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RETHINKING AUTEUR AND AUTHORITY ON CREATIVE ACTORS IN TURKISH VIDEO GAME INDUSTRY

HAZIRLAYAN

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YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZİ

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The motivation behind this thesis lies in my long-standing fascination with the creative processes behind video games—an art form I have grown up with, studied, and come to appreciate not only as entertainment, but as a powerful medium of storytelling and design. As I explored auteur theory in cinema, I began to question whether video games, with their hybrid nature of art and code, could ever accommodate such a concept. This question eventually gave birth to this study in order to understand the industry's complex structure of shared creativity and corporate influence.

The journey of writing this thesis has been both intellectually stimulating and personally rewarding. It involved not only theoretical research, but real conversations with game developers, whose insights were invaluable in shaping the direction and relevance of this study. I am deeply grateful to them for their time and openness.

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Lastly, I want to thank the game creators—both celebrated auteurs and anonymous developers—who continue to shape this evolving art form with passion and imagination. It is my hope that this thesis contributes, in some small way, to recognizing and understanding their creative roles in the games we play.

ÖZET

Tarlabölen, Yiğit. Türk Video Oyun Endüstrisinde Yaratıcı Aktörler Üzerine Yazarlık ve Otorite Kavramlarını Yeniden Düşünmek, Başkent Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Radyo, Televziyon ve Sinema Tezli Yüksek Lisans Programı, 2025.

Bu tez, yaratıcı süreçlerin, başka bir deyişle video oyun endüstrisindeki yaratıcılığın zaman içinde nasıl geliştiğini araştırmayı amaçlamaktadır. Çalışma, modern video oyun endüstrisinde bireysel yaratıcılık ile kurumsal kontrol arasındaki gerilimi incelemektedir. Modern video oyunlarının önünü açan eski zamanlardaki oyunlardan dijital oyunların olduğu modern endüstriye kadar uzanan bir yolculuk yapan çalışma, yaratıcı aktörlüğün teknolojik, endüstriyel ve ekonomik gelişmelerle birlikte nasıl değiştiğini araştırmayı amaçlamaktadır. Çalışma, yönetmeni tekil bir sanatsal vizyon olarak merkeze alan geleneksel film teorilerinden biri olan Auteur Teorisi üzerine inşa edilmiştir. Ancak bu teori, modern video oyun endüstrisinin gelişim süreçlerini incelemek için yeterli değildir. Modern video oyunları, özellikle AAA ve AA oyunları, bireylerin yaratıcı vizyonları yerine kurumsal hiyerarşilerin etkisi altında üretilmektedir. Hideo Kojima, Shigeru Miyamoto, Hidetaka Miyazaki, Sony, Nintendo ve Microsoft gibi önemli bireyler ve stüdyoların derinlemesine analizleri yoluyla, bu çalışma bireysel otoritenin nasıl yönetim kurullarına dönüştüğünü belirlemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Ek olarak, Auteur Teorisinin uygulanabilirliğini desteklemek ve test etmek için, tez Türk video oyun endüstrisinden sektör profesyonelleriyle niteliksel görüşmeler gerçekleştirmiştir. Bu görüşmeler, geliştiricilerin video oyun endüstrisinin mevcut durumunu nasıl anladıklarına dair ampirik bilgiler sağlamaktadır. Bulgular, yaratıcı vizyonun yapısal otoriteler tarafından şekillendirildiği veya kısıtlandığı yönündeki çalışmanın ana iddiasını büyük ölçüde desteklemektedir. Bu bağlamda, bu çalışma kâr odaklı kaygılarla şekillenen modern video oyunlarında yaratıcılığı analiz etmek için doğru bir bakış açısı sağlamayı amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: video oyunları, yaratıcılık, otorite, endüstri, oyun geliştirme

ABSTRACT

Tarlabölen, Yiğit. Rethinking Auteur and Authority on Creative Actors in Turkish Video Game Industry, Başkent University, Institute of Social Sciences, Master Program of Radio, Television and Cinema with Thesis, 2025.

This thesis aims to explore how creative processes, in other words the authorship in the video game industry evolved throughout the time. The study explores the tension between individual creativity and institutional control in the modern video game industry. Tracing back to the games from ancient times, which paved the way for modern video games, to modern industry with digital gaming, the study aims to explore how creative authorship has shifted alongside technological and industrial developments as well as economic. The study is built on one of the traditional film theories, *Auteur Theory* which centers the director as the singular artistic vision. However, the theory is not enough to explore the development processes of modern video game industry. Modern video games, especially AAA and AA games, are produced under the effect of corporate hierarchies instead of creative visions of individuals. Through in-depth analyses of both key individuals and studios like Hideo Kojima, Shigeru Miyamoto, Hidetaka Miyazaki, Sony, Nintendo and Microsoft, the study aims to identify how the individual authority turned into executive boards. Additionally, to support and test the applicability of Auteur Theory, the thesis conducted qualitative interviews with sector professionals from Turkish video game industry. These interviews provide empirical insight about how developers understand the current situation of video game industry. The findings provide greatly the main claim of the study in which the creative vision is shaped or constrained by structural authorities. In that regard, this study aims to provide an accurate lens for analyzing the authorship in modern video games shaped by profit-based concerns.

Keywords: video games, creativity, authority, industry, game development

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INTRODUCTION

Game and gaming are one of the earliest human activities. From ancient times to today's digital societies, game have been reflecting the way humanity thinks and create meaning. Just like how Johan Huizinga describes in his work *Homo Ludens* (1949) game has always been a fundamental cultural activity not just an entertainment or leisure time activity. Outdoor activities or sports like football are all based on Huizinga's descriptions of play. Throughout the time humanity develop different types of games whose aim is learning, practicing and enjoyment. This historical arc of games can be divided into three parts. The first arc is symbolic and ritualistic board games like *Senet*. These types of games had dominated the game industry for centuries until the twentieth century. After that point, mechanical and arcade games became the dominant way to play, and the final arc of games is the modern digital video games. These three arcs of games highlight the fact that humanity always continues to play and developments in technology evolve the way of play. All these historical developments indicate that video games have evolved into not only a medium of entertainment but also an important form of cultural and creative production.

The modern way of playing is mainly video games. The video game industry has grown so much recently, and it has become the biggest entertainment sector in the world. Every year, video game industries in different parts of the world create millions of dollars. In that regard, video games have become globally cultural phenomenon. One of the main reasons why video games have become the biggest entertainment sector is that video games is one of the best ways to mix technology, narrative, interactivity and design. In that regard, video games are also complex artwork like literature or film. Even video games have more complexity in them than literature or film since the interaction and narrative are limited in literature and films. In other words, the interaction and narrative are restricted to the views and desires of authors and directors. However, players can interact with the world and narrative of the video games as they desire thanks to the interactive designs of them. In that regard, video games should be analyzed as creative art works instead of pure entertainment.

In this context, the main question of the study is who the creative authority in video game development is and whether this process can be explained within the framework of the classical Auteur Theory. Even though their complex structures, the development process of video games is like films. Also, the in-game structures in terms of design, narrative and gameplay allow applying *Auteur Theory* to the video games. Even though the theory was

originally developed for the cinema, it can be applied to video games too since there are some important individuals for the industry that can be considered as auteurs of the industry. However, when the theory is applied on video games, developer studios instead of individual names become more suitable for the theory since video game development is a more complex process than films and any individuals' creative control over every aspect of the production is quite hard. For this reason, applying the theory of studios instead of individual names would be more accurate.

To understand the recent situation of the video game industry, it should be crucial to understand how video game development evolved. The early stages of video game development, especially between 1980s and 1990s, generally consisted of individuals or small teams who had strong creative vision. Thanks to this creative vision, early developers could lay the foundations of modern games today. Developers of this era can be seen as the true auteurs of the video game industry. Their games shaped the industry and introduced new gameplay mechanics throughout the time. However, after this period, video game development became industrialized. In other words, video games are now considered like blockbuster films or technological products instead of artworks and AAA (Triple-A) games are developed under major teams, tight schedules and monetization targets.

