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E-sports: a 21st century phenomenon

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Video games are set to become the largest global cultural industry in the 21st century. But will e-sports make the leap to becoming a household name in the realm of sport and culture? Without a physical element, can it really be considered a sport? Thierry Lorey, Marketing Professor at KEDGE, answers these questions.

E-sports deliver impressive growth figures

E-sports have taken off in the past few years, finding an audience of 400 million spectators, or e-spectators, worldwide, and earning revenue of 1 billion dollars in 2018, a figure that is forecasted to reach 2 billion in 2022. Another telling figure: games like Fortnite or Battle Royale can attract up to 350 million players from around the world.

What is driving the success of E-sports?

Their success is driven by four growth factors: the global factor, the multi-sport factor, the consumer factor and the fact that e-sports have been embraced by traditional sports like football, basketball and tennis.

1. E-sports are a global phenomenon, played on every continent, from Europe and the Americas to Asia and Africa (which has shown great growth potential). They are built on a globe-spanning ecosystem of publishers, teams and international tournaments, and a broadcasting system (Twitch streaming) that ensures that games can be played on any continent at any time.
2. E-sports are also a digitised global service that can be played on any gaming system, computer, console, tablet or smartphone. Plus, e-sports are evolving into a free-to-play service that offers a large population of novices the opportunity to try out competition games.
3. There is also the consumer and generational factor; gamers are divided into two generations with Millennials, ages 20 to 40, on the one hand and Gen Z, born in the 2000s and now between one and 20 years old, on the other. These are the generations that are accustomed to playing video games and e-sports, and they are gradually replacing the Boomer generation. This means that e-sports have a built-in mechanism for growing user numbers in the coming years.
4. Organisations for traditional sports like football and basketball are embracing and developing e-sports units. This is true of PSG, Olympique Lyonnais, Manchester United, and E-Series for the French Open and NBA 2K.

These four factors are driving the widespread adoption of e-sports in the early 21st century, with classic video game companies further accelerating this dynamic.

E-sports must overcome challenges to become a household name

The first challenge involves establishing a single worldwide governing body. There are currently at least two associations: one that is composed of federations, and one that is made up of competition clubs and organisers. Once established, a single worldwide governing body could create rules for the sport and advocate for inclusion in the Olympics.

The second challenge for the nascent e-sport federation would be to promote the entertaining and educational aspects of e-sports, to combat the violent reputations of certain e-sports games.

Growth outlook for E-sports in the next ten year

The sport could become truly universal by being included in the Olympics and that seems like a real possibility, given that e-sports were a demonstration event in the Asian Games in Indonesia in 2018. It also has the possibility

In the end, e-sports could well become the biggest household name in sport and culture in the mid-21st century.

To find out more, watch the XERFI video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C62XZafziGQ&feature=youtu.be>

Thierry Lorey is at your disposal should you have any requests for interviews or coverage on this topical subject.

About Thierry Lorey:

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