



# The possibility analysis of Esports becoming an Olympic sport

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<p><b>Abstract</b></p> <p>Since Esports became a demonstration sport of the Jakarta Asian games, people have been wondering whether Esports will become an official event in the Olympics and Asian games. But as the events for the 2024 Paris Olympics and the 2022 Asian games in Hangzhou were announced, Esports is not included. The purpose of this study is to find out the factors of Esports becoming an Olympic sport and discuss the feasibility of turning Esports into an Olympic project.</p> <p>This study analyzes the popularity and social recognition of Esports, the defected audience advantages of Esports and how Esports match Olympic values. According to data and literature analysis, some Esports have undesirable elements that do not accord with the Olympic values, but they also have positive elements. The high popularity of Esports among young people is in line with the IOC's desire to attract more young people to the games. However, since the penetration rate of other age groups is comparatively low, Esports is less popular than the new sports in the next two Olympic Games, and the general concept of Esports and video games are not yet clear. The short life and high commercialization are usually regarded as the main defects of Esports, while the latter actually plays a positive role in driving host countries to embrace Esports.</p> <p>It is suggested that relevant organizations strengthen communication with the international Olympic committee on matters related to the entry of Esports into the Olympic Games and make plans to promote Esports into the Asian games. To improve the possibility of Esports entering into Olympics Games, relevant organization should carry out Esports popularization activities, support Esports promotion in areas without Esports foundation, and maintain good operation of game manufacturers to improve the quality of existing Esports games to ensure longevity. What's more, game manufacturers should develop diversified Esports games and promote the Esports market by turning existing casual e-games into sports.</p>	
<b>Keywords</b> Esports, Olympics, Olympics Games	

## Table of contents

1. Introduction .....	5
2.Theoretical foundation.....	5
2.1 Electronic games and Esports .....	5
2.2 Background of Esports development.....	6
2.3 Olympic spirit and values.....	7
2.4 Esports and the Olympic Games .....	7
3. Research approaches .....	9
3.1 Literature research .....	10
3.2 Data analysis .....	10
4. Research results .....	10
4.1 Fit between Esports and the Olympics.....	10
4.1.1 Esports and Olympic values .....	10
4.1.2 Game manufacturers and operators .....	13
4.1.3 Cross-cultural communication tool .....	13
4.2 The popularity of Esports and other sports.....	14
4.2.1 Esports, Olympic Charter and popularity of sports .....	15
4.2.2 Social acceptance of Esports .....	17
4.2.3 Misunderstandings between Esports and video games.....	18
4.2.4 The separate development of Esports.....	18
4.3 Defects of Esports .....	19
4.3.1 Commercialization.....	19
4.3.2 Longevity of Esports projects .....	20
4.3.3 Physiological factors of Esports .....	24
4.4 Esports entry effect .....	24
4.4.1 Young people and Olympic Games.....	24
4.4.2 Esports and Olympic Game's host country .....	27
4.4.3 The Capital of Esports -system .....	28

5.Conclusions .....	29
6.Discussion and suggestions.....	31
List of references .....	34

## **1. Introduction**

Esports has developed a lot since the first Esports competition in 1972. With Esports being a demonstration sport in the 18th Asian Games in Jakarta, the IOC recognized Esports as a "sport" at the sixth IOC summit in October 2017 and Esports has been widely discussed in all circles. Whether Esports can become an official sport of the Olympic Games and the Asian Games have also become heated topics. Esports failed to appear on the list of sports announced for the Paris 2020 Olympic Games and the Hangzhou 2022 Asian games. Besides, at the 7th IOC summit, the organizing committee of the Olympic Games said it was still too early for Esports in all aspects. (IOC, 12 December 2018)

The road of Esports becoming an Olympic sport has become harder now, but Esports still have the potential to become an Olympic sport. We will further understand Esports by elaborating the difference between e-games and Esports. On the basis of regarding Esports as a sport, we will analyze the different factors that influence Esports to become an Olympic sport through data analysis and literature research.

## **2. Theoretical foundation**

### **2.1 Electronic games and Esports**

Video games are a form of game that runs on computer and with its outstanding computing power, digital games are able to enjoy higher running speed and interaction speed, so that the long game process that must be carried out by hand and props in the past can be quickly completed by the computer nowadays. Popular video games, mobile games, arcade games and many other similar games are all belong to the genre of video games. (Internet Development Research Institution, 2019, p.46-47)

Esports is the sports projects that are based on video games, computer equipment as a carrier, and carried in virtual situations. The forms of Esports emphasize the confrontation between competitors under the same rules, challenging quick response, operational skills and teamwork.

Esports has successfully turn screen into the carrier of a sport, digitalized competition process, realized the competition function of digital entertainment and promote certain entertainment function, business value and culture meaning during the whole process. (Dai, 2019, p.23)

In China, Esports was listed as the 99<sup>th</sup> formal sports competition by the General Administration of Sport of China in 2003. In South Korea, Esports, along with football and Chinese chess, are listed as three major competitive sports. The sixth international Olympic committee summit also recognized Esports as a sport, and Esports was also a demonstration sport in the Asian Games in Jakarta, therefore Esports is undoubtedly a sport.

## **2.2 Background of Esports development**

In October 1972, some students from Stanford University held an “Intergalactic Spacewar Olympics” in their lab, and It became the first documented video game competition. Although the scale of the game was small, Esports realized using electronic game as a tool to compete on fair rules, therefore guaranteeing fair and mutual competition among competitors. (Internet Development Research Institution, 2019, p.69-70)

Since then, video games have gradually matured, and the audience has grown as well. As digital game manufactures work hard on promoting digital games and further popularizing digital games in public areas, the prototype of Esports eventually emerged. The most representative event at that time was Atari's "Space Invaders Championship", which attracted more than 10,000 players and became the first video game event in history involving more than 10,000 people. (Internet Development Research Institution, 2019, p.74)

In 1990s, video games moved from the era of the mainframe to the era of personal computers, where computers could conduct real-time games through LAN, therefore becoming an important opportunity of turning video games into Esports. The ‘Red Annihilation Quake Tournament’ held in Atlanta in 1997 was the first true Esports competition officially recognized by game industry. This competition adopted the network battle mode and used the personal computer as

the game terminal, marking that the modern electronic sports competition has already begun to take shape. (Internet Development Research Institution, 2019, p.128)

After 2000, Electronic Sports World Cup (ESWC) and World Cyber Games (WCG) were held successively, marking the internationalization of Esports. Since then, with the maturity of technology and commercialization, the population of Esports has reached 1.758 billion and the total revenue of Esports has reached 1.096 billion. (Newzoo 2019, 12) Esports has become one of the hottest sports in the world.

### **2.3 Olympic spirit and values**

“The Olympic spirit is linked to the values and ideals of Olympism. The spiritual dimension of the Games was stressed from the beginning by Pierre de Coubertin himself and the Olympic values, which constitute the foundations of sports and Olympic education, were based on it. The contribution of these values to education and society is considered of outmost importance by the International Olympic Committee, the International Olympic Academy and international Olympic education institutions all over the world. The spiritual dimension of the Olympic Games underpins the athletic, ethical and social education of young people all over the world. Respect for pluralism in sport, as part of the Olympic Movement’s cultural diversity is the dominant spiritual value of the Olympic Games. Moreover, the Olympic Games themselves are an example of peaceful social coexistence of athletes from different sporting and cultural backgrounds. Olympism’s general philosophy is based on the principles of peace, fair play and fair contest with the view to creating a peaceful society with less violence and competition. In other words, Olympism leads to a different, idealized way of life that today’s society desperately needs”. (IOA Official Website)

### **2.4 Esports and the Olympic Games**

The establishment of the International Esports Federation (IeSF) in 2008 should be regarded as the starting point of Esports entering Olympics, symbolizing that Esports has a global project management and promotion organization, which lays the organizational foundation for Esports

to enter the Olympic Games. After that the International Esports Federation held the "IeSF Challenge", whose name was changed into "IeSF Grand Final" in 2010, "IeSF world championship" in 2011, and finally "Esports World Championship" in 2013 and has remained so far. In 2013, the council of the Olympic Games of Asia authorized the IeSF to participate in the formulation of the competition rules of Esports in the 4th Asian indoor and martial arts games, realizing the breakthrough of Esports entering the competition recognized by the International Olympic Committee. In the same year, the world anti-doping agency (WADA) signed a document recognizing the IeSF as responsible for anti-doping in Esports. In 2014 IeSF was granted temporary membership in SportAccord. In the same year, IeSF obtained the membership of Trim and Fitness International Sport For All Association (TAFISA). In 2015, the IeSF invited representatives of international sports associations to discuss matters related to the greater recognition of Esports on a global scale during the Esports world championships. In 2016, the IeSF hosted the international eGames during the Rio Olympics, hoping to promote international recognition of Esports by this chance. Intel Corporation, the TOP partner of the IOC, held two Esports competitions ( *Star Craft II* and *Steep* ) just before the 2018 PyeongChang Winter Olympics, successfully gaining support from the IOC.