These targets eventually turned the video game development into easy profit products. Big corporates like *Microsoft, Warner Bros.* and *Sony* have started to buy and incorporate successful independent studios and make them develop their desired games. On the other hand, these independent studios are always on the edge of shutting down if they cannot meet the expectations from these big corporates. "Microsoft has closed a number of Bethesda studios, including Redfall maker Arkane Austin, Hi-Fi Rush and The Evil Within developer Tango Gameworks, and more in devastating cuts at Bethesda, IGN can confirm" (Yin-Poole, 2024). In today's video game industry, the number of shut down studios is getting higher since they are expected to develop games that they do not have any passion to develop. *Arkane Studios* was known for its' own aesthetic visual style and common themes among games. However, after *Microsoft* had incorporated *Arkane*, they were expected to develop a live-service shooter game which does not fit the qualifications of *Arkane*. In other words, *Arkane* is known for single player, narrative focused games but they were expected to develop an online game with a shallow narrative. This game is *Redfall* and it was released in 2024. After the release of the game, *Microsoft* shut down *Arkane* because of the failure of the game. Jason Schreier's book *Play Nice* also mentions similar issues. He states in his book "Now, the landscape was different. Traditionally at Blizzard, the executive producer of each

game team had the autonomy to run their franchise however they saw fit. But in this new era, Zerza and his finance department would sit in meetings and offer input, making suggestions that sounded a whole lot like demands" (Schreier, 2024, p. 207). This shift toward the corporate systems in the video game industry causes harm to the original priorities of game design which are narrative, aesthetic, mechanical coherence and creative freedom. There are great number of examples for this situation like *Anthem* from *EA Games* and *Suicide Squad: Kill the Justice League* from *Warner Bros. Games*. Also, this shift can be resulted in gameplay mechanics like *Ubisoft'*s repetitive open-world design, pay to win services targeting players' wallets like *EA Games*'s in game stores in *EA FC* or industrialized production cycles like *Activision*'s yearly release of *Call of Duty*.

It is important to note that video games are commercial products, and they should make profit in order to continue their development. In other words, video games should be liked by the player base to continue. However, there must be a balance between creativity and market demands like previous times. Today, video game development is greatly influenced by market control, profitability and fast production which highly put creativity away. Game developers and studios generally face constraints, redirection to meet trends, rejections and even premature releases like *Mass Effect: Andromeda* in 2017**.** The current situation that modern video game industry is in is the main concern of the study. The shift of artwork to craftsmanship. For this reason, this thesis seeks to understand how one of the core elements of video game development, which is creativity, survives under corporate systems.

To understand this situation, the study interviewed with three different video game companies from Turkey. All the companies are different scales and provide great insights for the thesis. The study was designed as qualitative research. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with three different sized developer studios which operate in Turkey. Participants were selected from different departments and roles in departments. The interviews analyzed to answer questions of how creative decisions are made in video game development, how effective individual vision is and how organizational structures shape the development process. The findings were evaluated in comparison with the classical Auteur Theory and the study, therefore, suggests the need of a new theory to understand the complex relationship in video game development.

The reason why the study focused on Turkish video game industry is that the Turkish video game industry is rapidly growing. Especially after the widespread usage of digital stores like *Steam* and the opportunity to release the games without any distributor, the number of Turkish video game developers and studios has started to increase. Turkish video

game industry has undergone significant development especially since the 2000s. In this period, the industry grew remarkably in terms of both game development and export capacity which mainly focused on PC and mobile platforms. *Mount & Blade* series (2008-2020) which is developed by Ankara-based company *TaleWorlds*, can be given as an example for Turkey's first breakthrough in the global gaming market. The success of *Mount & Blade* shows that globally appealing video games can be produced in Turkey too. On the other hand, Turkish video game industry is also known for its' market share on mobile gaming. In 2020, one of the biggest mobile game companies in the world, *Zynga,* acquitted *Peak Games* for $1.8 billion (*Zynga Enters into Agreement to Acquire Istanbul-Based Peeak, Creator of Top Charting Mobile Franchiseses Toon Blast and Toy Blast*, 2020). This agreement made *Peak Games* the first "unicorn" gaming company. Therefore, Turkey became a serious contender in the eyes of global investors.

According to Gaming in Turkey's, which is a gaming and esports agency, 2023 annual industry report, Turkish video game industry reached a market size of approximately $695 million. 54% of this income is from mobile games while %25 is from PC games and %21 is from consoles. However, the scale of the industry is still small when it is compared to global companies. As of 2023, there are approximately 500 game development companies and indie developers whom are operating in Turkey and estimated employer numbers are 2500 to 3000. (*Türkiye Game Market 2023 Report*, 2023). In comparison, *Activision Blizzard* had approximately 9000-10000 employees according to their annual report (*Activision 2021 Annual Report*, 2021). This comparison indicates that Turkish video game industry is still developing.

Besides the scale of companies, investments is also an important aspect of Turkish video game industry. The industry reached a total investment volume of $71,6 dollars in 2024 (Kükürt & Çil, 2025). In contrast, US gaming industry alone was invested over $2 billion dollars in 2022 according to the annual report of *InvestGame* (*Gaming Deals Activity Report 2022*, 2023). Investments in Turkish video game industry are generally targeting early-stage startups, which make it easier for small teams to enter the market.

For these reasons, even though Turkish video game industry is still developing, and it is not at a level to compete with global big companies in terms of production scale, employee numbers, investments and popularity, the industry still has a rapidly growing startup ecosystem. The current position of the industry and global successes show that the sector will become bigger and influential in the coming years. In that regard, the Turkish

video game industry is a great sample for this study. Even though the scale of the companies is smaller than the global ones, they can still provide valuable information and data.

Besides the current situation of the Turkish video game industry, game studies is also a popular topic in Turkish academia too. According to National Thesis Center of Turkey, there are total number of 191 Master's and Doctoral Thesis in Turkey as of 2025. Most of these studies generally focus on impacts of video games such as addiction, violence and purchasing behaviors. Also, content analysis and localization studies are also quite popular among these theses. On the other hand, three studies stand out from the thesis database since these studies emphasize the importance of industry analysis in order to understand the video games better. One study was conducted in the context of classical Auteur Theory. The thesis examines the authorship in video games by focusing on adaptations and transmedia storytelling. The study conducts a survey, and the results show that even though players prioritize gameplay over authorship, author branding is still an important aspect especially in transmedia products. In that regard, thesis' case studies are H.P. Lovecraft and Andrej Sapkowski. Also, the study argues that Auteur Theory must be considered within collaborative creation and player engagement in terms of game studies (Günal, 2021). On the other hand, there are two theses focusing on Turkish video game industry. The first one is about decision-making processes in the video game industry and how they handle uncertainty in development processes. The research was based on qualitative methodology to analyze METU Technopark entrepreneur's' experiences and challenges that they face with. The study also talks about the historical development of the video game industry (Durukan, 2019). The third study is also about the video game industry. It examines the development of Turkish video game industry within the framework of globalization and digitalization. The focus of the study is Sony and Microsoft's operations in Turkish market. The study compares these market giants' operations in Turkey with national developers and the study's conclusion is how Turkish video game industry is shaped by global cultural flows (İmir, 2019). These studies provide valuable insights and foundation to understand and explore further rapidly growing Turkish video game industry.

Besides Master's and Doctoral Theses, there are also a significant number of books about video games from Turkey. For example, *Dijital Oyunlar ve İnteraktif Anlatı (Digital Games and Interactive Narrative)* written by Prof. Barbaros Bostan is about the interactive structure of video games and the impact of narrative on experience (Bostan, 2021). There is also another book which is called *Video Oyun Evreninde Yol Bulmak: Sınıflandırma ve Türler (Finding Your Way in the Video Game Universe: Classification and Genres)* is about

the difficulties in classification of video games with multiple and different gameplay mechanics. The main reason behind this issue is because video games become more and more popular and they can be intriguing for people who never play video games (Halaçoğlu, 2020). In this respect, even though game studies is a popular topic in Turkish academia, it still needs more attention in terms of industry. For this reason, this study can be considered a step toward filling the gap in the academic field in Turkey.

