

# Esports from those who have Never Heard to those who Play: Examining the Awareness of Esports in Trabzon University

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## ABSTRACT

Technology and the internet have brought innovations in all areas of life and have brought a new dimension to the understanding of sports. Traditional sports understanding has moved to digital platforms with the change in communication technologies. Digital games that individuals play at their desks or smartphones and tablets are a means of relaxation and a different branch of sport. Digital games, which are preferred to spend leisure time, have attracted attention over time and turned into professional games. This professionalization has turned digital games into sports thanks to the increase in the audience. Today, esports is a new sports branch that is accepted all over the world and tournaments are organized. Esports-centered games, which are especially preferred by young audiences, have ceased to be a leisure activity and turned into a professionally practiced sport. The scope of this study is to examine the level of awareness of esports and the studies on esports and to measure the awareness of esports. Within the scope of the study, esports researches published in Turkey were scanned and classified according to their content. In addition, in order to determine the awareness of esports in the research, data were obtained by using the survey method with Trabzon University Faculty of Communication students. As a result of the research, findings were obtained that esports awareness varies according to age, income, and playing time

**Keywords:** Esports, Digital Sports, Awareness, Digitalisation and Sports, Esports in Communication Axis, Generation Z.

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## Introduction

Esports, which has found its place in the literature within the institutional framework, is defined as a sport that requires both physical and mental effort, where people from one end of the world can meet and play games with people from the other end of the world via the internet, or people from different parts of the world can meet and play games through large electronic sports organizations (Özkurt, 2019, p. 16). Esports, which is not only a new sports branch offered by developing technology, contributes economically to many sectors, especially the gaming industry. According to Newzoo's 2021 Global Esports & Live Streaming Market Report, global esports revenues are expected to exceed 1 billion dollars, while the country expected to receive the largest share of this revenue is expected to be China with 360.1 million dollars. The sector also has a large follower base and is in demand by its viewers. According to the same report, expected to reach 920.3 million spectators by 2024, esports is seen as one of the brightest areas of our age and the future, both as a sports branch and as an economic value. In today's world, Adoni and Nossek's formula of functional equivalence (the replacement of the traditional platform with the new one), functional differentiation (the traditional and the new platform seeking ways to continue together), functional diversity (the merging of both platforms under a single roof for many purposes), which is used to explain the processes that the media will undergo with technology, is also constructed in esports. Especially individuals who do not have the opportunity to do traditional sports have the opportunity to do sports on digital platforms with esports. Esports, which organizes international and regional tournaments and has started to take place among the branches of many sports clubs, is becoming a sector whose economic volume is developing by creating brand value while contributing to many sub-sectors and new branches (Daloğlu, 2021, p. 34).

Despite esports, which is seen as an ecosystem, esports player transfers, national and international leagues and tournaments, coaches, analysts, broadcast media and sponsors, whether it should be seen as a sports branch or not continues to be a subject of debate. When evaluated in terms of its quality, it is known that it is a field that gives people the opportunity to develop their cognitive and affective skills in the process of using technology, and it is understood that it has the basic features of traditional sports (training, technique, tactics, etc.) (Atalay & Boztepe, 2020, p.32). Considering the necessity of coordination and strategy development ability that sports is not only physical skills, we see that esports falls within the scope of the definition of sports in the age of technology. In opposition to this view, there are also opinions that see esports as a game addiction that does not contribute to physical abilities played on the computer and cannot be organized enough. Those who argue that the content of digital games is contrary to the spirit of traditional sports do not see esports as sports (Çakmak, 2021, p.63). Countries that understand the future development of esports include esports in their education programs. In countries such as China and Malaysia, esports has started to gain a place in the education programs of universities (Üçüncüoğlu, 2018, p. 38). Individuals who have the opportunity to gain career opportunities with esports also gain the ability to gain and coordinate cognitive and mental skills. Considering that esports is on the way to becoming a branch that brings many opportunities, and today, when it is researched how to make interaction with the new generation more efficient, it is seen that esports can be a tool to provide faster and easier access to audiences that are difficult to reach in terms of mass communication (so-called generation z, "digital natives", alpha generation, etc.). For this reason, it is important to determine the awareness of esports among individuals.

## Esports in Turkish Literature

When the articles on esports in Turkey are examined, it is seen that there are no elements that define the identity of the field, but many different disciplines are trying to examine this issue: We can list these studies as follows:

1. Studies that include research on the demographic structures of esports players, age and gender distribution and playing time (Alp et al., 2020; Mustafaoğlu et al., 2018; Ecevit et al., 2018).

