

Esports Tourism as an Urban Tourism Opportunity: A Literature Review

Denaz Karuma Hijriansyah^{1*}, Hadiono², Pratik Hari Yuwono³, Septiana Dwi Rakhmawati⁴

^{1,2} Sport Science, Universitas PGRI Yogyakarta, 55182, Indonesia.

³Primary School Teacher Education, Universitas Muhammadiyah Purwokerto, 53182, Indonesia.

⁴Physical Education, Jenderal Soedirman University, 53182, Indonesia.

*Correspondence: denaz@upy.ac.id

¹ Sport Science, Universitas PGRI Yogyakarta, 55182, Indonesia.

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Abstract

Background: Electronic sports, better known as esports, open up new opportunities to create destinations that can be explored through a type of unconventional sports tourism known as esports tourism.

Objectives: This study concludes that esports tourism is a strategic opportunity in the development of city tourism as tourists increasingly demand technology-based experiences and digital entertainment.

Methods: This article uses a literature review research method. The collection of articles constitutes secondary data. The databases used were Web of Science (WoS), Scopus, SINTA, and Google Scholar. The SINTA database was specifically used to collect domestic literature not found in WoS or Scopus. The collection of articles was limited to publications from 2020 to 2025.

Results: Esports tourism shows significant potential for destinations to attract tourist flows and expand their contribution to the local economy. The literature confirms that the esports tourist experience is shaped by service quality, event atmosphere, staff communication, and emotional engagement in live attendance. These factors influence the image of the destination and the intention to return, making them key components in the success of esports tourism.

Conclusion: The study's findings also emphasize that the success of esports destinations depends on the readiness of digital infrastructure, including the availability of venues with esports technical standards, low-latency networks, and integrated broadcast production systems. In addition, digital marketing through social media has proven to be a key instrument in attracting interest, expanding reach, and building sustainable community engagement. Platforms like Instagram and TikTok play a crucial role in creating a cycle of attention leading to tourist action.

Keywords: esports tourism, urban tourism, city tourism, smart city

INTRODUCTION

The development of the digital industry in today's technological era is advancing rapidly. This has also brought about changes in the behavior patterns of tourists and tourist cities in Indonesia. These changes have provided impetus for the tourism sector to remain relevant and competitive. The traditional tourism sector tends to focus on natural, cultural, or historical attractions. Meanwhile, the disruption caused by the younger generation, who want new, more immersive, and technology-based travel experiences, can put pressure on this sector. On the other hand, electronic sports, better known as esports, open up new opportunities to create destinations that can be explored through a type of unconventional sports tourism known as esports tourism. Esports is beginning to be considered a new tourism trend because gaming tournaments and events attract tourists to the locations where they are held (Maslowski & Karasiewicz, 2021).

Esports tourism is intended in two contexts, namely city tourism and esports. City tourism can increase its economic competitiveness by synergizing digital infrastructure and smart city institutions. Digital infrastructure can include fast internet access, streaming venues, and tourist data integration. These elements can serve as the foundation for organizing hybrid esports events. Additionally, esports, as a new tourism trend, has proven to be a magnet for tourists. It contributes to attracting both local and out-of-town fans, whose spending is channeled into the hospitality, retail, transportation, and creative economy sectors. Esports has fans who exhibit intensive consumption behavior when participating in live or hybrid events, meaning it has the potential to benefit destinations that can accommodate them (Zhang et al., 2023).

There are challenges in bridging urban tourism and esports. Regarding this, a literature review is needed as a starting point. Esports events are a new tourism trend that requires further study (Dulgaroglu, 2023). Tourism cities in Southeast Asian countries, including Indonesia, face challenges such as the digital divide, limited event capacity, and suboptimal integration of stakeholders (local government, event organizers, the hospitality sector, and the esports community). Smart tourism technology has a significant impact on the tourist experience (Rahmawati et al., 2022). However, it has not yet been linked to sports/digital events such as esports. The local economic perspective views sports and events as having a real role in regional development. This is in line with studies on the role of sports in regional economic development (Abukalloub & Kutluay, 2023). Therefore, destinations that can synergize digital elements,

sports or esports events, and urban network infrastructure can drive economic diversification and increase local added value and new tourism opportunities.

METHODS

Study Design and Participants

This article uses a literature review research method. The collection of articles constitutes secondary data (Andriansah & Gumilar, 2025). The databases used were Web of Science (WoS), Scopus, SINTA, and Google Scholar. The SINTA database was specifically used to collect domestic literature not found in WoS or Scopus. The collection of articles was limited to publications from 2020 to 2025.