A series of publicity and publicity activities by IeSF has laid a good foundation for the official proposal of Esports entering the Olympic Games. In February 2016, IeSF consulted the international Olympic committee about its entry into the Olympic Games. (Table 1) Soon after, IeSF officially sent a letter to the international Olympic committee about its entry into the Olympic Games. However, the IeSF's application was rejected at the IOC executive board meeting at the end of the year. At the sixth IOC summit in October 2017, delegates discussed the rapid development of Esports industry and finally agreed to regard Esports as a competitive video game, which can be considered as a sport. It is also concluded that the preparation and training intensity of Esports for the games are comparable to those of traditional sports players. In order to further gain the acceptance of Esports in the IOC, the content of Esports shall not violate the Olympic values. (IOC, 28 October 2017)

In December 2018, the seventh IOC summit once again discussed the issue of Esports, pointing out that some Esports projects are inconsistent with the Olympic values, and that the essence of the Esports industry is driven by interests rather than a series of problems like traditional sports

based on values. Considering this series of problems, it is still too early to include Esports as a medal activity in the Olympic plan. (IOC, 12 December 2018)

Table 1. The main activities of the IeSF

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Time</b>
The establishment of the International Esports Federation (IeSF)	2008
IeSF establish the "Esports World Championship"	2010
IeSF to participate in the formulation of the competition rules of Esports in the 4th Asian indoor	2013
The World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) signed a document recognizing the IeSF as responsible for anti-doping in Esports.	2013
IeSF was granted temporary membership in SportAccord	2014
IeSF obtained the membership of Trim and Fitness International Sport For All Association (TAFISA)	2014
IeSF invited representatives of international sports associations to discuss matters related to the greater recognition of Esports on a global scale during the Esports world championships	2015
IeSF hosted the international eGames during the Rio Olympics	2016
IeSF consulted the international Olympic committee about its entry into the Olympic Games	2016
IeSF held two Esports competitions with Intel Corporation and successfully gaining support from the IOC,	2018

### **3. Research approaches**

The main objective of this thesis is to study and analyze the possibility of Esports becoming an Olympic event. The main research methods used in this thesis are literature research and data analysis methods.

### **3.1 Literature research**

The literature research method is a method to obtain information through investigation of literature according to a certain research purpose or subject, so as to comprehensively and correctly understand and master the problem to be studied. This thesis mainly collects materials by using databases and information retrieval websites such as CNKI, CQVIP, and Google, and summarize and refine the views of other scholars. News reports related to the content of this article were also collected to ensure that the content and opinions of this article could follow the latest progress of Esports entry into the Olympic Games.

### **3.2 Data analysis**

Data analysis refers to the process of analyzing a large amount of data collected with appropriate statistical analysis methods, extracting useful information and forming conclusions to study and summarize the data in detail. In practice, data analysis can help people make informed decision. The data are mainly obtained from PricewaterhouseCoopers, Newzoo, Statista and other websites, and the latest data are analyzed targeted at factors affecting the entry of Esports into the Olympic Games.

## **4. Research results**

### **4.1 Fit between Esports and the Olympics**

#### **4.1.1 Esports and Olympic values**

Olympic values are Excellence, Respect, and Friendship. (IOC, 2019) One of the most important requirements for Esports entering the Olympics is that it should conform to Olympic values. Thomas Bach President of the International Olympic Committee said in an interview in Jakarta on September 2018, that “we cannot accept the so-called killing game, a competition that condones violence and discrimination, in the Olympic program. Esports in our view, are against the values of the Olympics, and that’s why they won't be accepted.” (AP News, 1

September 2018) The Seventh IOC Summit also pointed out that some Esports programs are not in line with the Olympic values. It can be seen from the above that the most conflict between Esports and Olympic values lies in "violence" and "discrimination".

We can take the games selected for the 2018 Asian Games in Jakarta as an example. Selected games for the Jakarta Asian games include *League of Legends*, *Pro Evolution Soccer 2018*, *Arena of Valor*, *StarCraft II*, *Hearthstone* and *Clash Royale*. Among these six games, with the exception of *Pro Evolution Soccer 2018*, the other five have more or less elements of violence and discrimination. *League of Legends* and *Arena of Valor* are about team confrontation and competition, which means "fighting" concerning violence. In *StarCraft II* and *Clash Royale*, there are "wars" between clans in gameplay. Though *Hearthstone* is a card game, it's based on virtual image confrontation in the form of card, which also involves "violent" element. From these aspects, Esports reveal some elements that conflict with "respect" and "friendship" in the Olympic core values from the perspective of the forms and settings of games. It is true that some Esports projects have elements that do not conform to the Olympic values.

In addition to Esports being selected for the Jakarta Asian games, let's take a look at other popular Esports.

GAME	MAIN DEVICE COMPETED ON	HOURS WATCHED
LEAGUE OF LEGENDS	PC	347.4M
COUNTER-STRIKE: GLOBAL OFFENSIVE	PC	274.9M
DOTA 2	PC	250.4M
OVERWATCH	PC	101.3M
HEARTHSTONE	PC	54.1M
STARCRRAFT II	PC	26.2M
PLAYERUNKNOWN'S BATTLEFIELDS	PC	24.1M
FORTNITE	PC	23.0M
ROCKET LEAGUE	PC	22.5M
HEROES OF THE STORM	PC	20.3M

Figure 1. 2018 Top 25 Games by live Esports hours watched on Twitch and YouTube gaming (Newzoo 2019, 16)

From Figure 1, we can see that among the top 10 most popular Esports games, apart from Rocket League, the other nine games all have certain "violence" factors in their gameplay. This means that an element of "violence" is generally welcomed by players to a certain extent. Esports is more like a "commercial product" than simply a commercial sports event. Game manufacturers will naturally cater to the interests of consumers to operate and develop Esports games. From my perspective, I'm afraid that in a short time, it is very difficult to witness the emergence of an Esports game without obvious bad elements

Based on discussion above, it is difficult to find a game that does not conflict with Olympic values in gameplay in a short time. However, we should notice that not all Olympic sports are completely free of violence. Sports such as shooting, archery, boxing, and taekwondo have a certain element of violence. The IOC President Jenson Barton explained that these sports originate from the real battle of mankind, but are regulated by the rules of civilization in the field of sports. Regardless of how Esports will be regulated in the future to become an Olympic sport, as long as Esports can be regulated in the context of sports through civilized rules, and athletes

respect the rules as well as their opponents. Violence or other undesirable elements will not completely eliminate the possibility of Esports becoming an Olympic sport under the premise that other sports with undesirable elements eventually are already Olympic sports.

From another side, the game forms of *League of Legends* and *Arena of Valor* are team games of 5v5 confrontation, which emphasized teamwork, communication while reducing the dominant role of individuals. Only when the five players trust and cooperate with each other can they win in the end. In the non-national team, team members often come from different countries, and they establish friendship, show respect to their teammates, opponents and rules, and they unite as one to play their best during competitions, which are in line with the Olympic core values of excellence, friendship and respect.. In *StarCraft II* and *Clash Royale*, soldiers defend their country and pursue peace in order to end the war, illustrating that "violence" and "discrimination" could also accord to Olympic values.