In that regard, the study is divided into four different chapters. In the first chapter, the study talks about the historical development of games and gaming by giving milestones in the video game industry and its' development throughout the time. The second chapter is dedicated to the classical Auteur Theory and its' application on video games by giving some important names from the industry that can possibly be considered as video game auteur. The third chapter will be about the methodology of the field research which introduces three different scaled video game companies from Turkey to understand the structures of video game companies in contemporary Turkish video game industry. The fourth chapter is dedicated to the collected data which is based on the interviews from the employees of the three target video game companies and the analysis of the answers. Finally, the study is concluded with the conclusion section.

1. HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF GAME AND GAMING

1.1. The Concept of Play and Cultural Foundation

To talk about the history of games and gaming in history, Huizinga's book which is called *Homo Ludens* (1949) is a must-mentioned source. The book centers on the central claim that play is a vital part of both human culture and civilization. According to Huizinga, play is not only a pass-time activity but rather a crucial element that creates language, law, war and art, among other forms of cultural expression. Huizinga claims that play is where culture emerges and develops (Huizinga, 1949, p.5). Based on his theory, play has always been a part of human activity and has been crucial to the rise of civilization. Play is entwined with serious issues rather than being outside of them, and it makes a substantial contribution to our knowledge and structure of society.

For this reason, there is much more to the connection between people and games rather than just simple entertainment. This relationship has been present for centuries. As Huizinga (1949) argues "Play is older than culture, for culture, however inadequately defined, always presupposes human society, and animals have not waited for man to teach them their playing" (p. 7). This recognition emphasizes how play itself -including the games that would eventually develop from playful activities- predates organized human civilizations. In correlation with it, play is fundamental to human existence and is entwined with the evolution of our species. Huizinga also claims that play also shaped the cultures besides its' existence before the emergence of the culture itself. "For many years the conviction has grown upon me that civilization arises and unfolds in and as play" (Huizinga, 1949, p.5). This supports the theory that the playful nature of early human societies had an impact on the development of human civilization. According to this theory, games were essential to how early people interpreted and structured their environment rather than only serving as entertainment.

Additionally, Huizinga characterizes play as an activity that goes beyond human life's utilitarian purposes. "In play there is something 'at play' which transcends the immediate needs of life and imparts meaning to the action" (Huizinga, 1949, p. 7). Comprehension the role games that were performed in early cultures, where they were frequently connected to rituals, rules, and even combat, requires an understanding of this transcendence. Beyond just

aiding in survival, games offered a framework for social interaction and expression that affected many facets of prehistoric human culture, such as law and religion.

Huizinga also highlights how crucial rules are too way that play is organized. “All play has its rules. They determine what ‘holds’ in the temporary world circumscribed by play. The rules of a game are absolutely binding and allow no doubt” (Huizinga, 1949, p. 17). This part of play is essential to comprehending how games evolved into organized forms throughout time, as rules compliance reflects the formation of law and order in human communities. Thus, games’ organized nature mirrors larger social organization and control patterns.

Huizinga’s contention that play and seriousness are not mutually incompatible may best sum up the importance of play throughout human history. “Play may rise to heights of beauty and sublimity that leave seriousness far beneath” (Huizinga, 1949, p. 14). This implies that games have always been more than just basic amusement and pass-time activity; throughout human history, they have had a significant cultural, intellectual and spiritual impact of game.

Games and gaming have an extensive past that precedes gaming which is generally known as digital video games by thousands of years. One can find evidence of games and gaming in almost every known culture back to date. “We have said that many of our modern games have descended to us from ancient times, and that some are depicted on the walls of Egyptian temples and tombs” (Falkener, 1892, p. 9). These early games possessed a range of educational, social and cultural functions as well as being just a pastime activity. In other words, long before video games became the primary form of gaming, traditional games mirrored religious views, ideals, and perhaps even the military training techniques of a society.

One of the earliest known ancient games, which is called *Senet,* can be a perfect example for how ancient civilizations understand from games and why they invent such things for their entertainment. *Senet* is a board game that originated in Ancient Egypt around 3500 BCE. “Beloved by such luminaries as the boy pharaoh Tutankhamun and Queen Nefertari, wife of Ramesses II, Senet is one of the earliest known board games. Archaeological and artistic evidence suggest it was played as early as 3100 B.C., when Egypt’s First Dynasty was just beginning to fade from power” (Solly, 2020). The game is believed to played by Ancient Egyptian nobility and used as a tool to metaphorize the journey to the life after death.

Other than Ancient Egypt, Mesopotamian people played a game which is called *The Royal Game of Ur* which dates to 2600 BCE. In parallel with it, the game called *Go* from Ancient China requires strategy and includes intellectual elements. Additionally, Ancient Greece and Rome had also games like other ancient societies. The most important common point of these ancient board games is mirroring these ancient societies' ideals. In other words, ancient people played these games not only for entertainment but also for developing strategic thinking and consolidating their both religious and societal ideals (Solly, 2020).

Following the relationship between humans and play, card games became a huge part of play and gaming culture around the world thanks to the invention of paper. In other words, playing cards has a significant place in the history of gaming. Although its exact origins are unknown, it is thought that playing cards may have come to Europe through trading routes from the East. As Singer suggests in the book which is called *Researches Into the History of Playing Cards; With Illustrations of the Origin of Painting and Engraving on Wood*, according to Brei'tkof, who believes that cards were first introduced into Germany around 1300, the first known account of cards dates to that year (Singer, 1816, p. 21). The author also implies that it could be possible to determine the exact year of their initial entry into Germany if the other ancient town books there were studied (Signer, 1816, p. 22).

Cards started to acquire regional traits as they traveled around Europe. In other words, the games and the meaning of the cards had differences around the countries in Europe. As Singer suggests.

> "To this Bullet demurs, and says that the Kings on the French Cards rep resent those monarchs only, by whose names they are designated, and the game being military, four war like monarchs have been chosen. Every game may be considered a species of combat, and that of Cards has most particularly the appearance we find Kings, and those renowned for military prowess, emblematic of the chiefs of armies; the Knaves, Va lets) symbolical of the vassals of feudal times, in whom consisted the principal strength of the state. The other cards seem to refer properly to the residue of the people of whom the armies were com posed the Queen appears to have been introduced into the game by the gallantry of the French, and was probably derived from them, and introduced by the Italians and Spaniards in the more complex game of Tarocco" (Singer, 1816, p. 34).

These different card game types and different meanings of the cards between the countries show a similarity in terms of gaming in ancient times. Just like how Ancient Egyptian people had interpreted their social lives and military strategies into games for both

educational purposes and having a quality time, European's also interpreted these features of their societies into card games.

Besides the card games, dice games also became an essential part of gaming for thousands of years. It even dated back before the introduction of card games. Around 3000 BCE, six-sided dice were discovered in Mesopotamia and were utilized for divination in addition to games. Murray (1978) describes, "The tetrahedral dice found in the royal graves at Ur and in Palestine are virtually of this kind, since the four corners of each die are cut away and two of them are marked by dots and two are left blank" (p. 8). Dice also played a major role in Europe in which both military and civilians enjoyed. As Murray (1978) notes that, "The earliest evidence that a board-game was actually played by any Germanic people comes from Scandinavia... They also include game-pieces; in the first two periods they are usually button-shaped with smooth base and slightly curved upper surface." (p. 57). Besides the Germanic people, Roman troops sometimes carried dice in their personal belongings, using them as a pass time activity or gambling during the intervals between battles in wars.

