question. In the study, it is aimed to reveal the place of e-sports activities within the scope of tourism activities and how they can contribute to the tourism sector. The main purpose of this study is to emphasize the contribution of e-sports tourism events to the tourism industry. The study differs from other studies in terms of revealing the potential of e-sports events in the tourism industry. In addition, with this study, the lack of literature on e-sports activities within the scope of tourism has been tried to be eliminated.

Literature Review

Understanding E-Sports and E-Sports Culture

E-sports could be expressed as the professionalization of competitive digital games in general. This definition, which is a useful starting point for understanding esports, lays the foundations of esports culture. In this sport, if the players have sufficient skills in a certain digital game that provides e-sports tournament opportunity, they can earn significant incomes if they reach the top level. The term e-sports defines professional electronic game competitions (Taylor, 2012). However, the way it is perceived may differ from person to person. The main reason for this is that "e-sports" has different definitions for different situations and different people from time to time. Therefore, it is necessary to examine the phenomenon more deeply in order to develop a solid perspective on how this very interesting concept is perceived (Stein et al., 2013). E-sports has a significant audience. For example, the photo showing the first part of a four-part e-sports organization is given in figure 1 (Harvard International Review, 2022).

Figure 1. This is Part 1 of a 4 Part Series on Esports.



Source: Harvard International Review (2022). Esports part 1: What are e-sports?. Accessed 10.12.2022 <https://hir.harvard.edu/esports-part-1-what-are-esports/>.

National culture has effects on tourists' international travel intentions and habits (Woodside et al., 2011). These effects may differ depending on the habits of the tourists in the countries they come from. Generally, citizens of European countries have different national cultures (Minkov & Hofstede, 2014). Parallel to this idea, from an e-sports standpoint, "European Culture" has emerged as players compete and play together almost exclusively with other Europeans on European servers (Rita et al., 2019). The "EU vs. NA" rivalry is the longest-running rivalry in e-sports and the animosity between the two regions because this rivalry effects millions of e-sports fans on both sides of the pool" (Minkov & Hofstede, 2014). Although the USA and Western Europe are culturally similar, it has been stated that traveling to participate in e-sports events may be more interesting for millennials from the USA (Hofstede, 1983; Rita et al., 2019). On the other hand, it is suggested that the regularity of sports consumption and the frequency of fan-related behavior may be higher in Western Europe than in North America (Parry et al., 2014). As a result, there can be significant differences between US and European e-sports audiences, so different aspects need to be considered in order to assess the differences between US and European esports audiences.

As an E-Sports Events Motivation Tool Twitch

TwitchTV could be defined as an internet platform used for live sharing video streams in electronic games and watching for its viewers. This platform stands out as an application that allows you to watch other gamers' games without playing the games. Thus, by enabling e-sports enthusiasts to communicate with each other, it could bring players and customers together. The popularity of this platform has increased so much that even Amazon has announced that it will pay 970 million dollars in cash for Twitch (Kim, 2014). Thus, it paved the way for the creation of Twitch Interactive. As a result, Twitch Interactive is now a subsidiary of Amazon.com. TwitchTV brings together millions of different viewers, with approximately millions of different players broadcasting their games on Twitch on a monthly basis, and an average of more than two hours per day for each viewer (TwitchTV, 2022). Therefore, it can be said that it is an important platform for e-sports players. Twitch TV has many channels for gamers. The most watched Twitch e-sports channels by gamers in 2021 are shown in figure 2.

Figure 2. Most Watched Esports Twitch Channels in 2021



Source: Markov, R. (2021). Most watched e-sports Twitch channels in 2021. Accessed 14.12.2022. <https://streamcharts.com/news/most-watched-esports-channels-2021>.

TwitchTV is of great importance for e-sports tournaments and events due to its organizational structure and opportunities. First of all, e-sports game performances are broadcast live. In addition, individuals could search on these games, just like the YouTube social media platform. Gamers could broadcast their live game performances

with TwitchTV. Thus, the game and the various shows of the players are also broadcast on this platform (Rita et al., 2019). Competitions such as tournaments, leagues and cups could be held frequently. These ongoing events could be held in different cities at the continental and global level. Because of this feature, they need to be organized and live broadcasts of commentators and presenters should be provided. In addition to Twitch, organizations such as ESPN also broadcast news covering e-sports tournaments, games, teams and players (Erzberger, 2016). Thus, the awareness and popularity of e-sports events may increase day by day.

Visit Intentions and E-Sports

Visit intention is a concept that explains and expresses the desire of tourists to visit a tourism destination (Matzler et al., 2016; Stokburger-Sauer, 2011). It is known that factors such as mentality and desire are effective determinants of individuals' future travel behavior. Therefore, it is important for tourism industry representatives to understand tourists' visit intention (Horng et al., 2012). Positive and negative experiences could change the way to tourists think about a place. Thus, it also affects their future travel intentions (Rojas-Méndez et al., 2019). As a result, e-sports tourism opportunities, online news about it, and events within the scope of e-sports may affect tourists' intention to travel and attend events. In order to carry out studies on this subject in more qualified way, it is necessary to participate in online gaming experiences and physical activities of e-sports players (Stokburger-Sauer, 2011; Rojas-Méndez et al., 2019). A visual of ESL Pro League 2022, one of the world-famous e-sports events, is shown in figure 3 (Kemp, 2022).