#### **4.1.2 Game manufacturers and operators**

Game manufacturers and operators are also working hard on the promotion of turning negative elements into positive aspects. The president of Blizzard Entertainment, Inc, Mike Morhaime, who created *StarCraft II* and the *hearthstone* President Mike Morhaime, declared on racial discrimination on DreamHack Austin in 2016: "I'm very disappointed at some audience on this event, we will never accept racial discrimination, gender discrimination of any form of discrimination with the slightest tolerance." (Tencent Games, 2016) Tencent, the developer of 'Arena of Valor', uses this game to discover many historical figures, thus promoting Chinese culture and history education in China. Although the manufacturers can not eliminate certain factors such as "violence" and "discrimination" factors, however, it somehow alleviates or changes the idea that some video games promote 'violent' and 'discriminatory' games to some extent. Therefore, the active work done by manufacturers or operators indirectly affects the possibility of Esports becoming an Olympic event.

#### **4.1.3 Cross-cultural communication tool**

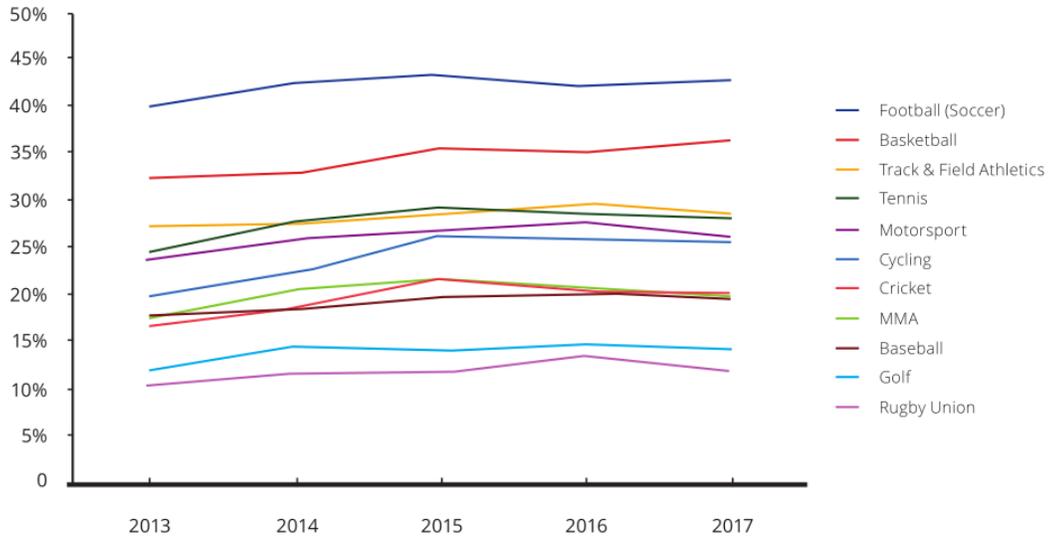
As a sport, Esports can also play the same role in promoting friendship and understanding as other traditional sports, as well as on the international stage. There are many cultures in the

world, and people often misunderstand each other due to different cultures, languages and concepts, while Esports provide a common window and platform for everyone. The purpose of Esports is to help people cooperate and communicate on a platform sharing common understanding and fair competition, ultimately eliminating estrangement and promoting mutual understanding and friendship. In the basic Olympic principles of the Olympic Charter, it is stated that "everyone must have the possibility to practice sports without any discrimination and in accordance with the Olympic spirit, which requires mutual understanding in the spirit of friendship, solidarity and fair play". Esports, at this point, can largely live up to that principle

#### **4.2 The popularity of Esports and other sports**

The popularity and public recognition of a sport is important criteria to evaluate whether it can become an Esports sport. According to the data from Newzoo, the global Esports population has reached 1.758 billion, and the core Esports fans have reached 201 million, accounting for 22.9% and 2.6% of the global population respectively,(Newzoo 2019, 12) as many as the population of popular traditional sports such as tennis, cycling, racing and Esports (figure 2). 2019 will see 460 million US dollars of revenue, an increase of 340 million US dollars compared with 2018. In 2018, there were 737 major Esports events, earning 54.7 million US dollars in tickets sales. The total award of 2018 reached 150 million, marking an increase compared with 110 million in 2017. (Newzoo 2019, 7) It is also estimated that by 2020, the overall market size of China's Esports will reach 135.31 billion, and the user scale will reach 430 million. (iResearch, 2019, 7) In this way, Esports seem to have gained a considerable degree of popularity and recognition in the world.

## PERCENTAGE “INTERESTED” OR “VERY INTERESTED” IN MAJOR SPORTS



Source: Nielsen Sports DNA. Figures represent results from surveys of 18 markets: Australia, Brazil (urban population), Canada, China (urban), France, Germany, India (urban), Italy, Japan, Malaysia, Poland, Russia (urban), Singapore (urban), South Korea (urban), Spain, U.A.E. (urban), U.K., U.S.

Figure 2. Percentage “interested” or “very interested” in major sports (Nilsen sports, 2018, p.5)

### 4.2.1 Esports, Olympic Charter and popularity of sports

According to the regulations of the 1987 edition of the *Olympic Charter*, the summer Olympic men's and women's projects need to takes place activities respectively in 50 and 35 countries and regions on three continents, that eligible to enter the *Olympic Games*, winter project requirement takes place activities in 25 countries on three continents, that eligible to enter the winter games. The 1991 edition of the *Olympic Charter* makes adjustments, the number of summer Olympic men's and women's sports are required to be held in 75 countries and regions on four continents and 40 countries and regions on three continents respectively. Winter sports are required to be held in 25 countries and regions on three continents to qualify for the summer and winter Olympics. Since then the *Olympic Charter* modified many times, until 2007, Jacques Rogge served as chairman of the IOC. *Olympic Charter* no longer contains clear requirements in the number of sports held by countries or regions, while all the Olympic sports be divided into

Core Sport and Additional Sport instead, and after Thomas Bach presided over the IOC, the Olympic Games project selection is more flexible. Although the *Olympic Charter* no longer strictly limits the number of countries that sport of the activity countries, however, as can be seen from figure 3, by October 2019, the number of organizing members of the international federation for new projects in Tokyo 2020 and new projects in Paris 2024 agreed in principle by the IOC. Skateboarding, surfing, rock climbing, baseball, and karate all had more members than the initial national requirements. Thus, in the process of reviewing the new Olympic sports, the global activity level of the sports also needs to be evaluated. The IeSF which has just 54 members, has yet to reach the level of popularity and activity needed to become an Olympic sport.