Dice games had also religious importance in many ancient communities in addition to being a way of gambling. To determine the fate of ambiguous circumstances or to discern the intent of the gods, lots casted often with dice which was a popular practice. "It was soon discovered that the knuckle-bone of the sheep, which when thrown could fall in four different ways, could be used instead of three staves... The values of the faces vary: in the Epic Period in India they were numbered 1, 2, 3, 4, but those used for the dice-chess had 2, 3, 4, 6"(Murray, 1978, p. 8). This indicates that dice were also used in terms of divination practices in addition to gaming. "The earliest tools that were used for divination were objects which, when thrown, could only come to rest in two different ways" (Murray, 1978, p. 8). In ancient societies, dice had a dual purpose as a gaming instrument and a holy item, which gave them great versatility. People attributed meaning to dice like how they did on cards. In that way, dice could become more valuable and interesting object for people to throw. Besides card and dice games there was also a period in which people played with machines which were the most like today's digital gaming.

The early versions of arcade saloons had coin-operated game machines in them. In other words, before the age of arcade gaming people played on these coin-operated amusement machines. "By the 1940s, companies had already invented mechanical baseball games. Other games simulated horse racing, hunting, and Western gunfights. Over the years, the field has grown to include hockey, soccer (known by many as foosball), flying, and even building construction" (Kent, 2001, p.10). These games generally required physical

interaction. In that regard, these types of coin-operated amusement games might be considered as the primitive versions of today's simulation games.

Besides coin-operated games, jukeboxes are also considered as a coin-operated amusement machine. Starting from the late 1930s, jukebox became so popular that it paved the way of modern entertainment industry. "Though flipper machines and other games have long represented a steady source of income, the jukebox defined the industry in the early going. During the 1940s and 1950s, jukeboxes were an integral part of the fabric of American society and the main source of income for amusement companies" (Kent, 2001, p. 8). In other words, jukeboxes showed that entertainment industry could become a never-ending industry like food industry because both the number of people and the amount of money the industry has been gaining throughout the years since the jukeboxes. Today, entertainment industry is one of the biggest industries of the world and digitalized gaming, in a controversial way, is the biggest part of this industry. The sales and active user numbers prove this argument. However, video games were not always in this state. It evolved and developed over time. That is why looking at the history of digitalized gaming is a must.

1.2. The Birth of Digital Games

A new age of gaming began in the mid-20th century with the shift from conventional card and dice games to their computerized equivalents. Many popular modern games have their origins from the ancient and medieval versions of the games. In other words, thanks to the rise of digital technology, traditional gaming evolved into digital versions. Also, with the advancements of digital technology, digital gaming has been developing day by day. Video games have a rich and varied history that spans several decades and is distinguished by economic success, cultural significance, and technological innovations.

Starting from 1950s with the development of the first computers, we can trace back the footsteps of video games back to the period after World War II. These early video games were generally used for experiments in academia and military. One of the first examples of video games is *OXO* which was developed by A.S. Douglas (Alexander Shafto 'Sandy' Douglas) from University of Cambridge. His PhD dissertation on human and computer interaction paved the way for the development of *OXO*. The game is often known as Noughts and Crosses. In other words, it is a computerized variation of Tic-Tac-Toe (Donovan, 2010). The game is played by one player against CPU (Central Processing Unit), in other words artificial intelligence. The player chooses which of the nine squares on the board they wanted

to move next by dialing their input using a rotary telephone controller. The computer would move after their move appeared on the screen; the game display updated only when state of the game changed (Cohen, 2014). In that regard, *OXO* has similarities with ancient and medieval games. *OXO* was also used for educational purposes both in academy and military just like games before digital age like *Royal Game of Ur* or *Go*.

After *OXO*, a game called *Tennis for Two* was developed in 1958 by American physicist William Alfred Higinbotham. This is one of the first interactional games in history since *Tennis for Two* can be played by two players at the same time, which is the earliest example of couch co-op (cooperative) games. The game was displayed on an oscilloscope screen, and the purpose of the game was simulating a tennis game. "He came up with the idea for a fun, interactive exhibit: a tennis game played on the screen of an oscilloscope that he built using transistor circuitry with the help of Brookhaven engineer Robert Dvorak. The game, Tennis for Two, recreated a side-on view of a tennis court with a net in the middle and thin ghostly lines that represented the players' racquets. The large box-shaped controllers created for the game allowed players to move their racquets using a dial and whack the ball by pressing a button. Brookhaven's visitors loved it" (Donovan, 2010, p. 16). The game became quite popular during the exhibition and *Tennis for Two* is the first video game in history that was not developed for academic research or military purposes. Instead, the game was just for pure entertainment. This shows that video games can become one of the mainstream entertainment elements in the future.

In the year 1962, the ancestor of arcade video games *Spacewar!* came out. The game was created at MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology). *Spacewar!*, which was developed by Steve Russell and his associates, made use of novel-for PDP-1 computer techniques at the time, including real-time visuals and interactive gameplay. The game demonstrated the promise of computer technology for entertainment by letting two players take control of spacecraft and fight with each other. The atmosphere of experimentation and programming that permeates university environments contributed to the slow spread of *Spacewar!* Across computer laboratories. As Monnens and Goldberg suggests "programmers who encountered the game became addicted and eventually brought a copy to their own labs or programmed new versions based on what they remembered" (Monnens & Goldberg, 2015). The game's natural dissemination helped it evolve and adapt to new settings, inspiring the development of several variants and related games.

Even though it wasn't widely available in the 1960s, *Spacewar!* Impacted a lot of game designers and set the foundation for future video games. "It would not be until 1977 when

Larry Rosenthal released the arcade adaptation Space Wars that Rusell's game finally enjoyed a mass audience" (Monnens & Goldberg, 2015, p. 141). This moves from scholarly circles to the for-profit arcade scene signaled a pivotal moment in the history of video games and illustrated the long-lasting influence of *Spacewar!* On the gaming business. "It went on to capture the imagination of players across the United States, eventually inspiring the first commercial arcade game, *Computer Space* (1971), helping launch a multibillion-dollar industry" (Monnens & Goldberg, 2015, p. 124). Thanks to the development of *Spacewar!*, 1970s became a decade of the rise of arcade gaming. This period also plays a crucial role in the popularity of video games at present.

1.2.1. The arcade era

One of the first examples of 1970s is *Computer Space*. *Computer Space* is an arcade video game that focuses on combat in space. The game was released in 1971, and it was developed by Nolan Kay Bushnell and Samuel Frederick Ted Dabney Jr. The game has a special place in the history of gaming since it was the first commercially available video game along with the first arcade video game title. However, the game was too complex to learn. For this reason, 1.500 units of *Computer Space* were never sold out. Even though it was not a great hit due to its' complexity, *Computer Space* paved the way for the arcade era of gaming. Ted Dabney says, "Nolan came on to say that Computer Space was just the beginning of a new era and the future of the coin amusement would be video games and pinball would no longer be the industry staple" (Donovan, 2010, p. 28). Even though *Computer Space* was not quite a hit at that time, the game showed that people have interest in playing with these kinds of machines. In other words, people who tried *Computer Space* did not like it because of its' complexity and learning process. In that regard, *Computer Space* can be considered as one of the founding fathers of arcade gaming and arcade gaming machines. One year after the release of *Computer Space*, the first successful arcade video game of history, which is known as *Pong* came out.

Pong was originally released on 29 November 1972. The game was developed by Atari, which was one of the foremost companies in gaming during the arcade era. The company was founded in the same year as *Pong,* and the founders are Nolan Kay Bushnell and Samuel Frederick Ted Dabney Jr. who were also the developers of *Computer Space*. The game was quite simple. It was based on simple 2D (two-dimensional) graphics and simulates table tennis. *Pong* became so popular that it established the groundwork for the arcade sector

and encouraged several additional businesses such as Taito and Namco to enter the market since the popularity of *Pong* made great amounts of money to Atari. "At a time when the average coin-op machine would make $50 a week, Pong was raking in more than $200 a week" (Donovan, 2010, p. 31). In addition to the success of *Pong* as an arcade machine, Atari also developed a home version of Atari in 1975. The game was ported for Magnavox Odyssey which was the first commercial home video game console. In that way, *Pong* was the first video game that was ported on a home console along with *Computer Space*. However, it was not sold as expected because of its high price. However, this failure led to the way for Atari to develop their own commercial home video game console in the next years. Before the rise of the home consoles, there was another arcade video game that must be mentioned since it was the first video game that started one of the biggest controversies on video games for the violent contents.