2. Addressing the effects of environmental and digital conditions on esports players and their motivation processes (Kilci & Yalçiner, 2020; Argan et al., 2019; Öz & Üstün, 2019; Yıldız et al., 2020; Alp, 2020; Mustafaoglu et al., 2018).
3. Studies on the professional competence of esports, which is considered as a new career opportunity, its interaction with other professional groups, and the occupational acquisition of digital games, which are the field of interest of young people (Önder, 2021; Erdem & Kemiksiz, 2020; Kocadağ, 2017; Kocadağ & Duran, 2019; Çakır & Bingöl, 2020; Şenses, 2020).
4. The sectoral development of esports, which is considered as the new face of sports, the problems experienced by esports and the infrastructure studies carried out by sports clubs for this field: (Bingöl et al., 2021; Üçüncüoğlu & Çakır, 2017; Evren et al., 2019; Nazlı & Yağmur, 2021).
5. Economic studies: focused on the industrial and marketing aspects of esports. Studies that address esports in terms of the value added by the sports industry to the economy: (Atalay & Boztepe, 2020; Yükçü & Kaplanoğlu, 2018; Demir & Sertbaş, 2020; Peçenek et al., 2020; Çakmak, 2020; Akgöl, 2019; Pişkin et al., 2020).
6. Digital games, which have become the new favorite of digital sector investors, are the center of attention of the marketing sector along with esports (Tan, 2020; Keçeci, 2020).
7. Studies on raising awareness about the tourism potential of esports championships, which emerged as a new type of tourism (Yenişehiröğlu et al., 2018; Dilek, 2019; Bayram, 2018; Aktuna & Ünlüönen, 2017, Dalgıç & Birdir, 2019).
8. Studies that add new content to the esports literature by creating a conceptual framework (Büyükbaykal & İli, 2020; Ayar, 2018; Keçeci & Çelik, 2021; Aslan & Çoknaz, 2021; Arslan, 2021).
9. Studies on the relationship between sports and esports with different perspectives (Yayla & Güven, 2020; Çakmak, 2021; Çat & Özsoy, 2018).
10. As a content within the discipline of communication studies, we see that esports is addressed with two dimensions in the studies. The first of these is the brand value dimension focused on public relations and promotion (Kocaömer, 2019; Çolak et al., 2018) and the second is the studies evaluating the interaction of esports broadcasting platforms with users (Sarı & Harta, 2019; Akkaya et al., 2021; Ayaş, 2020).
11. Health-oriented content consists of topics related to addiction and physical development and activation aspects of esports (Mustafaoğlu et al., 2018; 2020; Can & Demir, 2020; Mustafaoğlu, 2018; Bayraktar et al., 2020).
12. A study on the development of mental and cognitive skills of esports players: (Saygın & Menteş, 2019).

### **Esports on the Axis of Communication**

Digital games are a part of mass media. For this reason, esports, which enables these games to be turned into a professional direction from amateur acting and watching, should also be seen as a media communication tool. As a matter of fact, the 2021 World Championship was followed by 2.2 million viewers simultaneously (Esports Charts Report). This shows that esports is an area that needs to be examined in many issues ranging from media usage preferences on the audience, addiction, consumption habits, and the brand and image value it creates. While the craze for competitive video games is thought to be primarily an Asian phenomenon, today only 51% of esports enthusiasts are in Asia. It is seen in the data obtained from Newzoo reports that North America and Europe have an important place in the global esports and gaming ecosystem (Baygöl, 2021, p.14).

Although it has many followers, esports contains problems whose negative aspects are open to discussion. Addiction is one of the leading problems. It is believed that digital games played during childhood develop cognitive intelligence, but games continued in later ages become activities with social components and become a means of social attachment (Kemiksiz, 2019, p.65). Studies have revealed that people who isolate themselves from their environment lose their perception of reality due to games, and many esports players have decreased reflexes in their 30s (Şimşek, 2020, p.63). In another addiction research examining the relationship between the emotional state of digital game players towards family and environmental ties and the duration of game playing, it was determined that esports players use to enter the pleasurable world of digital games to escape the stress and pain of daily life (Yılmaz, 2020, p.179).

According to Kocaömer (January, 2020, p.44), esports should not be considered only within the scope of players. In order for digital games to be considered within the scope of sports, they need to become professional competitive team games. Audience is considered as a very important component for sports organizations. Sports events are seen as the heart of the sports industry, and the sports audience is interpreted as the heart that keeps the heart working. The continuity of the audience is important for the continuity of this sports branch. As in every sports branch, esports has different audiences according to the game types. The fact that the audience plays the games as an amateur at the same time has a factor in following esports. Motivation is provided for the audience with the attraction of the phenomena that cannot happen in real life, which are available in game duration and games (Ocak, 2020, p.46). Audience motivation also gains importance in terms of keeping the continuity of the sector alive. Digital games are also commodities offered to the masses for consumption purposes. There are two types of consumption in game consumption: audience and player. In addition to consuming games by purchasing and playing them, users also consume them by watching the content created by different players (Bayrak, 2019, p.58). Both esports players and viewers tend to purchase digital games. In a study conducted with esports players and viewers, it was concluded that the sponsor of an event, a player or a team has a great influence on purchasing (Ejjaberi et al., 2020, p.858). Although digital games are purchased once in the market, consumers continue their purchasing behavior in different channels with other products (products such as cosmetic items, boxes, keys, season tickets) (Bayrak, 2019, p.73). Esports consumers' purchasing behaviors are affected by the success they gain by moving away from the perception of reality, especially during game play, and their interest in game characters. It is seen that consumers turn to sub-segment products related to the game in order to belong to the game or team they are a regular (Esen, 2019, p.103). While individuals become a potential consumer with digital games, digital games, which are the new product of communication technologies, gain momentum in becoming an industrial product. While esports products, which have started to create a new culture, attract the attention of large-scale companies, they have made individuals more dependent on themselves thanks to the perception they create. Esports, which makes the individual dependent on itself, is polished day by day and attracts consumers under the name of sports (Küçük, 2019, p.40). The new generation, which makes it compulsory to live in the virtual world, forces the course of the sector to keep up with itself. Realizing that the only way to survive in the virtual world is to consume, many sports clubs (e.g. Galatasaray, Fenerbahçe, Beşiktaş, etc.) are taking their place on esports platforms.