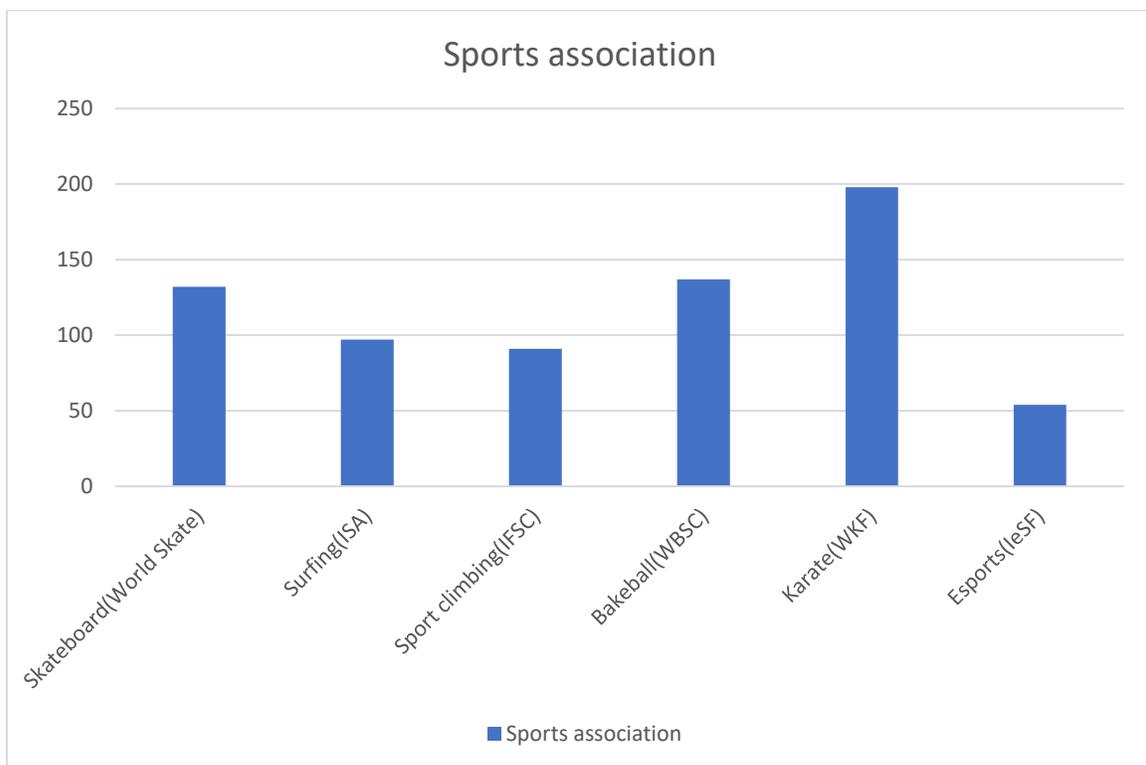


Figure 3. Number of added sports association official members of the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games and IeSF official members (World Skate, 2019; ISA, 2019; IFSC, 2019; WBSC, 2019; WSF, 2019; IeSF, 2019)

#### 4.2.2 Social acceptance of Esports

PricewaterhouseCoopers (PWC) surveyed the public on whether Esports should be included in the Olympic Games. According to the survey data, only 10.4% supported Esports entry into Olympic, 5.9% did not express their opinions, and 83.7% objected this proposal (figure 4). Despite the high disapproval rating of 83.7% in the survey, not everyone is strongly opposed to Esports entering Olympic. According to the results of the subdivided survey, 29% of people believe that Esports should be developed independently, 26.7% believe that Esports should not be included in the Olympic Games and a credible regulatory agency is needed, while 28% believe that Esports is not a "sport". However, 26.7% of the public who believe that "Esports is not allowed to enter the Olympic Games, and a credible regulatory agency is needed" hold a relatively optimistic attitude towards of Esports entering the Olympic Games, if there is a credible regulatory agency for Esports in the future. These people are more likely to switch their attitude towards Esports entering the Olympics.

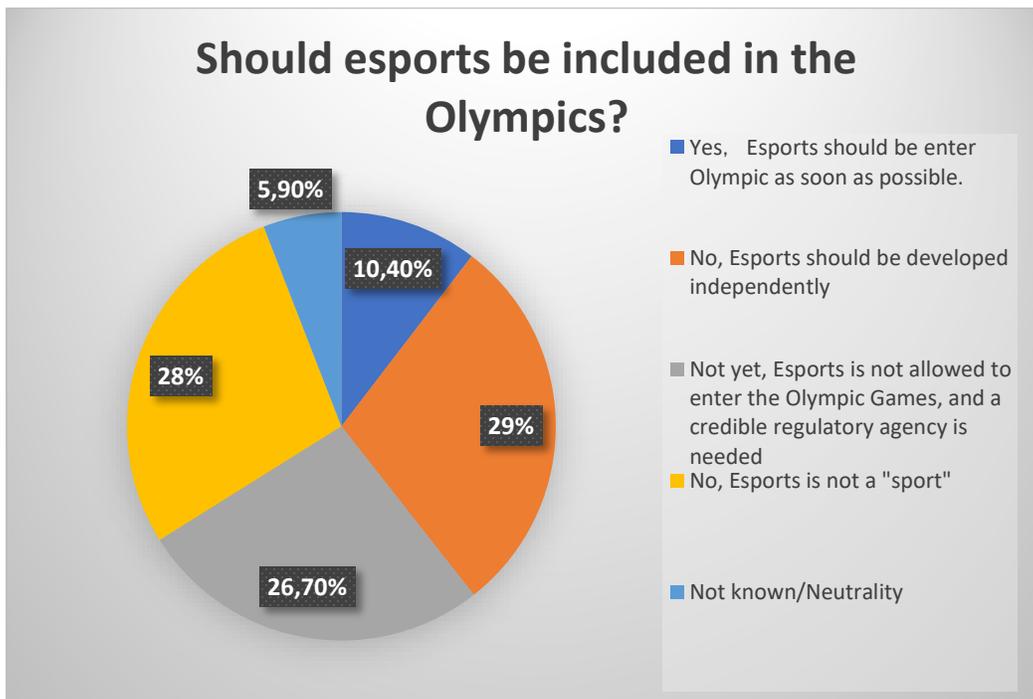


Figure 4. Should Esports be included in the Olympics? (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2018, p.35)

### **4.2.3 Misunderstandings between Esports and video games**

It is easy to confuse Esports with video games without a clear concept of Esports, making people misunderstand "Esports = video games", of which the negative elements brought by video games can easily affect Esports. Take China as an example, the regulation system of video games is not mature so far. For example, the game rating system that has been implemented for a long time in other countries has not been promoted and formulated until this year. Young people are easily exposed to video games with a large number of negative factors. Although a large part of the reasons is lack of government regulation and family education rather than video games themselves, video games are a good excuse to blame. People put aside the problems of regulation or education itself to oppose and boycott video games. In 2002, 25 people were killed and 12 injured in a retaliatory arson attack at an Internet café in China called *Blue Speed*. It was proved that four juveniles deliberately set fire to burn the Internet cafe due to conflict with the Internet cafe staff and caused serious damage. China's State Council had consequently announced a closure of Internet cafes nationwide and issued a series of laws to regulate Internet cafes.(Baidu baike, 2019) The cause of this incident should be the lack of Internet cafe regulation system and education system, while it eventually aroused boycott and serious attack on video games, even labeling video games as " ill-spent plaything". At the same time, the digital sports industry with video games as its core was seriously impacted. Esports was shut down, clubs lost their sponsorship and most Esports players were unemployed. This example also shows that people's prejudice or thoughts on video games without a clear concept of video games and Esports can easily influence people's views on Esports, thus affecting the public's recognition and support for Esports and its entry into the Olympic Games.

### **4.2.4 The separate development of Esports**

"Esports should not be in the Olympics, but should be developed separately" 29% interviewee said. Personally speaking, there is no conflict between the development of Esports alone and entering the Olympics. All sports should be allowed to grow independently, and so should Esports. But for Esports, they have yet to gain the same level of global recognition as other traditional sports. As one of the three major sports events in the world and the largest comprehensive sports games in the world, the Olympic Games is the best platform for Esports

publicity and self-justification. Take Esports becoming a demonstration sport of The Asian Games as an example, mainstream media including state television station have greatly popularized Esports, illustrating why can Esports enter the Asian games. After the Chinese team won the competition of *League of Legends*, people's discussion about Esports related topics further increased. National television station and domestic mainstream media have reported and congratulated the Chinese team on winning the event, greatly arousing public's interest in Esports, which has also changed people's concept of Esports, expanded the popularity of Esports, and promoted the development of the Esports industry. The entry of Esports into the Asian games as a demonstration sport is undoubtedly the starting point even without taking national pride and the popularity of Esports into consideration. If Esports become an Olympic sport, it will be labeled an "Olympic sport" and conduct global promotion. The public's recognition of Esports has increased, which has expanded the audience of Esports and played a positive role in the independent development of Esports.

