eSports and ethics: The need for a research agenda

Ivo van Hilvoorde
1978
eSports
eSports could be medal event at 2024 Olympics, Paris bid team says

- Paris bid committee co-president to meet with IOC about competitive gaming
- In April, it was announced eSports will be medal sport at 2022 Asian Games

Competitive gaming draws spectators in droves to online platforms and real-world venues, like the Intel Extreme Masters Counter-Strike tournament in Poland’s Spodek Arena this year. Photograph: Tom Jenkins for the Guardian

eSports could be added to the Olympic programme as an official medal sport in 2024.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>GAME</strong>*</th>
<th><strong>SPORT</strong>*</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>lusory attitude</td>
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* B. Suits
GLOBAL NUMBER OF ESPORTS ENTHUSIASTS

- 58 million (2012)
- 89 million (2014)
- 145 million (2017)

Report: Global Growth of Esports
Trends, Audience and Revenues Towards 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gamers</th>
<th>Individual Sports</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.7Bn</td>
<td>151M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1Bn</td>
<td>94M</td>
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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Sport</th>
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Global Esports Audience

- Enthusiasts
- Occasional viewers

+12.5% CAGR 2015-2020

2009: Korea’s Esports Scene Takes a Blow

Legislations in South Korea implementing bans and curfews on gaming, a feud between the Korean Esports Association and Blizzard, and the falling popularity of Starcraft contributed to the dip in prize money in South Korea between 2008 and 2012. Since then, esports broadcaster MBC was discontinued and OnGameNet is a much smaller operation whose content is no longer broadcasted on TV....

2014: US & China Lead

Korea has never fully recovered, rendering the US today’s #1 in the accelerating esports market, with China close on its heels....

$71.0M

+97% YoY

$36.0M

$19.8M

$13.1M

$9.7M

$5.2M

$3.5M

$6.4M

$6.1M

$4.4M

$3.6M


## eSports = Sports?

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Embodiment and fundamental motor skills in eSports

Ivo v. Hilvoorde & Niek Pot

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ESPORTS & ETHICAL ISSUES

Big data & Society

Sport

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2

eSport

3
ESPORTS & ETHICAL ISSUES

- Doping
- Matchfixing
- Harassment
- Child labour
- Governance
Match-fixing in StarCraft 2 (1)
ESPORTS & ETHICAL ISSUES

- Privacy and security
- Surveillance Futures
- Global digital Divide
THE HIGHEST EARNING ESPORTS COUNTRIES
BY PRIZE MONEY WON

1. China
   Main Games
   Dota 2
   Prize Money: $52,266,435.74

2. United States
   Main Games
   Dota 2
   Counter-Strike
   Prize Money: $46,909,614.66

3. South Korea
   Main Games
   Starcraft
   League of Legends
   Prize Money: $44,232,905.90

4. Sweden
   Main Games
   Dota 2
   Prize Money: $18,945,467.84

5. Canada
   Main Games
   Dota 2
   Counter-Strike
   Smite
   Prize Money: $10,366,238.67

*ALL FIGURES IN USD AND CORRECT AS OF END OF YEAR 2016
ESPORTS & ETHICAL ISSUES

Big data & Society

Sport

3 eSport
eSport specific ethical issues

- Cheating with software
- Online attacks to disable opponent
- Sabotaging internet connections
- Hacken
- Troll-playing
- Identity deception
- eSpionage
- Avoiding fights
- False accusations
- Intimidation
Conclusion and challenges

• We need to understand these games better, before we can morally evaluate the behavior within the game.

→ More ethnomethodological studies (cf. Boellstorff 2008; Milik, 2015)
EVE Players are less bound or restricted by terms of conduct and social norms of fair play, honesty and sportsmanship. (Carter & Gibbs 2013; Milik 2015)

Stealing, spying, bribing and throwing matches are commonplace.

EVE Online is unbounded and characterized by a “culture of mistrust”
“The acceptability of *eveSport* conduct is determined through its effect on the spectacle for the spectator rather than through concepts of ‘fair play’ or integrity of the performance.” (Carter & Gibbs 2013)
Conclusion and challenges

• We need to understand these games better, before we can morally evaluate the behavior within the game.
• We cannot talk about ‘the’ ethics of eSport
• We have to acknowledge and understand the diversity of eSports
• Many rules are not fixed (yet)
• No clear distinctions between strategy, cheating and spoilsport
• Dynamics in online world not easy to manage
• Domination by male players
• Little knowledge (also by parents) of the ‘ethos of the game’
• No uniformity of sanctions, no central governance
• Little or no education