Death Race was released in 1976. The game was developed by Exidy and it was based on the cult movie *Death Race 2000 (1975)*. To be able to get points, the player drives a car over "gremlins." These characters scream when upon him and turn into tombstones, which prompted claims that the game encouraged violence and irresponsible behavior. Despite *Death Race'*s crude visuals, many found the idea of purposefully driving over individuals upsetting, which did not mitigate the criticism. The long-running discussion about violence in video games began with public uproars about the video game's brutality. "They named it Death Race. 'We had no clue that it would cause any controversy,' said Ivy. 'The game was fun and challenging. There was no underlying motivation or thoughts in creating the first controversial video game. It was created out of necessity and defense of our own product licensing.' The media and public, however, didn't agree and Death Race provoked the first major moral panic over the content of a video game. 'The controversy began with a reporter in Seattle,' said Ivy" (Donovan, 2010, p. 50). In that regard, one of the earliest video games to spark a public conversation about gaming violence is *Death Race*, which helped set the stage for later talks about content regulation in the sector.

1970s witnessed rise of the video game industry with arcade machines in public places like bars and diners. These arcade machines were replaced with coin-amusement machines like pinball. People loved these arcade gaming machines, that is why the next decade was also important for the arcade industry since arcade gaming salons became quite popular for gaming as well as home consoles like Magnavox Odyssey and Atari 2600 in the late 1970s and NES and Sega Genesis in 1980s.

1.3. Console and Hardware Development

The video game sector saw a dramatic change in the late 1970s and early 1980s as home consoles started to emerge and brought arcade gaming into living rooms. A new age in gaming began with the introduction of home consoles, which provided a more convenient and intimate means of engaging in interactive entertainment. In this time period there were several gaming consoles like *Magnavox Odyssey* and *Home Pong*. These consoles were considered as the first generation of consoles and they paved the way for the next generations of gaming.

1.3.1. The Magnavox Odyssey

The Magnavox Odyssey was released in 1972, and it is credited as being the first home video game console to be sold commercially. In other words, it is the first gaming console which only aimed for entertainment unlike its' previous counterparts. Created by Ralph H. Baer, it was a significant turning point for the video game industry. Console featured several basic games, such as a Pong variant, but its gameplay relied on translucent overlays placed on the screen to simulate various environments, such as tennis courts or haunted houses, rather than internal computing or graphics processing like other consoles or computers. Game pieces were represented by white dots that players played; the action was simple yet revolutionary. *The Magnavox Odyssey* was inventive, but it failed financially, partly because of its expensive price and insufficient promotion (Edwards, 2012). Several historical narratives of the video game sector emphasize the significance of the *Odyssey*. One such narrative is from Tristan Donovan's *Replay: The History of Video Games*, which describes how the console helped Ralph Baer's vision of video gaming as a family leisure time activity. Donovan points out that although it did not have a huge amount of popularity due to several reasons including its $99 price tag, it was crucial in popularizing the idea of playing video games at home (Donovan, 2010).

The Magnavox Odyssey proved that video games could become a viable source of entertainment at home and set the foundation for the home gaming industry. Future developments in game technology were also influenced by Baer's idea, which immediately resulted in the development of more sophisticated systems like Atari's Pong and the Atari 2600. *The Odyssey* had a significant impact on the evolution of video games from novelty goods to essential components of popular culture.

1.3.2. Atari 2600

One of the most important shifts in video game industry was the *Atari 2600*, which was released in 1977. It cemented video games as a popular form of home entertainment. The console was originally called as the *Atari Video Computer System (VCS),* the system deviated from its predecessors by using a cartridge-based architecture, which allowed for an ever-growing selection of games like *Pac-Man, Space Invaders* and *E.T. the Extra Terrestrial*, which would become the destroyer of video game industry in the following years. Thanks to its versatility, *Atari 2600* became the focal point of a quickly expanding home gaming sector, extending its usefulness well beyond single-game systems. Another aspect of the success of the console was reasonably priced games through technology that promoted innovation within its limitations (Goldberg, n.d.).

Atari 2600's popularity might be seen as a significant cultural turning point as much as technological advancement. The console provided an interactive experience that revolutionized family leisure time activities at a time when passive media like television were the only options for home entertainment. Its cartridge-based business strategy was essential; by allowing several games to be played on a single platform, Atari fostered an environment of constant interaction, development, and growth. In addition to generating a steady revenue stream from game sales, this design promoted a feeling of community by allowing users to interact and debate upcoming releases. In other words, it created its own fanbase like today's gaming world.

However, the success of *Atari 2600*, unfortunately, turned upside down with the release the video game adaptation of popular science fiction film *E.T the Extra Terrestrial* in 1982 after successful five years.

1.3.3. The 1983 video game crash

In 1983, video game industry faced a catastrophic market collapse that put a stop to the industry's rapid growth and compelled a review of its methods. Market oversaturation was the primary cause of the crash, while there were other contributing reasons as well. Numerous businesses, both new and old, have produced their own games and platforms as a result of the *Atari 2600*'s tremendous popularity in the late 1970s. Because of the lack of quality control and this quick influx, the market was overrun with poor-quality games, which catastrophically damaged customer confidence. Notably, the industry's reputation was

damaged by the reaction from high-profile flops like *E.T the Extra Terrestrial* and the *Atari 2600* port of *Pac-Man*, which were notorious for disappointing players.

> "If any single game summed up both the excesses of the boom years and the pain of the fall, it was E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial – Atari's big VCS 2600 game for Christmas 1982. Steven Spielberg's 1982 summer blockbuster, a tale of a friendly alien stranded on Earth, had become one of the biggest grossing films of all time. In a bid to ingratiate himself with the hottest director in Hollywood, Warner chairman Steve Ross struck a $25 million deal with Spielberg for the rights to make a game based on the movie and then informed Atari of what he had done. Kassar was shocked: 'Ross forced me to make E.T.. He called me and said I've guaranteed Spielberg $25 million to work on this project. I said: 'Steve, we've never guaranteed anybody any money. Why would you want to guarantee $25 million?' Kassar argued that the film's lack of action didn't lend itself to a video game, but Ross had already made his mind up. Atari was told to get the game out before Christmas, leaving the company with barely any time to make the game. 'We didn't have enough lead time,' said Kassar. 'This was in August, he wanted it for Christmas. Normally we had a six-month lead time.' Kassar persuaded VCS game programmer Howard Scott Warshaw to knock the game together in six weeks in return for a hefty bonus. The result was terrible but on time" (Donovan, 2010, p. 124).

The 1982 video game disaster of *E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial* is an important case study of overreach, poor management, and the perils of unbridled ambition in a changing industry. Atari's overconfidence in its brand's capacity to sell regardless of quality was evident in the game's hurried development, which was developed in an incredible six weeks due to an aggressive schedule to ensure that it was on the shelves during the holiday season. Here, Atari put speed ahead of quality, thinking that the success of Spielberg's movie would over up any shortcomings of the game. However, *E.T.* came out so unplayable that it gained notoriety for its confusing objectives, unpleasant design, and terrible graphics-all of which highlighted a discrepancy between the game's execution and the high expectations of its audience.

The turmoil was further heightened by the ease with which third-part developers could make games for systems such as the *Atari 2600*. Without strict guidelines, the business experienced a rise in mediocre titles that did not appeal to players. From that point, the companies had so many options, and they were discouraged by negative sales and bad experiences, they started to lose confidence in the medium, which eventually led to sharp and rapid drop-in sale rates. Most of the companies in that time reported great losses by the end of 1983. Even some such as Games by Apollo or U.S Games declared bankruptcy or left the video game business altogether.