## **4.3 Defects of Esports**

### **4.3.1 Commercialization**

The Olympic charter states that "political and commercial abuse by any sport or athlete shall be rejected". There are some highly commercialized sports such as football, basketball, and tennis in the Olympic Games; however, none of these sports was born as a commercial product like Esports, whose operation, maintenance, promotion and rule modification are dominated by game manufacturers. The largest international organization of Esports is the IeSF, which was founded in South Korea in 2008. Like other traditional international sports organizations, IeSF is committed to promoting and promoting Esports programs and standardizing Esports. For traditional sports, *Federation Internationale de Football Association (FIFA)*, for example, in addition to promoting Football and organizing games, will also revise the rules of the games and related rules through the FIFA council to ensure the maximum level of fair play. In most cases, IeSF can only coordinate with game manufacturers and has no right to directly interfere with the rules and regulations of an Esports project. Game makers have the biggest say in making and providing all the rules, tools and infrastructure for Esports singles. The high commercialization of Esports may conflict with the Olympic Games to some extent. In the 2018 Asian Games in

Jakarta, there was a conflict between the global finals schedule of League of Legends and the schedule and preparation period of the Asian Games. The same is true of highly commercialized soccer, where the Olympic games clash with qualifying for Europe's two major cups, and where FIFA allows only three over-age players under the age of 23 to compete in the games in order to secure World Cup status. The difference between Esports and football are that the diversity of Esports projects will lead to the need to coordinate with multiple game manufacturers, making the establishment and management of Esports small projects more complicated. If Esports becomes an Olympic sport, the coordination between the IOC and the IeSF and the game makers will also be a problem and challenge.

#### **4.3.2 Longevity of Esports projects**

Esports projects are operated, maintained and updated by game manufacturers. The development of Esports projects directly depends on the operation strategies of game manufacturers. Moreover, with the rapid development of science and technology in modern society and the frequent upgrading of electronic devices, Esports based on electronic devices will undoubtedly be affected by the upgrading of electronic devices. Judging from the competition of World Cyber Games (WCG) since it was founded in 2000, the competition sport change dramatically from year to year. One of the important reasons is the upgrading and popularity of Esports games. According to the regulations of the international Olympic committee, the entry of minor sports into the Olympic Games needs to be determined three years in advance. Due to the frequent updating and popularity of Esports, it is difficult to guarantee and popularity of Esports game when the Olympic Games are held. Audience will directly affect the number of competing countries and the audience's review of the whole Olympic Games. We can take a look at the data of online people of three different Esports games.

The first is the peak number of online players for '*PlayerUnknown's Battlegrounds*' (PUPG), produced by Bluehole Ginno Games, the predecessor of KRAFTON. The highest number of online players of PUPG has been declining since January 2018, but only slightly recovered in December 2018. After January 2018, the overall number of online players dropped significantly. In addition, the online number of the game's highest peak in September 2019 reached the lowest value after January 2018. Meanwhile, the data in September 2019 is the latest data, so it is likely that the online number of the game's highest peak will continue to decline in the future.

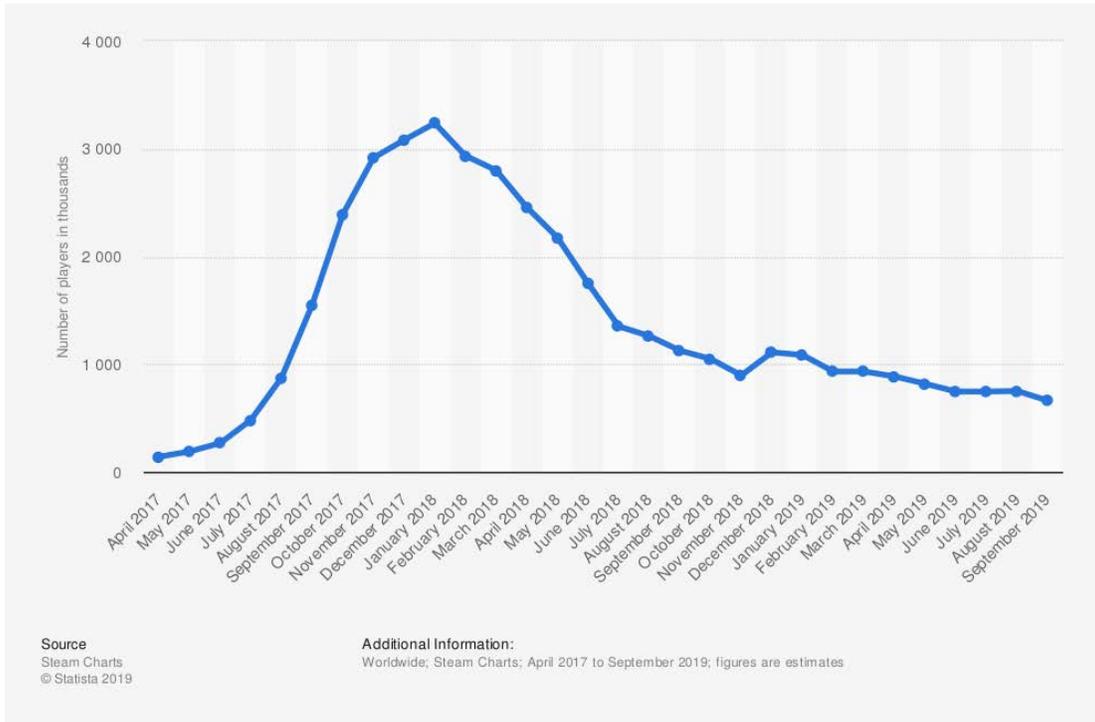


Figure 5. Number of peak concurrent players of *PlayerUnknown's Battlegrounds* (PUBG) on Steam worldwide from April 2017 to September 2019(in 1,000s) (Statista, Sep 2019)

The second is the highest number of online players for '*Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six Siege*' (R6s), produced by Ubisoft Montreal. From the release of the game to May 2018, the peak number of online game players was on an upward trend and peaked in May 2018. After that, the number of online game players dropped slightly and remained stable until September 2019. The overall trend is upward.

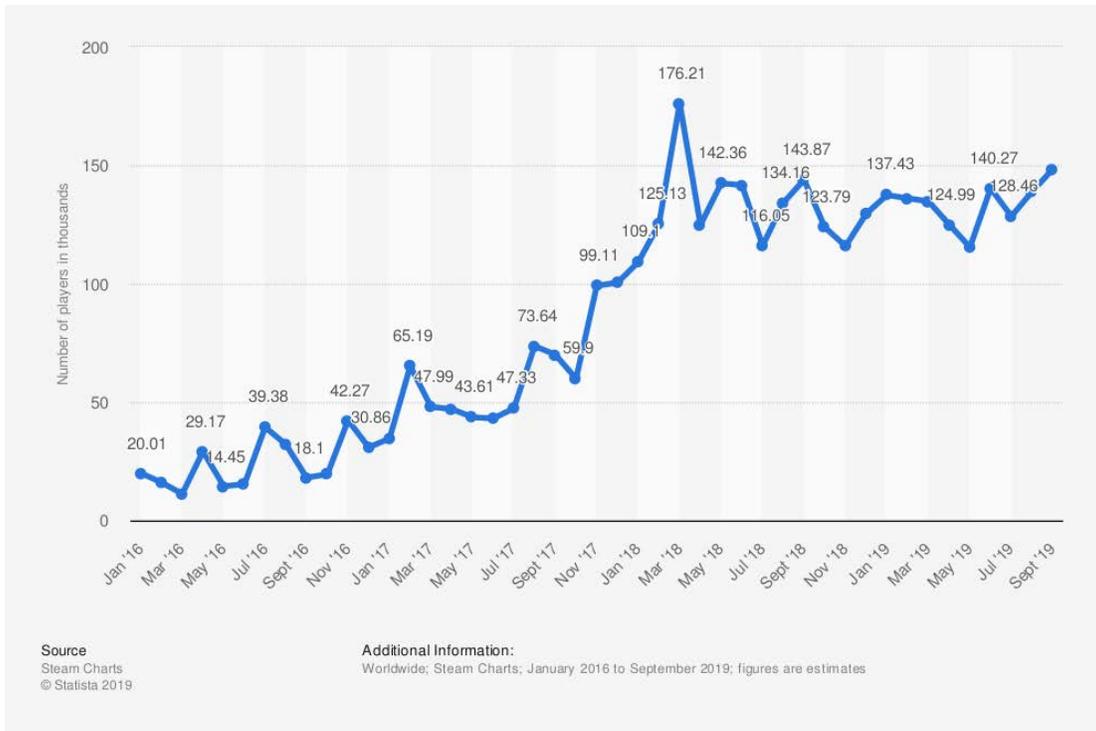


Figure 6. Number of peak concurrent players of *Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six SIEGE* on Steam worldwide from January 2016 to September 2019 (in 1,000s) (Statista, Sep 2019)