Figure 3. A Visual of ESL Pro League 2022



Source: Kemp, C. (2022). 2022 Esports calendar - all major tournaments and events. Accessed 10.12.2022. <https://www.ginx.tv/en/esports/esports-tournaments-events-calendar-2022>.

E-sports could include much more than games between players. Some motivational components could be obtained even by observing others at play. Hundreds of millions of users may prefer to spend time watching other players playing video games through live internet broadcasts called streaming on platforms such as Twitch (Hamari & Sjöblom, 2016). There are many factors that motivate these users to spend their time watching others play video games. The release of tension during the game plays a big role in this. In their study conducted in 2016, Hamari & Sjöblom stated that the tension that arises during playing electronic video games increases the time it takes for users

to watch broadcasts. As a result, the popularity of e-sports has increased, especially with the inclusion of video games that are best known in the esports industry in the global video streaming trend. Thus, it has become a motivating element for individuals to travel for e-sports purposes (Radman Pesa et al., 2017).

Online communities with elements such as trust and friendship could affect tourists' travel intentions (Lee & Hyun, 2015). Features of e-sports events, such as providing opportunities for friends to play together or to make new friendships, could create visit intentions on individuals within the scope of event tourism.

E-Sports Events and E-Sports Tourism

E-sports (electronic sports) could be defined as a new form of sport in which basic aspects of sport are applied through electronic systems. Within the scope of e-sports systems, players and teams face each other through computer interfaces (Hamari & Sjöblom, 2016). In other words, esports could be defined as "a form of video game where both players and teams (while playing a team game) face off against each other to play digital video games on computers via LAN or internet connections". E-sports covers competitive video games that take place in leagues and tournaments where teams sponsored by various companies participate in electronic sports organizations created at certain scales (Radman Pesa et al., 2017).

With the increasing interest created by e-sports organizations, another important issue to be considered is the role of these events within the scope of sustainable tourism (Albani and Usulludin, 2021). For this reason, the economic and social approaches that emerged with the development of e-sports are important within the scope of sustainability tourism. It has been emphasized that the economic impact of the new events that emerged with the developments in e-sports not only provides the current level of stability of the industry, but also commercial growth (Nyström et al., 2022). An example of this situation is the organization of 5,432 e-sports tournaments worldwide in 2019. It is known that the first three of these tournaments were organized in powerful countries in terms of economically such as the USA, China and South Korea. In addition, since 2018; players, teams and destinations from the esports market have reacquired close to \$1 billion in revenue. (Albani and Usulludin, 2021). Thus, it can be said that e-sports is more than just activities for having fun.

The role of e-sports events within the scope of social sustainability is explained by meeting the various needs of the individuals participating in these events (Nyström et al., 2022). Considering this situation from the point of view of professional gamers, they could get awards and wages as a result of their performances, and they could also be recognized by other gamers. On the other hand, fans who are e-sports enthusiasts could consciously devote their free time and financial situation to experience e-sports events, meet the players they support, and share their passions with other e-sports enthusiasts with similar interests. From the perspective of e-sports tourists, participation in a live e-sports event is considered a unique and unforgettable experience involving individuals who enjoy participating in or watching the games (Qian et al., 2020; Masłowski & Karasiewicz, 2021).

Hosting events for e-sports tourists has a direct impact on the tourism industry because of spending on accommodation, transportation, beverage, food and so on (Nyström et al., 2022). Expenditures resulting from agreements carried out for e-sports organizations and promoting the local economy could increase the competitiveness of the destination where e-Sports events are held against other destinations. Therefore, e-sports events could be considered as a driving force in terms of improving the image of tourism destinations. This could strengthen the touristic facilities and services operating in the destination against their competitors. The satisfactory experiences of the gamers and the perceived quality of service at the facilities where e-sports events are held will also shape the perceptions of e-sports tourists about the destination visited and their preferences for their future visits (Albani & Usulludin, 2021; Masłowski & Karasiewicz, 2021).

Discussion and Previous Studies

In the literature, some studies have been conducted on the importance of spectator support, enthusiasm and commitment for gamers (Funk & James, 2006; Gladden & Funk, 2002; Mahony et al., 2002). Visitors attend events in the hope of establishing a greater bond with famous individuals they admire (Lee et al., 2019). Individuals who participate in e-sports events held in other cities or organized on online platforms could also be evaluated in this sense. It can be said that e-sport events tourism type is among the alternative tourism types. This type of tourism is mainly about gaming companies that offer e-sports-based experiences to individuals. This type of tourism includes gamers, gaming communities, sponsor companies, broadcasting stations, tour operators/travel agencies and other tourism businesses (Kozinets et al., 2004).