This catastrophic crash in the video game industry in the year 1983 remains a cannon event in the history of video games. The process shows the dangers of uncontrolled rapid growth and the importance of consumer trust. This period can be considered as the "Depression Era" of the history of video games. In that regard, this depression continued until 1985, when *Nintendo*, which is a Japanese company, introduced a new approach to the industry with quality assurance in games with the *Nintendo Entertainment System (NES)*. This approach of *Nintendo* would eventually make the company the industry leader.

1.3.4. The rise of video game industry: the Nintendo era (mid 1980s-1990s)

After the crash era of 1983, the video game industry stayed in a state of instability and doubts about the future of video games. *Nintendo* and some other Japanese companies like *SEGA* played an important part in trying to revitalize and setting new standards in the market. This revival period can be considered as "The *Nintendo* Era" which took place between mid-1980s to 1990s. In this period, *Nintendo* became the revolutionary of video game industry with their technology, iconic games as well as business approaches. In addition to reviving the video games, *Nintendo* also established new standards for the business by building trust and quality. This era started with *The Nintendo Entertainment System (NES)* with multiple popular titles' first installments like *Mario, The Legend of Zelda*, and *Metroid*.

1.3.4.1. The Nintendo Entertainment Sector (NES)

After the 1983 industry meltdown, the *Nintendo Entertainment System (NES)* has been given credit for bringing the American video game market back to life. *Nintendo*'s rigorous approach to quality and market control characterized this period of gaming and set standards that still have an impact on the sector. According to David Sheff in *Game Over: How Nintendo Conquered the World*, Nintendo's success with the *NES* was a result of its strategy of using characters like Mario to enter "the collective consciousness of American children. This was demonstrated when surveys showed that children recognized Mario more than Mickey Mouse (Sheff, 1993, p. 23). Nintendo's ability to establish its games and characters as essential component of daily enjoyment was highlighted by this cultural infiltration.

A crucial part of Nintendo's approach was its strict licensing regulations, which made sure that only top-notch games were released on the *NES*. This strategy gave Nintendo "unflinching authority over the licensing agreement that publishers had to sign" to make games for the *NES*, as explained by Steven Kent in *The Ultimate History of Video Games*.

This was done to avoid the oversaturation that had previously caused the industry to collapse (Kent, 2001, p. 350-351). By setting strict guidelines for third-party games, Nintendo safeguarded its reputation and gaming experience for customers, creating a community where reliability and excellence were associated with its brand.

The *NES*'s cultural impact was most noticeable in Mario, who rose to become a global symbol. Mario is a "one-word shortcut for Nintendo, for gaming itself, and for the concept of fun," according to Jeff Ryan in *Super Mario: How Nintendo Conquered America* (Ryan, 2011) Because of its symbolic function, Mario was transformed from a simple video game character into a cultural icon, and the *NES* was transformed from a product into a platform that promoted a generational shared experience. Mario's popularity reflected Nintendo's larger strategy of including character development and storytelling, which contributed to the *NES* and its games' strong emotional effect. Nintendo was innovative in more ways than just gaming. According to Tristan Donovan describes in *Replay: The History of Video Games* how Nintendo's 1986 "supernova" moment of *Super Mario Bros.* pushed the *NES* into the public eye and established the system as the hub of a resurgent gaming industry. "Along with 1984's Pac-Man spin-off Pac-Land, Super Mario Bros heralded a new era for platform games. Instead of confining the action to a single screen, Super Mario Bros offered the thrills of exploration in a virtual playground far larger than players' TV sets and where there was always some unexpected delight around the next corner. It could be a castle with a moat of lava, a beanstalk stretching into the sky to climb or an Alice in Wonderland-inspired magic mushroom that turned Mario into the giant Super Mario" (Donovan, 2010, p. 187-188). Nintendo met a need for games that were more than just leisure by creating games that blended creative worlds with exploratory features. These games served as experiences that provided adventure and escape, making them accessible to players of all ages.

In addition to *Super Mario Bros.*, two innovative video game titles that increased the breadth and complexity of video game narrative and gameplay contributed to the *NES*'s popularity. These games are *Metroid* and *The Legend of Zelda*, both of which changed player expectations with their intricate storylines and novel systems. With its 1986 debut, *The Legend of Zelda* was among the first video games to provide players with access to an open world where exploration was crucial. *Zelda* allowed players to explore a vast world full of mysteries, hidden dungeons, and riches, in contrast to previous games that directed them along linear pathways. The game's non-linear design gave players a sense of agency and adventure that was groundbreaking at the time, enabling them to customize their trip to suit their preferences. "For Miyamoto it was a game that, like The Legend of Zelda, recreated

the joy he felt as a child exploring the countryside around Sonobe. And for a generation of American and Japanese children whose freedom to wander, explore and play outside was being curtailed by urbanization, it was a virtual substitute" (Donovan, 2010, p. 187). In addition to improving the game's replay value, this design concept set the stage for other open-world games, making *Zelda* an iconic video game and a milestone for future open-world games. Beyond its gaming mechanics, The Legend of Zelda had a significant impact. Complex puzzles, a rich plot, and the renowned protagonist Link—whose quest to save Princess Zelda from the villain Ganon became a fundamental narrative trope—were among the classic aspects it introduced that later became hallmarks of the series. Zelda became more than simply a game because of these components, as well as the game's enduring soundtrack and sophisticated setting design, which created a strong bond with players. The Legend of Zelda is a pillar of Nintendo's history because of its immersive qualities, which established a benchmark for game design and storytelling that influenced innumerable subsequent games.

In the same year that *Zelda* was released, Nintendo released *Metroid*, a video game that would push the limits of atmosphere and adventure. Players were invited to explore a linked environment where advancement hinged on careful navigation and gaining new powers in *Metroid*'s dark, alien universe, which was both mesmerizing and ominous. "Metroid was a difficult game to beat. It involved a lot of precision jumping, one of the tougher skills in video games. It featured several large side-scrolling and vertically scrolling maps and stands out for having some of the most innovative and challenging levels of any NES game" (Kent, 2001, p. 373). The game's aura of mystery and the thrill of discovering new locations and power-ups for advancing in the game gave the game a puzzle-like feel that rewarded patience and smart thinking. In contrast to other *NES* games, the game's ambient tension-supported by an eerie soundtrack-made it more immersive and nearly cinematic. In addition, *Metroid* pioneered a new character representation by revealing at the game's end that Samus Aran, the protagonist of the game, was a female bounty hunter. This unexpected revelation shocked many players and went against the common assumptions of male heroes in video games. In addition to being a progressive gesture on Nintendo's part, this unveiling marked a turning point in the image of women in video games by demonstrating that heroines might be varied and multifaceted. "In the video-game world of macho stereotypes, the game's hero was a surprise. Samus, the warrior, on the quest to destroy the Mother Brain, went to battle with a nifty array of weapons and slick moves, dressed in a space suit and helmet. At the end of the game, after the Mother Brain died a

screaming, light-spewing death, Samus could finally relax and take off his helmet. Long blond hair fell out. Samus, the great warrior, was a woman" (Sheff, 1994, p. 66-67). *Metroid*'s innovative gameplay and groundbreaking protagonist not only increased the *NES*'s popularity but also sparked a new genre of nonlinear storytelling video games.

Together, Metroid and The Legend of Zelda helped build Nintendo's reputation for excellence and creativity. These titles played a key role in demonstrating the NES's potential beyond the straightforward arcade-style gameplay that ruled the market at the time. Nintendo changed the concept of video games by providing players with more complex, difficult, and emotionally impactful experiences. In addition to pushing the limits of their genres, both games featured storylines and gameplay aspects that are now commonplace in video games. A lot of modern video games inherit innovative features of *The Legend of Zelda* and *Metroid* series. In that regard, it can be said that Nintendo's IPs are still considered as industry leaders.