The unifying aspect of esports is provided by digital media portals like itself. In this way, teams can establish more advanced ties with their fans and fan bases around the world. All clubs operating under the scope of esports can reach their fans through digital channels such as their own web pages, social media accounts, discord servers, mobile applications, etc., so that they can share a lot of transfer news and events. In addition, blocks created by teams' fan bases also help other fans to interact and operate together. In esports platforms broadcasting within the scope of Linear TV (traditional TV), Online TV and social media platforms with live video streaming feature, the top five platforms that reach the masses with live broadcasting are Twitch TV, YouTube, Mixer, VK, Smashcast, respectively. From this point of view, although esports matches are broadcasted from many different platforms all over the world on the grounds that they are related to consumption, it can be said that social media platforms are at the forefront in terms of consuming esports matches (İçli, 2020, pp.127-130). Research shows that sponsors

invest in esports events by targeting new generation players, especially the so-called "gamer". For this reason, there are many companies and brands that see young people as the target audience such as telecommunications, automotive, food, travel, entertainment sector, technology, social media. It is difficult to reach esports audiences, which have a unique audience, through traditional communication channels. With the "influnecer", which corresponds to the opinion leader in social media, young people follow esports events with their observations. For this reason, companies also turn to influencers. In addition to all these, the fact that sponsorship costs are lower and the reachable audience is higher compared to traditional sports directs brands and companies to esports, a new sports branch (Taşkıran, 2019, p. 90). The numerical data in the 2020 reports of Newzoo, a platform where studies and data on esports are published, show the direction of investments in this field. In the "2020 Global Esports Market Report" report, 636.9 million of the 1.1-billion-dollar investment consists of sponsorship expenditures, media rights and advertising expenditures. Revenues from sponsorship account for more than 50 percent of global esports revenues. Brands that effectively analyze the "Generation Z" profile anticipate a 14.9% increase in investments by 2023. All these investments also allow esports activities to develop further (Çürükoğlu, 2020, pp.37-38).

Today, although there is still debate about the counting of esports as a sport, a significant part of the literature defines esports as a sport of the future. Hutchins (2006, p.6) sees esports as a content that points to high-level sports competitions such as training, teamwork, aggression, and the full execution of planned tactical maneuvers. Esports players, who are not seen as a branch in the discussions due to the limitation of physical activity, perform 400 movements on the keyboard four times as much as an average person (Üçüncüoğlu, 2018, p.51). Sports clubs use esports to reach the young generations they have started to lose in the face of digitalization (Akgöl, 2018, p.215). Esports appeals to new generations with the career and job opportunities it provides. Investors who realize the sector invest in professional players. Apart from being a professional player, it offers job opportunities such as broadcasting, commentating in tournaments, and taking part in tournament organizations. Many late generations who admire the esports players they watch and admire are becoming addicted to digital games due to this new career opportunity (Kocadağ, 2019, p.91).

### **Esports in terms of Economic Value Awareness**

The speed of development of digital games continues at the highest level. This speed has turned itself into a sports branch as esports. Just as every sports branch becomes industrialized over time, esports is also becoming an industry. Thanks to the practice of free games, the young generation is turning to esports, which they see as a new line of business. Not only that, esports events that feed many branches directly and indirectly affect many sectors from players to viewers, from sponsors to broadcasters. One of the most suitable areas for young people to be won is esports activities, and when brands and companies make their products and advertisements through these organizations, they can reach very large young masses (Daloğlu, 2021, p.34). The phenomenon of leisure time is one of the issues that attract the most attention of the consumption and culture industry. Individuals turn to various activities to fill their free time. These activities have gained different dimensions with the development of the digital age. However, the most important target audience of these contents is the young generation known as "Generation Z". Today, it is seen that many sectors, from sports clubs to brands, from the digital industry to the food industry, have shifted their investments to esports, the most professional field of digital games (Güler, 2019, pp.51-52). From transfers, national and international leagues and tournaments, coaches, analysts, broadcast media and sponsors, esports has become an ecosystem, making it necessary for sports clubs to establish their own teams. In Turkey, well-established sports clubs such as Fenerbahçe, Galatasaray and Beşiktaş have formed their esports teams. At the same time, esports is after soccer. It is the most watched sports branch in Turkey. In addition, Turkey has its own esports league called Zula Super League (Özkurt, 2019, pp.83-84). Although esports is a developing sector, it also contains problems for players and employees. First of all, families are worried about the future of their children because they do not have enough information about esports. Esports players also have future anxiety.

The fact that the sector is socially insecure and the contracts are not based on adequate legal regulations is one of the main problems. However, the pressure of success, mobbing, long working hours, low wages compared to abroad, and the fact that female athletes do not take part in team games sufficiently are listed as other problems (Demir, 2019, pp.228-229). According to experts, the reason for these problems is the lack of a legal structure.

### **Research Method**

The problem of the research is addressed in two basic frameworks that support each other. The first is the status of the concept of e-Sports in research in Turkey. The second is its awareness by the young generations, which is the target audience.