Research Instruments

Articles were collected based on keyword searches using Boolean operators. The selection of articles was initially broad but became more specific to facilitate review (Astuti, 2022). The keywords used in the research included “esports” OR “gaming” AND “tourism” AND “smart tourism” OR “smart city” OR “digital infrastructure” AND “gaming impact” AND “economic impact” OR “local economy” OR “UMKM” OR “economic development” AND “pariwisata” AND ‘Asia’ OR “Southeast Asia”.

Data Analysis

Articles are determined based on reliable academic databases. This study applies semantic search. Semantic search is the process of searching for content based on the appropriate context, where the content is written text and the context is the existence of the text desired by the user (Syauqi & Farisah, 2014). The semantic search results are correlated with keywords and their context. Document search focuses not only on keywords, but also on the meaning associated with the keywords (Unik & Ramli, 2018).

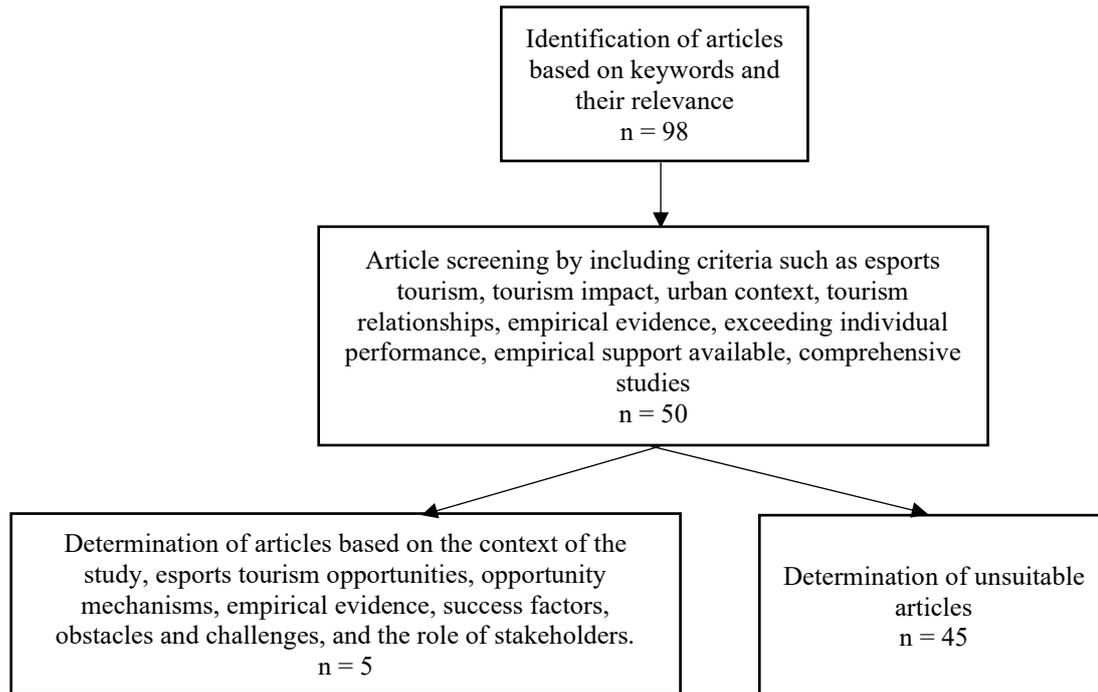


Figure 1.0 Article Selection Flowchart

Based on Figure 1.0, the following shows that the first step is to identify articles. The identified articles focus on keywords and their relevance. A total of 98 articles were found. The second step is to filter articles based on specific criteria. The criteria for screening articles include esports tourism, tourism impact, urban context, tourism connection, empirical evidence, beyond individual performance, empirical support present, and complete study. The third step is to make a determination based on context and relationship with keywords to obtain extracts that include study context, esports tourism opportunities, opportunities mechanism, empirical evidence, success factors, barriers and challenges, and stakeholder roles.

RESULTS

Table 1.0 Article Findings

Num.	Author and Year of Publication	Title	Method	Objective	Key Findings
1	Lim and Setiawan (2022)	Dampak Pandemi Covid-19 Terhadap Perkembangan Event E-Sports di Indonesia	Qualitative Descriptive, Literature Review	Understanding the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on esports events in Indonesia	The potential for esports tourism, where the Covid-19 pandemic has given a boost to the esports industry through online events. Esports