Nintendo is still one of the biggest companies in the contemporary video game industry among other big companies Sony and Microsoft in terms of both exclusive game IPs and consoles. Likewise, Nintendo stands out from other companies in the US market thanks to its' business strategies and dedication to quality. Donovan's study states detailed information about Nintendo's success. He explains *NES*'s popularity unlike other consoles in the market thanks to its titles like *Super Mario Bros.* Nintendo focuses on character driven video games like Mario's journey of rescuing Princess Peach or Link's adventures to save Zelda. In that way, Nintendo also told stories like fairy tale appealing to people of all ages which was unique in that time period (Donovan, 2010). The key point of *NES*'s success lies behind their approach to all ages. In other words, *NES* was more appealing for the customers since Nintendo gave importance on being durable and family friendly entertainment system rather than only a game console.

In that regard, the main reason behind *Nintendo Entertainment System (NES)*'s success is all-around business strategy. This strategy combines marketing strategies, cultural resonance with western characters like Mario or Zelda and giving importance on narrative and character development. Therefore, Nintendo started to dominate the business, which was trying to rise from the ashes, and set the standards for future developments in the industry in terms of both game development and console development.

1.3.4.2. The Game Boy

Besides the *Nintendo Entertainment System (NES)*, Nintendo also released a new console in 1989. The console is called *The Game Boy,* and it is a handheld console which makes it possible to play the games in a hand. In other words, it redefined gaming by making it portable and more accessible. *The Game Boy*, which was developed by Gunpei Yokoi, was able to dominate the handheld consoles in the industry for years by combining affordable price, durability, and simplicity. The console uses replaceable cartridges, and it gained a versatility that appealed to a broad audience as opposed to other handheld consoles that were more expensive and had limited game catalogues. For this reason, as Steven Kent states in his book "Unlike the other hardware systems that came out in 1989, Game Boy was an immediate success. According to an article in Time magazine, the one million Game Boys sent to the United States in 1989 met only half the demand for the product. That allotment sold out in a matter of weeks. Game Boy was a juggernaut. Its sales did not slow down, even when it was confronted with a technologically superior product" (Kent, 2001). *The Game Boy* is still considered as one of the most influential and successful consoles of all time. *The Game Boy*'s practical design was a major factor in its popularity. The console placed a higher priority on battery life and affordability than its rivals like *The Atari Lynx* and *Sega Game Gear*, which had better graphics and colored displays. Customers who prefer *The Game Boy* found the console especially enticing thanks to its lightweight build and monochromatic display, allowing players to enjoy longer play sessions without changing batteries frequently. Nintendo understood the demand from the market and prioritized dependability and usefulness above technological flair by prioritizing utility over flashy technologies.

The Game Boy's success was further solidified when Tetris was included as a bundle. Tetris was the perfect choice for the portable device because of its straightforward but captivating gameplay. Its global appeal cut across demographics, drawing in casual players. They were individuals who were unfamiliar with video games. "It became the must-have game that drove the handheld's massive sales across the world. More than 40 million Game Boys with copies of Tetris were sold worldwide … and let Nintendo gain a level of dominance in the handheld games market that was even greater than its hold on the home console business" (Donovan, 2010). Pairing of the console and one of the most popular games of all time is one of the best marketing decisions in gaming history. Tetris's reach even to individuals, who were not familiar with games and gaming, showed that *The Game Boy* could be enjoyed by people of all ages and it was not only a toy for kids. In addition to

Tetris, *The Game Boy*'s vast game selection helped sustain its appeal over time. Despite the technical limitations of the console, the system was able to offer great gaming experience with games such as *Super Mario Land, Pokémon Red and Blue*, and *The Legend of Zelda: Link's Awakening*. These successful titles not only made *The Game Boy* last longer, but they also helped Nintendo to establish its standing as the number one in the industry.

Additionally, *The Game Boy* set the stage for later developments in portable gaming. By facilitating multiplayer experiences, the link cable came with the console popularized social gaming. This feature gained significant popularity with the release of *Pokémon*. This invention paved the way for Nintendo's following handheld consoles *DS* and *Switch,* which would expand on the concept of shared gaming experiences by showcasing the ability of handheld systems to link players with each other.

The Game Boy's clever game bundling, well-considered design, and wide market appeal contributed to its huge global success. Nintendo once again showed its ability to comprehend and influence customer preferences by emphasizing accessibility. Consoles influence on the industry went much beyond its remarkable sales. It cemented Nintendo's dominance in the video game market and demonstrated what handheld consoles can do. Decades after its initial debut, *The Game Boy* is still regarded as a milestone in the history of video games.

1.3.4.3. A new rivalry begins: Sega Genesis (Sega Megadrive)

Released in 1988 (or 1989 in North America), *Sega Genesis*, which is also known as *Sega Megadrive* outside of North America, was a daring and inventive step into the market by signaling a change for both Sega and the industry at large. *Sega Genesis* was Sega's attempt to challenge Nintendo's throne in the gaming industry and establish itself as a competitive option for gamers who were looking for new and more advanced gaming experience. In the early 1990s, *Sega Genesis* changed the way people thought about video games by challenging Nintendo's hegemony with its modern 16-bit hardware and strong marketing approach.

In terms of technology, *Sega Genesis* was far superior to Nintendo's 8-bit *NES*. It was especially well-suited for arcade games. Thanks to the console's 16-bit processor, *Sega Genesis* could produce sharper graphics and faster gameplay than *NES.* Sega had a competitive advantage with their technological advancement. This technology made it possible for Sega's arcade classics like *Streets of Rage, Golden Axe*, and *Altered Beast* to be

successfully ported on the new console. As Steven Kent states in his book, these games demonstrated the console's capacity to provide top-notch arcade gaming experiences at home, attracting gamers who appreciated the action-packed, quick-paced gameplay (Kent, 2001).

The Genesis' popularity was also influenced by Sega's marketing approach. With a concentration on teens and young adults who preferred edgier, more complex games than those provided by Nintendo, the company catered to an older customer base. By advertising the console as more sophisticated and stylish substitute for the *NES*, the tagline "Genesis does what Nintendon't" perfectly encapsulated this strategy (Sheff, 1993). Players who thought they had outgrown Nintendo's family-friendly selection of Mario and Zelda titles and want games that suited their evolving preferences found resonance in Sega's marketing approach.

However, Sega did not only target older audiences. They also want to attract younger players to the console too. For this reason, *Sonic the Hedgehog*, Sega's response to Mario was born and became a key component of the *Genesis'* identity. *Sonic* represents speed, attitude, and energy and this made *Sonic* the ideal mascot for the console since *Sonic* perfectly captured the edgy vibe of the system. The first game of *Sonic* was released in 1991 and became an instant hit which demonstrate the *Genesis's* visual and gameplay prowess and making *Sonic* an icon. Also, the character can be described as "the anti-Mario". As Kent states "Mario games used two buttons, so Sonic should use one. Mario collected coins, so Sonic collected rings. The way Naka's people differentiated Sonic from Mario was by making the hedgehog faster and giving him 'attitude.' Mario games were slow and friendly, Sonic games would be fast and the eponymous ground hog would glare at the camera and tap his foot impatiently if the player did not move quickly enough" (Kent, 2001). *Genesis* was able to get a remarkable place in the market thanks to *Sonic*'s famous soundtrack, vibrant graphics, and quick-paced platforming.

Other than *Sonic the Hedgehog*, sports games were another area in which *The Genesis* excelled, with games like *NBA Jam* and *Madden NFL* becoming incredibly popular. These titles significantly enhanced the console's appeal to older gamers by demonstrating its capacity to manage dynamic, visually complex gameplay. By focusing on sports and action games, Sega was able to establish a unique brand in the gaming industry that went well with its branding as a more sophisticated rival to Nintendo.

Nevertheless, there were difficulties in *Genesis'* success. *The Super Nintendo Entertainment System (SNES)*, a technically superior console that Nintendo released in 1991

in response to Sega's improvements, rekindled the two firms' rivalry. Even though the ensuing "console wars" compelled Sega to develop and broaden its library, the contest also exposed weakness in the company's long-term plan. Sega found it difficult to keep up with the competition and adjust to shifting consumer demands as the market became more challenging with new competitors like Sony. *The Sega Genesis* left a legacy despite these challenges. It played a key role in ending Nintendo's monopoly in industry and promoting greater competition in the market, which eventually helped players by spurring innovation and increasing the selection of games available. *Genesis'* focus on speed, flair and attitude helped to define a gaming period and showed how technology and branding could influence the industry. The console is still regarded as a representation of Sega's brilliance and aspirations during a pivotal time in video game history.