In order to measure esports awareness, a face-to-face survey was applied to Trabzon University Faculty of Communication students in April 2022. In the study, 28 questions were asked to measure students' awareness of esports, seven of which were demographic data and 21 of which were Likert statements to determine their awareness levels. The survey results were statistically analyzed with SPSS Window 23 program. Whether there is a significant difference in students' awareness of esports was analyzed by t-test and ANOVA method for independent groups. Cronbach Alpha coefficient of the data was calculated as .74. In the findings and interpretation section, only the data with significant differences are tabulated. Frequency distributions were made to show the demographic characteristics of the students. At the same time, the frequency distribution and averages of the answers for the statements presented about esports were determined. An independent sample t-test with 95% reliability was applied to compare whether there is a difference in gender, the department they study, whether they play digital games or not, and where they play digital games in line with different statements to each student on the opinions about esports. In addition, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) with 95% reliability was applied to each student to compare whether there were differences between their age, income levels, digital game playing time for evaluations related to esports. Tukey test was used to determine the direction of the difference in multiple comparisons.

Ethics committee approval was received for this study from the ethics committee of Trabzon University (Date: 08.07.2022, Number: E-81614018-000-2200026594).

### **Findings and Interpretation**

281 students participated in the study. Of these students, 152 were female and 129 were male. 91.1% of the students participating in the study were between the ages of 17-24. 7.5% were between the ages of 25-34, while only 1.4% of the students between the ages of 35-44 participated in the study. While 50.9% of the students participating in the study were journalism students, 49.1% were public relations and advertising students. 32.4% of the participants have an income level between 2000-3000 TL, 27.8% have an income level of 3000-4000 TL, 14.9% have an income level of 4000-5000 TL, while 21% have an income level of 5000 TL and above. 64.4% of the participants play digital games, while 35.2% do not play digital games. Among the participants who play digital games, 30.2% play digital games for less than 1 hour a day, 21% for 1-2 hours, 8.2% for 2-3 hours, 3.6% for 4-5 hours, and 2.1% for more than 5 hours. It was determined that 43.4% of the participants played digital games on phones, 19.9% on computers and 1.4% on tablets.



**Table 1.** Esports awareness t-test by gender

Expression	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	p
Esports is a branch of sports where digital games are played professionally	Female	150	3,1533	1,15123	-3,390	<b>.001</b>
	Male	129	3,6744	1,41511	-3,339	
Does esports cause gaming addiction?	Female	151	3,4040	1,13242	2,122	<b>.035</b>
	Male	129	3,0930	1,31958	2,097	<b>.037</b>
Esports appeals to everyone from seven to seventy.	Female	152	2,9211	1,17099	2,882	<b>.004</b>
	Male	128	2,5078	1,22311	2,872	<b>.004</b>
Esports is a professional profession.	Female	149	3,0604	1,13440	-2,794	<b>.006</b>
	Male	127	3,4567	1,21991	-2,778	<b>.006</b>
Esports has negative effects due to its violent nature.	Female	152	3,3092	1,12311	4,390	<b>.000</b>
	Male	128	2,7109	1,15119	4,381	<b>.000</b>
Esports has negative effects because it involves fear	Female	149	3,2081	1,12271	3,696	<b>.000</b>
	Male	126	2,6905	1,19642	3,676	<b>.000</b>
Esports is a sport that attracts young people	Female	151	3,8079	1,05018	-1,958	<b>.051</b>
	Male	127	4,0630	1,11802	-1,948	<b>.053</b>
Esports players also succeed in other professions.	Female	152	3,2434	1,06725	2,535	<b>.012</b>
	Male	129	2,9070	1,15543	2,519	<b>.012</b>
I follow esports on YouTube	Female	151	1,6093	,99982	-4,578	<b>.000</b>
	Male	129	2,2403	1,30369	-4,485	<b>.000</b>
I follow esports on Twitch	Female	151	1,4901	,94423	-4,111	<b>.000</b>
	Male	129	2,0543	1,34228	-4,002	<b>.000</b>

(\*:  $p < .05$ ; \*\*:  $p < .01$ )

As a result of the t-test for independent groups, a significant difference was found in the statements in the table for different genders. Accordingly, male participants agree with the statement "Esports is a sports branch where digital games are played professionally" more than female participants. It is seen that female participants agree with the statement "Esports causes game addiction?" more than male participants. It is seen that female participants agree with the statement "Esports appeals to everyone from seven to seventy" more than male participants. Male participants agree with the statement "Esports is a professional profession." more than female participants. Female participants agree with the statement "Esports has negative effects because it contains violence." more than male participants. Female participants agree with the statement "Esports has negative effects because it contains fear." more than male participants. Male participants agree with the statement "Esports is a sport that attracts the attention of young people." more than female participants. Female participants agree with the statement "Esports players are successful in other professions." more than male participants. Male participants agree with the statement "I follow esports on Youtube." more than female participants. Male participants agree with the statement "I follow esports on Twitch." more than female participants.