						has shown great potential as a sub-sector of the creative industry that has been able to grow rapidly during the pandemic.
2	Leon et al. (2022)	eSports Events Trend: A Promising Opportunity for Tourism Offerings	Exploratory-descriptive survey	Identifying the potential of esports as an alternative for diversifying tourism events in Guayaquil, Ecuador	There are four important indicators of satisfaction with the esports tourism experience, including event staff, event atmosphere, hospitality, and positive feelings about being there in person. Visitors and tourists also expressed their willingness to return to the city in the future.	
3	Wahyudi and Kencana (2024)	Instagram Content Strategy For Esports Events @Mpl.Id.Official Increasing Esports Tourism	Qualitative Descriptive, Semi-Structured Interviews	Analyzing Instagram content strategies on the @mpl.id.official account as a leading esports tournament in Indonesia	The Instagram content strategy of @mpl.id.official effectively attracts audience attention by featuring popular teams and players, meeting audience demand with informative content, and implementing reposting and tagging strategies aimed at increasing content reach. The social media content strategy is considered effective in attracting followers and interest in esports tourism linked to	

					popular games such as Mobile Legends.
4	Frans et al. (2022)	Study Of E-Sports Tourism Potential Using Triple Bottom Line Analysis Method	Qualitative Descriptive	Analyzing the potential of the esports industry in the tourism sector, particularly in urban areas in Indonesia	The esports industry is experiencing rapid growth and has a positive impact on social, economic, and natural resource aspects. Esports shows its potential as a sustainable tourism resource. Regulatory support and local product development are recommended because Indonesia contributes less than 1% of global esports products, meaning that most products are still imported.
5	Kim et al. (2020)	The rise of E-Sports and potential for Post-COVID continued growth	Systematic Literature Review Evaluation	Analyzing the economic impact of esports, which has significant growth for a region	The strategy of policy makers in utilizing esports for the economic development of a region is very important. Opportunities in esports are key to integrating esports tourism. This will create a larger audience and therefore revenue and growth are expected to increase in the future. With technology continuing to evolve, esports has the potential to become a major sport and it is

important for cities and countries to start investing in this industry.

DISCUSSION

Economic Opportunities and Market Growth

The fascination of the esports industry has a significant influence, ranging from public attention to economic growth in esports tourism. This stems from empirical findings showing that the global esports industry grew to reach 443 million viewers and USD 950 million in revenue in 2019 (Leon et al., 2022). The value of the esports industry continues to rise.

Table 2.0 Growth of the Esports Industry

Economic Indicator	Value	Periodic	Geographic Scope
Global Revenue	USD 950M	2019	Worldwide
Market Value	USD 0,97B	2020	Worldwide
Market Value	USD 1,28B	2021	Worldwide
Global Revenue	USD 1,79B	2022	Worldwide
Global Revenue	USD 1,9B	2023	Worldwide
Global Revenue	USD 2,09B	2024	Worldwide
Projected Market Value	USD 2,89B	2025	Worldwide

Table 2.0 shows that industry growth is based on diverse economic indicators. The esports market value grew from USD 0.97 billion in 2020 to USD 1.28 billion in 2021, reaching USD 1.79 billion in 2022 (Lim & Setiawan, 2022). In 2023, the esports industry earned global revenues of USD 1.9 billion, which increased to USD 2.09 billion the following year (Yusuan, 2022). Finally, in 2025, the esports industry is predicted to grow to USD 2.89 billion (Kim et al., 2020).

The global revenue of the esports industry is based on six types. These types are sponsorship, media rights, publisher fees, merchandise and tickets, digital, and streaming (Clement, 2025). However, it should be noted that the growth of economic value in the global esports industry shows a positive trend, which can drive esports tourism in a more significant direction, especially city tourism. The dynamics of esports tourism in Indonesia are characterized by less than 1% of global esports products and the underutilization of esports tourism events, even though Indonesia has a potential market of 175 million people that can be

tapped into (Frans et al., 2022). This opens up great opportunities for city tourism in Indonesia to organize esports tourism.

Event Experience and Tourist Satisfaction

City tourism combined with esports can be realized. Esports tourism is one way to increase tourist interest. Like the city of Guayaquil in Ecuador, which is a potential reference for hosting esports tourism events, one of which has an international destination image (Leon et al., 2022). The city of Guayaquil has a world-renowned tourist attraction, Malecon 2000, a 2.5-kilometer-long pedestrian walkway along the Guayas River, and the city has the Port of Guayaquil as the gateway to the Galapagos Islands (Ananda, 2023). Similarly, Indonesia has cities with amazing tourist attractions that make it an attractive destination for the world. The emergence of interest among sports tourists is influenced by the image of the destination, especially the motivation to return for subsequent editions (Kaplanidou et al., 2012).

