

Chapter 1

eSports Today: Its Origins and Ecosystem

ABSTRACT

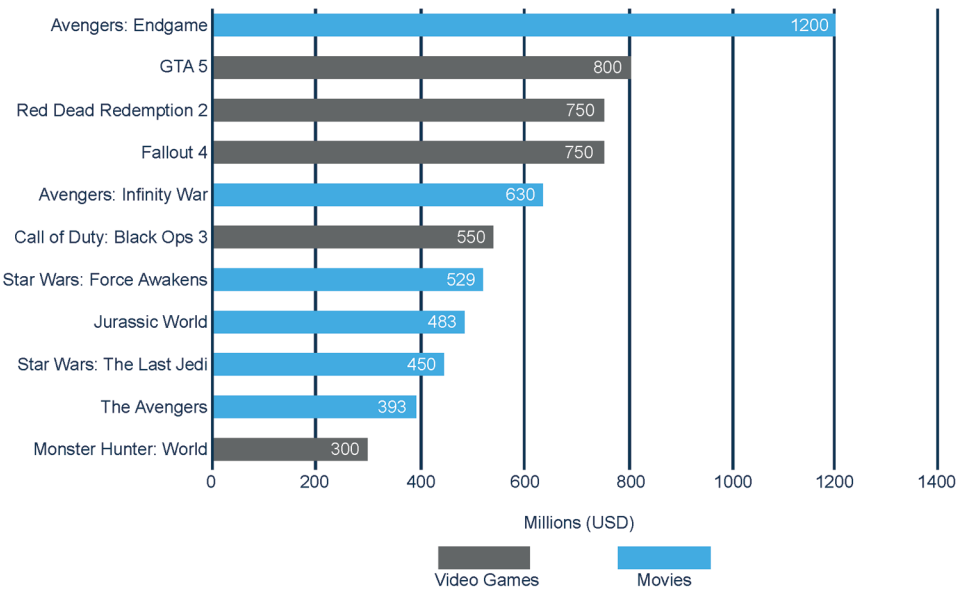
Today, gaming, from consoles to PCs to mobile devices, is a global phenomenon with over two billion active participants. In the past two-decades, a subsector of gaming has emerged. eSports has transformed gaming into a networked forum where participants compete with others from around the world. This first chapter provides an overview of the major eSports issues and themes. It will include mapping the history of eSports and the major components of its business ecosystem. Each subsequent chapter will do a deep dive into core themes within eSports and their implications on business and society.

INTRODUCTION

Driven by technological advancements, social networking and video streaming, the global gaming market today exceeds two billion participants or 30% of the world's total population (Merwin, Sugiyama, Mubayi, Hari & Terry, 2018). For perspective, Red Dead Redemption 2 generated \$725M in sales in its first three days. If Red Dead Redemption 2 was a movie, it would rank as the third largest box office opening in history; larger than any Star Wars or Harry Potter movie (Box Office Mojo, 2019). In fact, as per Figure 1, three of the top five “opening weekends” in history are held by games, not movies.

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Figure 1. Worldwide opening weekend revenue (in millions USD)



While eSports and gaming are often used interchangeably, competitive electronic sports (eSports) is really a subset of gaming, where individuals or teams compete in leagues or tournaments for money or prizes. Today, eSports represents only 5% of the overall gaming market, but it’s the untapped upside of it that appears to have created the incredible hype. Thus to better position and understand this industry, this book will explore the past, present and future of eSports. This first chapter provides a brief overview of the major eSports issues and themes and reflects on whether eSports is even a sport. The first chapter then maps out the history of eSports and its ecosystem, including market potential, disruption to current business and issues related to race, gender, health and wellness. Each subsequent chapter then addresses specific themes introduced in this first chapter.

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