**Table 2.** Esports Awareness t-test according to game playing status

	Do you play esports?	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	p
Esports is a branch of sports where digital games are played professionally	Yes, I'm playing	181	3,5580	1,33467	2,868	<b>.004</b>
	No, I'm not playing	97	3,0928	1,19967	2,961	<b>.003</b>
Esports is a money-making medium.	Yes, I'm playing	177	3,6723	1,15551	3,064	<b>.002</b>
	No, I'm not playing	96	3,2396	1,03359	3,167	<b>.002</b>
Esports is a professional profession.	Yes, I'm playing	178	3,4213	1,17747	3,417	<b>.001</b>
	No, I'm not playing	97	2,9175	1,15172	3,439	<b>.001</b>
Esports is a sport that develops intelligence.	Yes, I'm playing	174	3,3276	1,10262	2,432	<b>.016</b>
	No, I'm not playing	97	2,9897	1,08489	2,444	<b>.015</b>
Esports has negative effects because it involves fear	Yes, I'm playing	180	2,8056	1,17277	- 3,178	<b>.002</b>
	No, I'm not playing	94	3,2766	1,14914	- 3,198	<b>.002</b>
Esports alienates individuals from the real world.	Yes, I'm playing	181	2,9337	1,21382	- 2,829	<b>.005</b>
	No, I'm not playing	99	3,3535	1,13671	- 2,884	<b>.004</b>
Esports is beneficial for the promotion of countries	Yes, I'm playing	181	3,4862	1,05202	2,632	<b>.009</b>
	No, I'm not playing	99	3,1414	1,04011	2,641	<b>.009</b>
Esports gives young people the opportunity to build a career.	Yes, I'm playing	181	3,4972	1,07819	2,648	<b>.009</b>
	No, I'm not playing	99	3,1414	1,06914	2,654	<b>.009</b>
I follow esports on YouTube	Yes, I'm playing	181	2,1934	1,26980	5,851	<b>.000</b>
	No, I'm not playing	98	1,3673	,79155	6,678	<b>.000</b>
I follow esports on Twitch	Yes, I'm playing	181	2,0000	1,28236	4,963	<b>.000</b>
	No, I'm not playing	98	1,2959	,77605	5,705	<b>.000</b>
I buy esports magazines.	Yes, I'm playing	181	1,3039	,72375	2,340	<b>.020</b>
	No, I'm not playing	98	1,1122	,49498	2,609	<b>.010</b>

(\*:  $p < .05$ ; \*\*:  $p < .01$ )

The participants who answered "I play digital games" agree with the statement "Esports is a sports branch where digital games are played professionally." more than the participants who answered "I do not play digital games". The participants who answered "I play digital games" agree with the statement "Esports is a means of earning money" more than the participants who answered "I do not play digital games". The participants who answered "I play digital games" agree with the statement "Esports is a professional profession" more than the participants who answered "I do not play digital games". The participants who answered "I play digital games" agree with the statement "Esports is a sport that develops intelligence" more than the participants who answered "I do not play digital games". The participants who answered "I do not play digital games" to the statement "Esports has negative effects due to the fact that it involves fear." agree more than the participants who answered "I play digital games". The participants who answered "I do not play digital games" to the statement "Esports alienates individuals from the real world" agree more than the participants who answered "I play digital games". "Esports is beneficial for the promotion of countries." The participants who answered that they play digital games agree with the statement more than the participants who answered that they do not play digital games. "Esports provides career opportunities for young people." Participants who answered that they play digital games agree with the statement more than the participants who answered that they do not play digital games. The participants who answered "I follow esports on Youtube." agree more with



the statement "I play digital games" than the participants who answered "I do not play digital games". The participants who answered "I follow esports on Twitch" agree with the statement "I play digital games" more than the participants answered "I do not play digital games". The participants who answered "I buy magazines with esports content." agree with the statement "I play digital games" more than the participants who answered "I do not play digital games". There is no significant difference to the statement "Esports causes game addiction?" H0 Hypothesis is accepted. Similarly, there is no significant difference in other hypotheses.

### ANOVA Test Results

**Table 3.** Differences according to the age distribution of digital game players

AGE		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	p	Difference
Digital games and esports games are the same thing.	17-24	251	2,8167	1,15857			
	25-34	21	2,0476	1,16087	4,616	.011	1-2
	35-44	4	3,2500	1,25831			
	Total	276	2,7645	1,17503			

The average between the ages of 17 and 24 for agreeing with the statement "Digital games and esports games are the same thing." is 2,8167 2,0476 3,2500 2,7645. As a result of the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), there is a difference between the participants of different ages in terms of agreeing with the statement "Digital games and esports games are the same thing." (F: 4,616;  $p < .05$ ) Accordingly, Hypothesis H0 is rejected. Tukey multiple comparison test was conducted to find the source of the difference. The 17-24 age group is higher than the 25-34 age group.

**Table 4.** Differences according to income distribution of digital game players

INCOME LEVEL		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	p	Difference
Esports is a sector that provides profit to the country's economy.	2000-3000	91	2,8681	1,14706			
	3000-4000	78	3,2564	1,09824	2,658	.049	1-4
	4000-5000	40	3,0750	1,02250			
	5000+	58	3,3276	1,11431			
	Total	267	3,1124	1,11825			

As a result of the ANOVA analysis applied to the mean income level 2,8681, 3,2564, 3,0750, 3,3276, 3,1124 for agreeing with the statement "Esports is a sector that provides profit to the country's economy." There is a difference between the participants with different income levels in terms of agreeing with the statement "Esports is a sector that provides profit to the country's economy." (F: 2,658;  $p < .05$ ) accordingly, H0 Hypothesis is rejected. Tukey multiple comparison test was conducted to find the source of the difference. The group with 5000+ income level is higher than the group with 2000-3000 income level.