The third is the peak number of online players for *Counter-Strike: Global Offensive* (CS: GO), a game developed by Valve and Hidden Path Entertainment. The overall trend volatile, with the most obvious range from May 2018 to January 2019. In just two months between May and July 2018, the number of people playing online dropped 37.5% from its peak. From June to December 2018, the number of people playing online rose by 77.6%. Similar situations have occurred several times, such as April 2016 to January 2017 and December 2018 to September 2019.

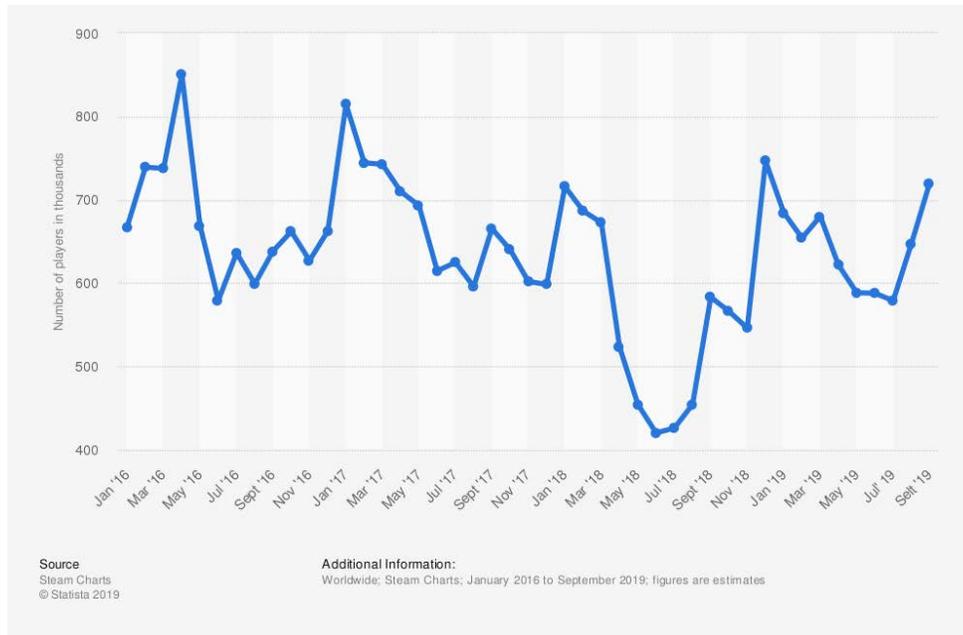


Figure 7. Number of peak concurrent players of *Counter-Strike: Global Offensive (CS: GO)* on Steam worldwide as of September 2019(in 1,000s) (Statista, Sep 2019)

As we can see from the number of peaks concurrent players of three Esports games, the popularity of an Esports game is very hard to grasp, and it is hard to predict how popular it will be after three years. If only three years before the games were held to determine the popularity of a minor event, it would be possible to see an underwhelm or miss out on a popular Esports event in Olympic, even the popular Esports game three years later is not yet born. If Esports enters the Olympic Games, how to screen and evaluate Esports events will be a difficult and complex problem.

Indeed, if the Esports project is determined to be Olympics project after three years, the increase in people's attention is highly possible. But at this stage there is no information to demonstrate this possibility. The only time for Esports to enter a large-scale comprehensive sports meeting is the Asian Games in Jakarta in 2018. It had only been three months from Asian Games Organization Committee announcing Esports as official event to the competition being held officially, and three months couldn't yield too much impact on the popularity of a Esports project. The three-month heat change was partly predictable, so Esports became a success at the Jakarta Asian Games. But three years is a long time, someone Esports game entry the Olympics Game could bring short-term attention. However, due to the long time, the Esports

game may be due to the manufacturer's operation, the game format outdated, and other reasons, the Esports games will not be popular at that time. And these events are often unpredictable.

### **4.3.3 Physiological factors of Esports**

The physical factor is the basic element of physical exercise, from which sports are normally inseparable. Although the physical activity level of Esports is quite different from that of traditional sports, its physical activity level is similar to intelligence sports such as go and chess. Intelligence sports are also parts of competitive sports, so the characteristics of low physical activity will not affect the existence of Esports as a sport. Although Esports training and competition can lead to physical problems. Sitting for long periods of time and intense exercise in parts of the hand can cause problems. These things can be classified as athlete injuries and alleviated through physical fitness management. In fact, many clubs now add physical fitness training into their training programs to ensure the physical condition of Esports athletes. The biggest problem caused by Esports low-body movement is that Esports, as a sport, has not been widely recognized by the society, and the fact that Esports has not reached the element of "enhancing physical fitness" has caused many obstacles in terms of social recognition.

## **4.4 Esports entry effect**

### **4.4.1 Young people and Olympic Games**

The Olympics is one of the most famous events in the world, attracting more than 3.5 billion and 2.1 billion people for each summer and winter games since the 2004 summer games in Athens and the 2002 winter Olympics in Salt Lake City. (Figure 8) The average age of Olympic viewers has risen from 45 in 2000 to 50 in 2006 and 53 in 2016, according to Nielsen's survey of 24 sports broadcast viewers. (Figure 9) Although this set of data shows live television ratings and does not include the new media, which is more popular with young people. It still reveals the aging phenomenon of the Olympic Games TV audience as a more and more serious problem. Ignorance of such problem will not only affect the Olympic sponsors, broadcasters and media operators but also affect the global reputation of the Olympic games. In fact, the IOC is aware of the seriousness of the problem. In the reform roadmap "Olympic agenda 2020", the

IOC regards "youth" as one of the three major themes of governance and hopes to attract the attention of youth through a series of reform measures. So as to realize the sustainable development of the Olympic Games and the intergenerational transmission of Olympic values, "to make Olympic sports more popular among young people" has become an important reform measure of the IOC. The Tokyo 2020 Olympics will add karate, baseball, softball, skateboarding, surfing, rock climbing, and other sports, which are popular among young people.