Cunningham and Kwon (2003) argue that the level of love that fans have for their favorite team strongly influences their intention to participate in sporting events. In this context, the formation of team identity is one of the important factors in predicting the intention of individuals to participate in activities in the future (Matsuoka et al., 2003). Since the necessity of winning as a team is at the forefront in many of the e-sports events, just like in sports such as football and basketball, the teams that appear in these events could also be evaluated within this scope.

Experiential streaming enabled by online platforms such as Twitch encourages audience participation in e-events (Chang et al., 2018). The experiential flow in the context of tourism positively affects the tendency to travel to the point where the flow comes from and the purchasing intentions of individuals (Perez-Vega et al., 2018). The e-sports events held and the broadcasting of these events on TwitchTV can also increase the desire of individuals to live these experiences by traveling to the places where the organizations are held.

There should be a consistent relationship between the motivations and expectations of tourists to participate in tourism and the activities they perform there when they travel to a place (Matzler et al., 2016). In this direction, Matzler et al. (2016) and Stokburger-Sauer (2011) also argue that there is a positive relationship between an individual's identity and travel intentions. Therefore, it can be said that the e-sports activities that individuals consider worth traveling for are the activities carried out on the e-sports games they love.

Lee and Hyun (2015) argue that e-sports events promote trust and friendship, and that online communities created within the scope of these events can affect the travel intentions of gamers (Cunningham & Kwon, 2003). Their travels are also similar because gamers have had similar experiences in their passionate e-sports games (McLeay et al., 2019). Thus, e-sports gamers have the opportunity to socialize at these events. As a result, it is seen that the organizers and marketers of e-sports events often emphasize the importance of socialization in these events because they know this situation.

Conclusion and Implications

E-sports events are events where various video games could be tried, in addition to the competitive environment it offers to the players. There are rooms that allow these games to be played with friends. E-sports events are also known to offer lectures on some new e-sports variants or video games. All these elements make e-sports a center of attraction for gamers. E-sports events also have a tourism aspect. Accordingly, in e-Sports events, experiences perceived by consumers within the scope of special interest tourism are also presented (Albani & Usulludin, 2021). The fact that tourists participate in tourism trips with the intention of visiting e-sports events confirms this situation. Therefore, when explaining e-sports events, the tourism aspect should also be mentioned.

E-sports events could be considered as an important resource for the tourism industry thanks to the multifaceted structure it contains. Because there are electronic games that are still played by billions of individuals in the e-sports industry. There is a large audience of famous gamers who play these games and fans who watch these games or famous gamers. This audience is familiar with the internal dynamics of e-sports events and its unique e-sports culture. Especially with the increase in the number and popularity of online gamer platforms such as TwitchTV, it is seen that the fan base of e-sports events is increasing day by day (TwitchTV, 2022).

Considering the developments and significant growth in the e-sports industry, it is being investigated how online gaming stakeholders could be attracted to e-sports events held in physical environments in certain destinations (Newzoo, 2020). These ongoing studies show the importance of e-sports events for the tourism industry. Therefore, the motivation of individuals to participate in e-sports activities is also decisive for the development of these activities. The motivations of gamers and e-sports game enthusiasts to participate in e-sports events also constitute their tourism motivation. Because these individuals create tourism movements by traveling to destinations where e-sports events are held with various motivations. Thus, the motivations that result from these tourism movements show the visit intentions of e-sports gamers.

With this study, the potential of e-sports events in the tourism industry has been emphasized by making use of statistical and conceptual data. The main question of the research, whether e-sports events could contribute to the tourism sector, has been answered. In the study, it has been concluded that e-sports activities could make various contributions to the tourism sector, especially increase the recognition of destinations and increase the visit intentions of tourists. As a result, it has been concluded that e-sports events could become an important position in the field of tourism, especially in the future.

As a result of this study, some implications could be presented to destination managers, tourism stakeholders, university administrations and e-sports stakeholders. The implications are:

- ✓ E-sports events, which is a new tourism motivation in the tourism sector, should be supported by destination managers. In particular, municipalities could both discover e-sports gamers and raise awareness in destinations by organizing e-sports tournaments.
- ✓ Tour operators or hotels could host world-famous e-sports tournaments such as ESL (Electronic Sports League), EPL (ePremier League), WTT (Want to Trade), BTS (Beyond to Submit) and CCT (Champion of Champions Tour) by sponsoring these tournaments. Thus, it can be ensured that the worldwide awareness of them and the destinations can be increased.
- ✓ Tourism researchers could focus on the games included in e-sports (such as CS: GO, Valorant and COD) and conduct specific research on these games.
- ✓ E-sports events could be included in the contents of courses such as event tourism or event management, which are given to students in universities. Thus, the interest of the students in the new generations could be increased.
- ✓ E-sports event managers could diversify e-sports events within the scope of tourism events. Gamers could be regenerated by performing tourism activities such as gastronomic tourism, cultural tourism, summer tourism and winter tourism between competitions.

Ethics Statement

During the writing process of this study titled "E-Sports Events as a New Trend in Tourism", scientific rules, ethics and quotation rules were followed; No falsification has been made on the data collection and this study has not been sent to any other journal for evaluation.

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