**Table 5.** Differences according to the duration of playing digital games

HOW MANY HOURS A DAY DO YOU PLAY GAMES		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	p	Difference
Esports is a branch of sports where digital games are played professionally	Less than 1 hour	85	3,1882	1,37576			
	1 hour-2 hours	59	3,8983	1,16995	3,253	.013	2-1
	2 hours-3 hours	23	3,6522	1,26522			
	4 hours-5 hours	10	3,9000	1,59513			
	Over 5 hours	6	4,1667	,98319			
	Total	183	3,5464	1,33292			
Esports appeals to everyone from seven to seventy.	Less than 1 hour	84	2,6190	1,16065			
	1 hour-2 hours	59	2,8814	1,21889	1,955	.068	
	2 hours-3 hours	23	2,7391	1,21421			4-1
	4 hours-5 hours	10	3,7000	1,56702			
	Over 5 hours	6	2,5000	1,64317			
	Total	182	2,7747	1,23879			
Digital games and esports games are the same thing.	Less than 1 hour	84	2,9762	1,20217			
	1 hour-2 hours	59	2,3559	1,22844	2,889	.024	1-2
	2 hour-3 hours	23	2,5217	,94722			
	4 hours-5 hours	10	3,0000	1,41421			
	Over 5 hours	6	2,1667	1,47196			
	Total	182	2,6923	1,22760			
Esports is a money-making medium.	Less than 1 hour	83	3,4458	1,09604			
	1 hour-2 hours	59	4,0000	1,09859	3,241	.014	
	2 hour-3 hours	23	3,9130	1,04067			2-1
	4 hours-5 hours	9	3,0000	1,41421			
	Over 5 hours	5	3,4000	1,67332			
	Total	179	3,6648	1,15118			
Esports is a professional profession.	Less than 1 hour	83	3,1446	1,07218			
	1 hour-2 hours	58	3,8276	1,17186	3,512	.009	
	2 hour-3 hours	23	3,1304	1,28997			1-2
	4 hours-5 hours	10	3,4000	1,34990			
	Over 5 hours	6	3,8333	1,32916			
	Total	180	3,4000	1,18934			
Esports is a sport that develops intelligence.	Less than 1 hour	80	3,1125	1,11371			
	1 hour-2 hours	57	3,5088	,94723	2,557	.041	
	2 hour-3 hours	23	3,2174	1,12640			
	4 hours-5 hours	10	3,5000	1,64992			5-1
	Over 5 hours	6	4,3333	,81650			
	Total	176	3,3182	1,11145			
Esports is a sport that develops strategic thinking.	Less than 1 hour	83	3,3012	1,14482			
	1 hour-2 hours	59	3,9661	,90907	4,557	.002	
	2 hour-3 hours	23	3,8261	1,26678			5-1
	4 hours-5 hours	10	3,9000	1,37032			2-1
	Over 5 hours	6	4,5000	,54772			
	Total	181	3,6575	1,13226			
Esports has negative effects due to its violent nature.	Less than 1 hour	85	3,1882	1,09647			
	1 hour-2 hours	58	2,6897	1,14259	5,348	.000	1-2-4
	2 hour-3 hours	23	3,2609	,96377			3-4
	4 hours-5 hours	10	1,8000	1,03280			
	Over 5 hours	6	2,3333	1,63299			
	Total	182	2,9341	1,16394			
Esports has negative effects because it involves fear	Less than 1 hour	84	3,1190	1,12373			
	1 hour-2 hours	59	2,4746	1,17965			
	2 hour-3 hours	23	2,9565	,97600	3,595	.008	1-2
	4 hours-5 hours	10	2,2000	,91894			
	Over 5 hours	6	2,6667	1,96638			
	Total	182	2,8242	1,18082			
Esports is a sport that attracts young people	Less than 1 hour	85	3,7059	1,20340			
	1 hour-2 hours	59	4,3051	,93319	2,617	.037	
	2 hour-3 hours	23	4,0000	1,34840			2-1

	4 hours-5 hours	10	4,3000	,94868			
	Over 5 hours	6	4,0000	1,54919			
	Total	183	3,9781	1,16240			
Esports is a sector that provides profit to the country's economy.	Less than 1 hour	85	2,9647	1,05161			
	1 hour-2 hours	58	3,1379	1,11526	3,171	.015	
	2 hour-3 hours	22	3,0455	1,09010			5-1-2-3
	4 hours-5 hours	10	3,5000	1,43372			
	Over 5 hours	6	4,5000	,54772			
	Total	181	3,1105	1,11502			
More support should be given to esports competitions for the development of tourism.	Less than 1 hour	84	3,0119	,98781			
	1 hour-2 hours	59	3,5085	,91676			
	2 hour-3 hours	23	3,4783	1,34400	3,597	.008	2-1
	4 hours-5 hours	10	3,8000	1,13529			
	Over 5 hours	6	4,0000	1,54919			
	Total	182	3,3077	1,07397			
I follow esports on YouTube	Less than 1 hour	85	1,7647	1,06511			
	1 hour-2 hours	59	2,5424	1,30413	7,394	.000	2-1
	2 hour-3 hours	23	2,0435	1,06508			4-1
	4 hours-5 hours	10	3,1000	1,59513			5-1-3
	Over 5 hours	6	3,5000	1,37840			
	Total	183	2,1803	1,26892			
I follow esports on Twitch	Less than 1 hour	85	1,4824	,82537			
	1 hour-2 hours	59	2,3898	1,38983	12,558	.000	2-1
	2 hour-3 hours	23	1,8261	1,15413			4-2
	4 hours-5 hours	10	3,5000	1,58114			5-1-3
	Over 5 hours	6	3,3333	1,50555			4-2-3
	Total	183	1,9891	1,27955			
I buy esports magazines.	Less than 1 hour	85	1,2000	,53005			
	1 hour-2 hours	59	1,3220	,68079	6,308	.000	4-1-2-3
	2 hour-3 hours	23	1,0870	,41703			
	4 hours-5 hours	10	2,2000	1,31656			
	Over 5 hours	6	1,8333	1,60208			
	Total	183	1,3005	,72046			