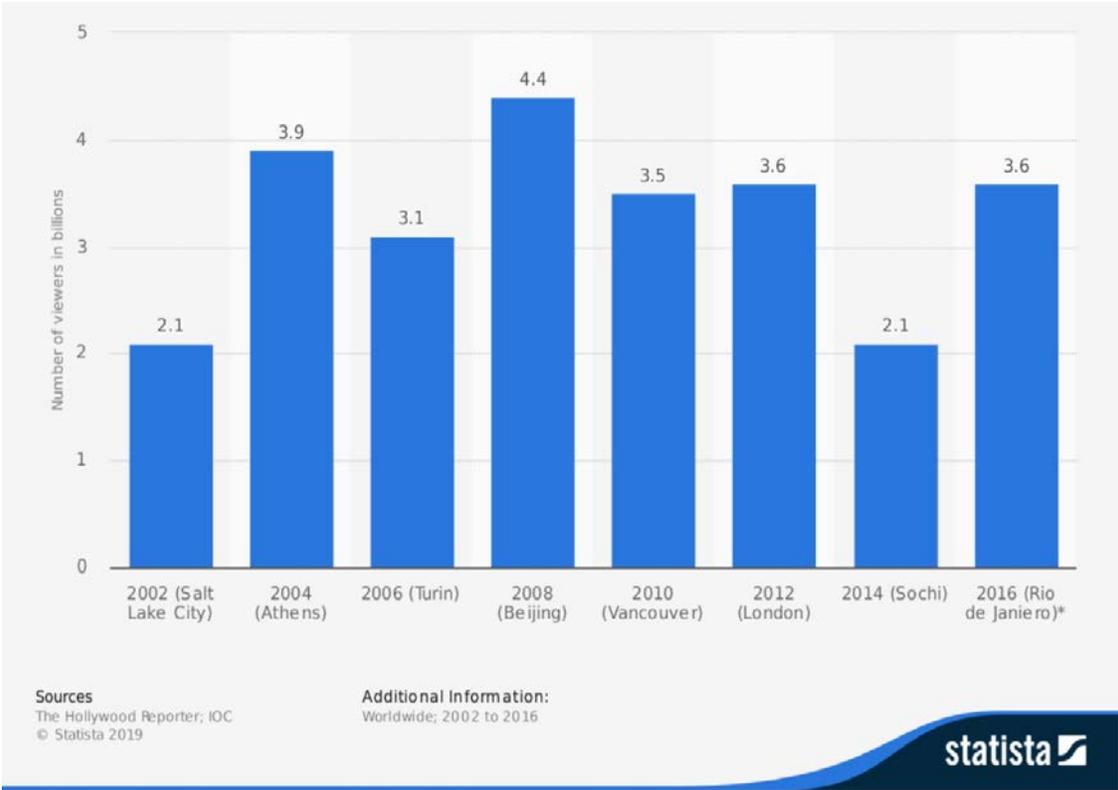


Figure 8. Number of Olympic Games TV viewers worldwide from 2002 to 2016 (in billions)  
(Statista, May 2019)

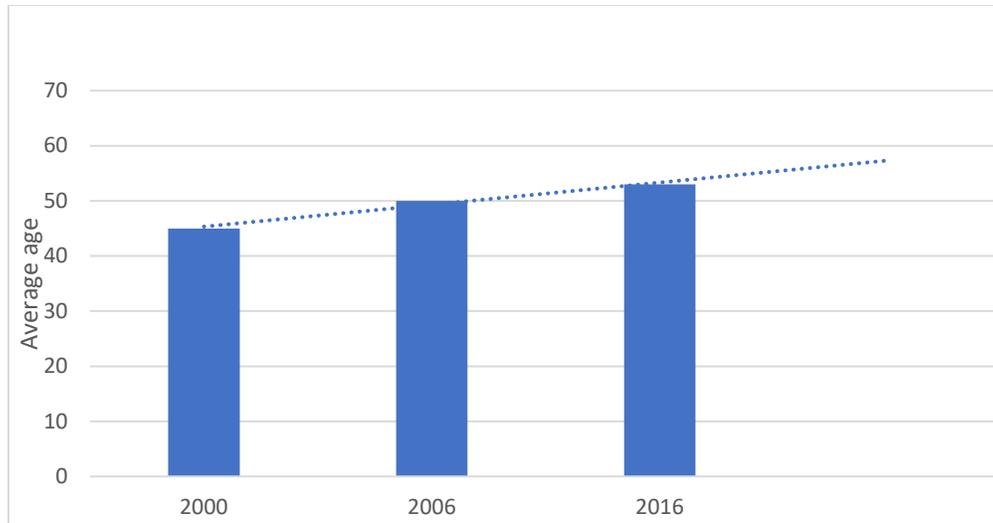


Figure 9. Average age of Olympic broadcast audience (Lanxiong Sports, 2017)

The young audience of Esports is exactly in line with IOC's aim of attracting young people's attention to the Olympic Games. Take China's Esports users as an example, 21.9% are under the age of 18. Esports users aged between 18 and 24 accounts for 26.2%, accounting for the highest proportion. The number of Esports users between 24- and 30-years old accounts for 23.8%, second only to those between 18 and 24 years old. Esports users over the age of 30 account for only 28.1%% of the total. The number of young Esports users under 30 reached 71.9%. It can be seen from the data that if Esports can enter the Olympic Games, it can not only meet the needs of young people in the Olympic Games and attract young people to pay attention to the Olympic Games but also guarantee the commercial benefits. Most importantly, it can realize the sustainable development of the Olympic Games and the intergenerational transmission of Olympic values.

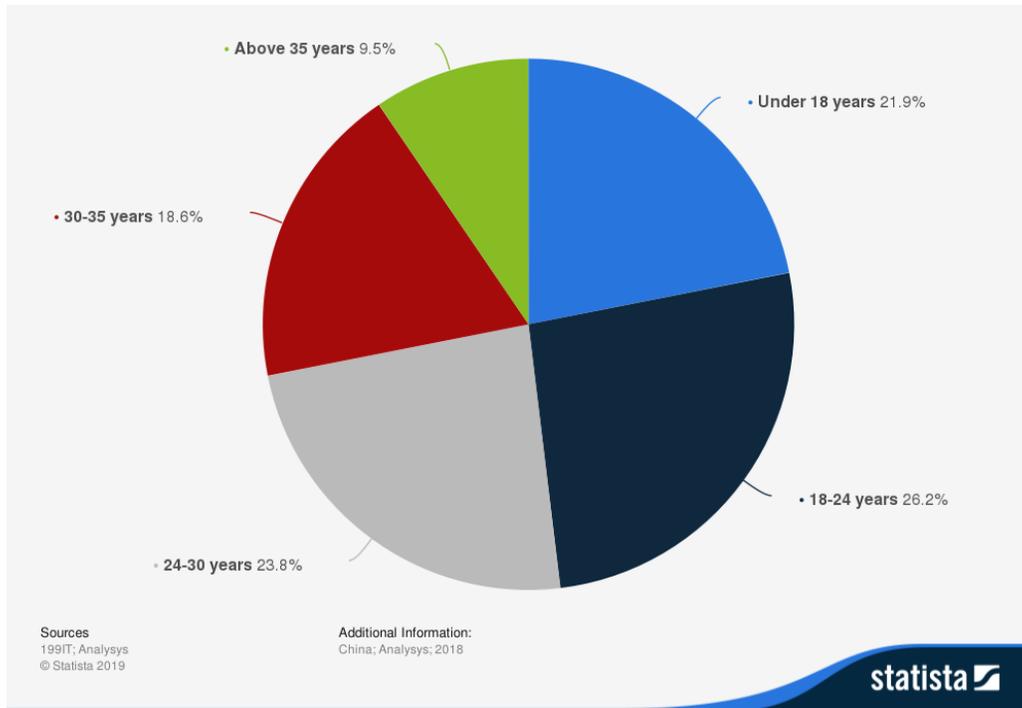


Figure 10. Share of Esports game users in China in 2018, by age group (Statista, June 2019)

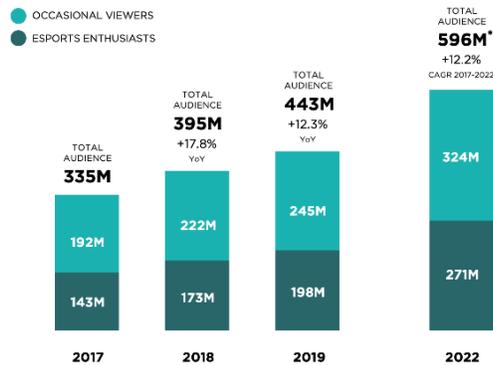
#### 4.4.2 Esports and Olympic Game's host country

The Esports industry is currently developing rapidly. The global Esports revenue has exceeded us \$1 billion and is expected to grow to us \$1.1 billion in 2019, an increase of 26.7%. North America will generate \$410m and China \$210m. (Newzoo, 2019, p.5) The number of Esports audiences is also increasing, from 335 million in 2017 to 395 million in 2018 to 443 million in 2019, increasing by 17.8% and 12.3% each year. It is estimated that the total number of Esports audiences will reach 596 million by 2022 (figure 11). if Esports can bring the host country such benefits, the host country will naturally promote Esports and Esports can make a mutually beneficial relationship with the host country.