Research on tourist perceptions found four key factors for success in esports event experiences, including event staff, event ambience, visitor services, and positive feelings about being there in real life, based on 384 respondents who said that 68% participated in national events and 32% participated in international events (Leon et al., 2022). The quality of event personnel communication is a determinant in various sports events (Moon et al., 2011). The hosting of esports events has an impact on the local economy, providing the benefits and stimulation of a promising local economy, so that facilities and service quality shape the perceptions of esports tourists (Dilek, 2019) (Albani & Usolludin, 2021) (Iatu & Bulai, 2011). Therefore, the indications that can be concluded from several studies are that the satisfaction of esports tourists has a significant influence on the image of a city's destination, which has the potential to be used as an esports tourism destination.

Infrastructure and Technology Requirements

Esports tourism required specially designed venues. Esports venues are infrastructure designed with network dependability, capable of producing broadcasts, and enabling supportive policies to ensure the success of esports tourism. The required esports arena must be versatile, featuring adjustable stages, crowd seating, team areas, and production control rooms integrated with the workflow of live events and broadcasts (Elsaid & Fathallah, 2023). As a result, on-site broadcasts and content production will seamlessly integrate with streaming services, which is essential for monetizing remote viewers and audiences (Chaib & Anagnostopoulos, 2025).

The requirements for esports venues can be met with a reliable infrastructure ecosystem. The technical requirements for esports venues are difficult to reconcile because they require low latency networks, high redundancy capacity, and proficient LAN setup to ensure competition integrity and fluency of broadcasts (Li et al., 2025). In addition, getting urban tourists to the esports venue needs to be a key consideration. Urban tourists are supported by easily accessible accommodation and transportation systems that are close to tourism infrastructure to increase tourist spending (Becka et al., 2021). This shows that digital infrastructure holds a central role in organizing esports tourism that can facilitate both direct and virtual tourist experiences.

Marketing and Digital Platform Utilization

Social media is a platform that serves as the main marketing channel for the development of esports tourism. This is appealing because in 2023, active social media users reached 167 million people (Riyanto, 2023). A case study conducted in 2023 revealed that the Mobile Legends Professional League (MPL) 2023 on the @mpl.id.official account has proven the effectiveness of Instagram by gathering 6.3 million followers (Wahyudi & Kencana, 2024). On the other hand, there is TikTok, a new social media platform that has had a significant impact on the esports audience. TikTok tends to engage users interested in Mobile Legends by prompting them to seek further information after watching its content (Ellenaor & Junaidi, 2022).

Table 2.0 AISAS Model

AISAS Components	Implement Strategy	Effect
Attention	Popular teams and players with large fan bases	Successfully captured audience attention
Interest	Informative content related to MPL Indonesia	Fullfilled audience needs
Search	Content reposting and talent/player tagging	Increased content reach
Action	Timely information updates	Attracted follower interest, sold out 1,200 grand final tickets
Share	Mobile legends related content	High sharing potential among followers

Table 2.0 above is the AISAS (Attention, Interest, Search, Action, Share) model from the study (Wahyudi & Kencana, 2024), where marketing amplification emphasizes timing and content design rather than traditional approaches. This is MPL Indonesia's strategy of

prioritizing captions over hashtags and focusing on delivering the right information at the right time. Visual content and materials shared on popular games show high engagement potential. Significant digital reach for esports tourism marketing. Online community groups and esports tourism platforms serve as marketing channels outside of social media networks (Frans et al., 2022). The creation of an integrated marketing ecosystem based on platforms that facilitate promotional activities and community engagement.

CONCLUSION

This literature review suggests that esports tourism is a strategic possibility in the development of city tourism. This is especially true in the digital era, which is characterized by a shift in tourist preferences towards more interactive, technology-based, and entertainment-oriented experiences. The consistent worldwide growth of the esports industry means that demand for national and international esports events is increasing. This will create a new wave of tourism with substantial contributions.

The integration of city tourism, digital infrastructure, and the esports ecosystem indicates that destinations are capable of building strong digital connectivity. This can provide venues that meet esports technical standards and deliver quality event experiences that have the potential to become competitive new tourist centers. Aspects of the tourist experience, such as service quality, event atmosphere, staff communication, and emotional engagement, have a direct impact on the image of the destination and the intention to return. In addition, digital marketing through social media has proven to play a critical role in building interest. Thus, it can be directed towards information seeking and disseminating tourist experiences. Therefore, esports tourism is not just a new tourism product but also part of the digital transformation of tourism that involves online communities, broadcast technology, and platform-based marketing strategies. On the whole, this literature explains that esports tourism is a strategic instrument for local economic diversification and increasing city competitiveness. However, its success is highly dependent on multi-stakeholder synergy, infrastructure readiness, and adaptive digital strategies.

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