As a result of the ANOVA analysis, there is a difference between the participants who play games for different periods of time in terms of agreeing with the statement "Esports is a sports branch in which digital games are played professionally." (F: 3,253;  $p < .05$ ) Accordingly, Hypothesis H0 is rejected. Tukey multiple comparison test was conducted to find the source of the difference. Those who play games between 1-2 hours are higher than the group who play games less than 1 hour. As a result of ANOVA analysis, there is a difference between the participants who play games for different periods of time in terms of agreeing with the statement "Esports appeals to everyone from seven to seventy." (F: 1,955;  $p < 0.05$ ) Accordingly, H0 Hypothesis is rejected. Tukey multiple comparison test was conducted to find the source of the difference. Those who play games between 4-5 hours are higher than the group who play games less than 1 hour.

As a result of the ANOVA analysis, there is a difference between the participants who play games for different periods of time in terms of agreeing with the statement "Digital games and esports games are the same thing." (F: 2,889;  $p < .05$ ) Accordingly, Hypothesis H0 is rejected. Tukey multiple comparison test was conducted to find the source of the difference. Those who play games less than 1 hour are higher than the group who play games between 1-2 hours.

As a result of ANOVA analysis, there is a difference between the participants who played the game for different periods of time in terms of agreeing with the statement "Esports mediates earning money" (F: 3,241;  $p < .05$ ). Tukey multiple comparison test was performed to find the source of the difference. Those who play games between 1-2 hours are higher than the group who play games less than 1 hour.

As a result of ANOVA analysis, there is a difference between the participants who played the game for different periods of time in terms of agreeing with the statement "Esports is a professional profession."

(F: 3,512;  $p < .05$ ) Accordingly, Hypothesis H0 is rejected. Tukey multiple comparison test was performed to find the source of the difference. Those who play less than 1 hour are higher than the group who play between 1-2 hours.

As a result of ANOVA analysis, there is a difference between the participants who played the game for different periods of time in terms of agreeing with the statement "Esports is a sport that develops intelligence." (F: 2,557;  $p < .05$ ) Accordingly, Hypothesis H0 is rejected. Tukey multiple comparison test was conducted to find the source of the difference. Those who play games for more than 5 hours and less than 1 hour are higher than the group who play games.

As a result of ANOVA analysis, there is a difference between the participants who played the game for different periods of time in terms of agreeing with the statement "Esports is a game that develops strategic thinking. There is a difference in terms of agreeing with the statement. (F: 4,557;  $p < .05$ ) Accordingly, Hypothesis H0 is rejected. Tukey multiple comparison test was conducted to find the source of the difference. Those who play games between 1-2 hours are higher than the group who play games less than 1 hour. In addition, those who play games for more than 5 hours are higher than those who play games for less than 1 hour.

As a result of the ANOVA analysis, there is a difference between the participants who played the game for different periods of time in terms of agreeing with the statement "Esports has negative effects due to its violent content." (F: 5,348;  $p < .05$ ) Accordingly, Hypothesis H0 is rejected. Tukey multiple comparison test was performed to find the source of the difference. Those who play less than 1 hour are higher than those who play between 1-2 hours and 4-5 hours. It is also higher than those who play games between 2-3 hours and those who play games between 4-5 hours. As a result of ANOVA analysis, there is a difference between the participants who play games at different times in terms of agreeing with the statement "Esports has negative effects due to the fact that it contains fear." (F: 5,595;  $p < .05$ ) Accordingly, Hypothesis H0 is rejected. Tukey multiple comparison test was conducted to find the source of the difference. Those who play games less than 1 hour are higher than the group who play games between 1-2 hours.

As a result of ANOVA analysis, there is a difference between the participants who played the game for different periods of time in terms of agreeing with the statement "More support should be given to E-Sports competitions for the development of tourism." (F: 3,597;  $p < .05$ ) accordingly H0 Hypothesis is rejected. Tukey multiple comparison test was conducted to find the source of the difference. Those who play games between 1-2 hours are higher than the group who play games less than 1 hour.

As a result of ANOVA analysis, there is a difference between the participants who played the game for different periods of time in terms of agreeing with the statement "I follow esports on Youtube." (F: 7,394;  $p < .05$ ) Accordingly, Hypothesis H0 is rejected. Tukey multiple comparison test was performed to find the source of the difference. Those who play games between 1-2 hours are higher than the group who play games less than 1 hour. Those who play games between 4-5 hours are higher than those who play games less than 1 hour. The group playing games for more than 5 hours is higher than the group playing games for less than 1 hour. Those who play games over 5 hours are higher than those who play games between 2-3 hours.