## ESPORTS AUDIENCE GROWTH

GLOBAL | FOR 2017, 2018, 2019, 2022



\*Due to rounding, Occasional Viewers (324M) and Esports Enthusiasts (271M) add up to 596M.  
©Newzoo | 2019 Global Esports Market Report, June 2019

Figure 11. Number of Global Esports audience growth (Newzoo, 2019, 23)

### 4.4.3 The Capital of Esports -system

For example, if Esports is successfully admitted to the Olympic Games, it can take advantage of the opportunity to like Shanghai, Xi'an, Chengdu and other cities to build the "Esports Capital" system, integrate Esports industry resources, hold or invite large-scale events to land and a series of measures to promote Esports industry. If we can build the "Capital of Esports" on the basis of Esports entering the Olympic Games, this title can perfectly play its role as a historical heritage and build the brand of the "Capital of Olympic Esports". In fact, after the end of many official games, a large number of venues fail to perform their original functions, either gaining maintenance or permission to be demolished. The "Esports capital" can be built upon the existing Olympic venues and make good use of recourses which were exclusively designed for the Olympic Games in the first place. With the premise of Esports into the Olympic Games, I believe it is fair to say that the plan of building the "Capital of Esports" is of high feasibility.

## 5. Conclusions

The problems of Esports to be able to entry to the Olympic Games are relatively clear. First, the main reason of the international Olympic committee to reject Esports entry is that Esports are not in line with the Olympic values such as "violence" and "discrimination".

According to the popular Esports sports at the present stage, in addition to certain Esports that are based on traditional sports, other Esports sports more or less contain some elements that do not accord with the Olympic values. However, I don't think it is necessary to define Esports as a bad effort sport as long as it is not dominated by elements that do not accord with the Olympic values. In many cases, the undesirable elements just are simply needed as a foil or story set in the sport. In spite of the negative factors of Esports, we should also face up to the positive elements of Esports. We should not deny the whole Esports project because of the negative elements in it.

The second is the confusion between Esports and electronic games. Esports sport is based on electronic games, so in this way it can be said that Esports is a branch of electronic games, and Esports games belong to one of the categories of electronic games. The essential difference between Esports and other types of video games is "competitiveness" and "entertainment". This is not to say that other types of electronic games do not have competitive elements, but electronic sports games emphasize the concept of "competitiveness" and "confrontation", with which electronic sports games can be developed into events based on Esports, as well as promoting electronic sports industry. And just because Esports originated from video games, the negative news of video games will affect the field of Esports because of the confusion between the two concepts. There are many kinds of video games, among which many games are dominated by bad factors. Such games are generally classified as "18+" in the game rating system, meaning that only adults are allowed to play them. But in fact, teenagers are easily exposed to games that are not suitable for them through various channels. Consistent exposure to games with negative factors at an early age will do harm to young people both physically and mentally.

Thirdly, the longevity of Esports. Currently, Esports games, such as League of Legends, Dota2 and CSGO, have been in operation for only 6-10 years. And it is difficult to predict its future development. For example, according to the data of CSGO analyzed above, it is difficult to guarantee that it can maintain its hot attention during the Olympic Games. But if Esports become an Olympic sport, its Esports games could bring back old players and attract more people who have never played Esports before. But currently, no precedent can demonstrate for this possibility

In terms of low popularity of Esports, the reasons may be as follows: firstly, the negative factors mentioned above prevent some people from embracing e-games and Esports, which makes it difficult to carry out Esports activities in some countries. Secondly, some major religious cultures of some countries ban video games and Esports. Thirdly, some countries have comparatively weak national strength and under-developed infrastructure, especially some African countries. Only a few major video games currently on the market have servers in Africa, leading to the slow development of Esports. The African Gaming League was founded in Nigeria in 2015 to promote Esports across the continent. However, by October 2019, the last update visible on the official website of the African games federation was on September 1, 2016.

The younger audience can be regarded as the biggest capital of Esports entering Olympic project. Esports has achieved the goal of "younger audience of the Olympic event", which can alleviate the aging problem of the Olympic audience and improve the audience rating of the Olympic Games by taking advantage of the current popularity of Esports.

In countries where Esports are thought highly of or well developed such as China, South Korea, and the United States, hosting an Olympics with Esports will stimulate their Esports industry, and the "Olympic Esports" will become their cultural name card. In many aspects, it is good for the host country's Esports development. For host countries that do not have an solid Esports base, Esports entry into Olympic could be an opportunity for them to start developing Esports from scratch.

## 6. Discussion and suggestions

Given that the types and forms of Esports is relatively monotonous and Esports is highly business-oriented, it's fair to say that the current Esports is not mature enough. Game makers natural need to cater to the hobby of consumers during operating and developing an Esports game leads to a lower possibility of the appearance of a "flawless" Esports game in a short time, which could cause obstacles to Esports entering the Olympics games. In addition, the recognition of the Esports and the popularity of the public are not high enough, so people are easily affected by the negative news of video games. If relevant institutions and groups do not popularize Esports activities in time, negative review of Esports among the public will inevitably emerge, therefore bringing even more obstacles to Esports entering the Olympics.

Taking the forms and status quo of current mainstream Esports games into consideration, the possibility of Esports entering the Olympic Games is not very high. But Esports is still very young as a sport, and the future of Esports may be completely different with the continuous development of technology. For example, the rapid development of smart phones in recent years has enabled Esports to develop at a high speed on the mobile side, presenting the public with a completely different form of Esports. In 2018, the mobile game *Arena of Valor* and *Clash Royale* became the Asian Games in Jakarta, representing the success of Esports games on a mobile end. It is highly likely that popular Esports games combining VR or AR technology will be born, endowing Esports with new energy to enter the Olympics.

### *Suggestions*

#### *Strengthen communication with the IOC*

Given that current popular Esports games is difficult to completely eliminate the adverse factors that are not in conformity with the Olympic values, for one thing, relevant institutions shall strengthen the communication to the IOC, emphasizing younger audience of Esports and the positive factors in Esports. For another, institutions can also communicate with the Olympic

committee of the host country to promote their willingness of accepting Esports entry into the Olympic Games.

#### *Promoting Esports as an official event in the Asian Games*

Esports has been featured in the Jakarta Asian Games, as the first time Esports event in a major comprehensive sports event. With this successful experience, Esports is more likely to become an official event in the Asian games than the Olympic Games. If Esports successfully become an official sport of the Asian games, its experience and the Asian games Esports operation mode can become the reference of Esports entry into Olympics.

#### *Carry out Esports popularization activities*

Relevant organizations should carry out Esport's popularization activities in countries with Esports industry foundation to popularize the concept of Esports to the public. Publicity could be carried out on the mainstream platform centering on national institutions or relevant organizations that are convincing to the public, so that the public can enhance their awareness of Esports and e-concept through all those activities. In those countries without strong Esports infrastructure and foundation, game manufacturers and leSF shall communicate with relevant local departments to enable the commercial power of game manufacturers to enter the market and set up servers for Esports games. It is also necessary to publicize the concept of electronic games and Esports thus promoting the public's enthusiasm for Esports on the basis of sustainable development.

#### *Game manufacturers maintain good operations and develop a variety of Esports games*

Game manufacturers should adopt correct operation strategies to extend the life of existing Esports projects. In order to ensure the stable operation of the existing Esports events, it's of high necessity to create new Esports games with the goal of higher diversification and create

Esports games with a wider user group, more diversified play methods and more profound thoughts. Promoting the charm of Esports by improving game quality is pivotal too. Game manufacturers can also make competitive changes in existing casual video games or take casual video games as competitive activities. For example, the "Speedrun" playing method of video games, which aims to finish a video game in the shortest time, could be used to increase the competitiveness of games. The rule of the game, by which players compete against each other for the fastest time, grants casual video games an element of competition, and provides a reference for other casual video games to develop new competitive mode.

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