As a result of ANOVA analysis, there is a difference between the participants who played the game for different periods of time in terms of agreeing with the statement "I follow esports on Twitch." (F: 12,558;  $p < .05$ ) accordingly H0 Hypothesis is rejected. Tukey multiple comparison test was performed to find the source of the difference. Those who play games between 1-2 hours are higher than the group who play games less than 1 hour. Those who play games between 4-5 hours are higher than the group who play games for 1-2 hours. The group playing games for more than 5 hours is higher than the group playing games for less than 1 hour and 2-3 hours. Those who play games for 4-5 hours are higher than those who play games for 1-2 hours and 2-3 hours.

As a result of ANOVA analysis, there is a difference in terms of agreement with the statement "I buy

magazines with esports content." ( $F: 6,308; p < .05$ ) Accordingly, Hypothesis H0 is rejected. Tukey multiple comparison test was conducted to find the source of the difference. Those who play games between 4-5 hours are higher than those who play games for less than 1 hour, 1-2 hours and 2-3 hours.

As a result of ANOVA analysis, there is no difference between the participants with different income levels in terms of agreeing with the statement "Esports causes game addiction" ( $F: 1,405; p > 0,05$ ). Accordingly, Hypothesis H0 is accepted. Tukey multiple comparison test was conducted to find the source of the lack of difference. Similarly, no difference was found in the other hypotheses.

## Conclusion

The main point of the debate on esports is whether it is considered as a sport or a digital game. While it is considered as a digital game in terms of the medium, design and content, it is also considered as a sport with its tactical content, strategy and team cooperation. In this study, the perspective of communication students, who have more knowledge about digital technologies due to their formation, on esports was examined. Their awareness of esports was analyzed with the answers in the questionnaire form. Accordingly, it was observed that female students had less awareness while male students had more awareness. In the research conducted in the 2018 Esports Report of the Ministry of Youth and Sports, the rate of playing esports in Turkey was determined as 56% for men and 44% for women (Esports Report, 2018, p. 50). The fact that men are currently more active in terms of playing digital games and participating in esports activities is also in line with the data of this study. It was observed that those who play digital games more are more aware of esports. It has been observed that these people have more knowledge about elements such as the content of the games, game style content, and the knowledge gap between them and those who have never played is higher. It was observed that as the time spent by people with digital games increased, their knowledge about digital games also increased. As a result of the study, it is possible to mention that there are differences between the groups in which esports awareness is measured. In the study, the variables in the variables of the participants, from gender, age, game playing information to income levels, revealed differences in esports. When esports, which has become a professional sports branch day by day due to the increasing demand for digital games, was evaluated as a result of the survey, it was revealed that it is a sports branch that is followed and shown more interest by male participants and is seen as a profession by men. It was concluded that male participants see esports as a professional sports branch compared to women. Those who play digital games evaluated esports as a professional sports branch compared to those who do not play. They also agree that they will have the opportunity to earn money through esports content. Female participants see men's interest in digital games as addiction. Those who play digital games think that esports contributes to the development of intelligence. However, while male participants do not see digital game content and esports as a branch that appeals to everyone; it was concluded that women who are more sensitive to violent themes, fighting, weapons, wounding, killing, etc. reflected in digital games affect the players negatively, and at the same time, the fear elements in the content of digital games that make up esports also affect the players negatively. It was seen that participants who do not play games support the statement that it will cause alienation by distancing individuals from the real-world perception.

Participants who stated that they play digital games also agreed that esports has opportunities that provide career opportunities and provide a good opportunity for the promotion of countries. Male participants who see esports as a sports branch that attracts the attention of young people do not agree that esports players will be successful in different professional groups. Participants who play digital games follow esports competitions on Twitch and Youtube. Digital games, which are mostly played by young people as an activity to spend free time, are accepted as the same thing as esports. Participants between the ages of 17-24 see esports and digital games as the same thing. It was concluded that participants with an income of over 5000 Turkish Liras consider esports as a sector that contributes to the national economy. However, those who play digital games for less than an hour do not think that esports brings income. While those who spend more time in digital games see the content of these games as developing intelligence and strategic thinking, it was concluded that esports is addictive as the

playing time shortens. In parallel with the shortening of the playing time, it is seen that the participation that the content of digital games will create negative effects due to the content of violence and fear increases. Individuals who spend more time in digital games think that esports will contribute more to the national economy.

As a result, esports is considered as a sports branch that has become widespread and respected among young people. Gender-based differences also bring about differences in the rate of playing digital games. Even if they play digital games, the majority of female participants do not know esports as a sports branch and their digital game playing time is shortened. Another general conclusion drawn from this study is that male participants, who are more interested in digital games, consider esports as a professional profession and a branch that brings income, and do not agree with the negative view that "digital games are addictive". Finally, we can state that esports, which has officially become a sports branch of the axis of discussions and has a federation, has become a field that is followed with interest by "Generation Z" and later. Educating young people more consciously while turning to this field and supporting them with infrastructures by governments are issues that need to be followed for esports, the sport of the future.

**Ethics Committee Approval:** Ethics committee approval was received for this study from the ethics committee of Trabzon University (Date: 08.07.2022, Number: E-81614018-000-2200026594).

**Informed Consent:** Consent was obtained from the participants who participated in the study.

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