The following years witnessed a period that can be called as "The Console Wars". The period was a pivotal period in the history of video games. Sega challenged Nintendo's monopoly with their console. After the success of *Sega's Genesis,* which targeted older audiences with violent video games like *Mortal Kombat*, Nintendo released *Super Nintendo Entertainment System (SNES)* in 1991 with iconic new games of their popular IPs, *Super Mario World* and *The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past* which were still maintained family-friendly image of Nintendo. This rivalry and "The Console Wars" period in 1990s eventually contributed the formation of the *Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB)* after some lawsuits on violence of video games. Even though Sega would eventually fall behind their competitors like Nintendo and Sony, which was the new player in the industry, "The Console Wars" period in 1990s helped to contribute greatly for the industry in terms of vision, creative and technological innovations. After this period, industry stepped into its' golden age which is the 3D Era and the birth of modern gaming

1.3.5. The 3D revolution and the birth of modern gaming

The 3D Revolution, which started in 1990s, was a milestone in video game history. The 3D Revolution set new standards for industry by introducing 3D (three dimensional) world designs and 3D adapted gameplay. In that way, the whole development process and gaming experience fundamentally changed. Even though the developers did not abandon 2D designs, most of them started to implement 3D designs to their games. Even though there were previous examples like *Battlezone (1981)* or *3D Monster Maze (1982)*, the first breakthrough was *id Software*'s *Wolfenstein 3D (1992)* and *Doom (1993)*. These games can

be given as the first examples of three-dimensional designed games. However, video games like *Tomb Raider (1996), Final Fantasy VII (1997)*, *Super Mario 64 (2004)* and *Grand Theft Auto III (2001)* showed the potential of 3D design and glimpsed the future of industry in terms of both design and technology. *PlayStation* and *Nintendo 64* were the first leading consoles of the 3D period. Thanks to the 3D Revolution, video games became the most popular entertainment mediums and made video games more detailed and visually aesthetic which became the standard of the contemporary video game industry.

1.3.5.1. Nintendo 64

Nintendo 64 was released in 1996, and the introduction of the console was important for the industry. Nintendo prioritized innovation and creativity to revolutionize gameplay and the player experience as the industry moved into the 3D era. A major technological advancement over its predecessors, *Nintendo 64* was released as a 64-bit system built to take advantage of 3D visuals and vast worlds of games. Some of Nintendo's most recognizable games were released during this time, showcasing the possibilities of 3D gaming and establishing new benchmarks for the sector.

The analog controller of *Nintendo 64* was one of the distinguishing features of the console. It was made especially to allow the player to control the character more precisely and freely in 3D worlds. For titles like *Super Mario 64*, which was the flagship title of the console, this innovation proved crucial. With the open-world layout and fully three-dimensional mobility of the game, *Super Mario 64* transformed platforming games and offered players a brand-new sense of autonomy in games. "Mario 64 was by no means the world's first 3D platformer … It was the game that made people sit up and take notice -- the definitive proof that 3D gaming was the future, and that it could be every bit as solid as more established formats" ("36. Super Mario 64," n.d.). On the other hand, the 1998 release of *The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time* was another notable and milestone *Nintendo 64* game for the industry. Considered by many and still on the first place of "Best Games of All Time" list of Metacritic with "99/100 critic reviews and 9.1/10 user score" (Metacritic, n.d.), *Ocarina of Time* is still considered as one of the best games ever made. The game blended a complex story with innovative features the targeting system, which made fighting in 3D world easier. This system is called Z-targeting system, and its' principles are still used in game development even today. This feature, together with its expansive, immersive setting, showed how 3D gaming might be utilized to provide mechanically inventive and

emotionally impactful experiences. “It's an idea we now take for granted, but at the time it was another example of why Nintendo was on the cutting edge of 3D control” (Davis & Thomas, 2010). In other words, like previously mentioned games of Nintendo, *Ocarina of Time* is another masterpiece of Nintendo that set the industry standards for future developments. In addition, Nintendo also introduced revolutionary multiplayer experiences with this console too. *GoldenEye 007* established the benchmark for multiplayer gaming and popularized first-person shooter games. In the meanwhile, titles such as *Banjo-Kazooie* and *Star Fox 64* demonstrated the console’s capacity to produce graphically gorgeous and intricately designed games that were popular with a wide range of players.

Nintendo 64 encountered difficulties in the market despite these artistic and technological accomplishments like *Super Mario 64* and *Ocarina of Time*. In contrast to its rivals, including *Sony*’s *PlayStation*, which switched to the CD format, *Nintendo 64*’s games were in cartridge form like the previous consoles. Cartridges were more costly to manufacture and had less storage space than CDs even though they provided benefits like quicker load times. Some third-party developers were deterred by this move and decided to develop their games for *PlayStation*. In that way, *Nintendo 64*’s game catalogue became smaller. However, *Nintendo 64* was successful in solidifying Nintendo’s standing as a high-quality and innovative company.

Additionally, *Nintendo 64* was crucial to the development of gaming culture. Games like *Mario Kart 64*, which exemplify the couch co-op features, promoted a communal gaming experience which eventually resulted in a defining characteristic of Nintendo’s strategy. The console helped players develop a stronger sense of community among themselves and their friends by promoting cooperative and competitive gaming. Looking back, *Nintendo 64* was a daring advancement that combined technological innovation with a dedication to artistic brilliance. Despite *PlayStation*’s superior sales performance, the console’s history is characterized by its revolutionary contributions to player interaction, game design and narrative. In addition to establishing new standards for the industry, it solidified Nintendo’s dominance in the market and served as an inspiration for the upcoming generation of gaming consoles. A beloved piece of gaming history, *Nintendo 64* is praised for its ambition, inventiveness and lasting influence.

1.3.5.2. New leader on the rise: Sony and Sony's PlayStation

In the history of video games, the 1994 (1995 in North America) debut of *Sony's PlayStation* signaled the beginning of a new, powerful force in the market. With its 32-bit design, *PlayStation* took use of the 3D technology to create a gaming experience that was unmatched and would revolutionize the industry. The console's inventive approach to game creation, marketing and audience involvement contributed to its popularity in addition to its technological prowess. Through its adoption of the CD-ROM technology, assistance for independent developers, and focus on an older audience, Sony established *PlayStation* as a high-end substitute for systems such as *Sega Saturn* and *Nintendo 64*.

PlayStation's success was largely attributed to its use of discing format of CD-ROM's rather hand cartridges, which reduced production costs and increased the capacity of storage. Developers were able to produce more vast and graphically stunning games thanks to the technical edge of the console, which included full-motion visuals and audio quality. These features were not possible on cartridge-based platforms. "PlayStation had a single processing chip with a 3D geometry engine in its CPU. This processor, along with the excellent development tools Sony made available, made PlayStation extremely easy to program. That ease of programming, along with Sony's liberal $10 per game licensing fee and its aggressive marketing plans, made PlayStation an attractive prospect for game designers. Nearly 100 game companies had signed licensing agreements with Sony by the time PlayStation launched in the United States, and more than 300 individual game projects were planned or underway" (Kent, 2001, p. 504). A key component of Sony's approach was its encouragement from outside developers. Sony had a more cooperative stance, allowing creators to experiment without undue limitations unlike Nintendo. Nintendo kept tight control over its games. This tactic produced well-known franchises like *Resident Evil, Metal Gear Solid*, and *Final Fantasy*. These titles not only demonstrated the *PlayStation'*s technological prowess but also presented gamers to fresh genres and narrative approaches. Another important element in *PlayStation*'s success was its marketing. Sony positioned the console as a high-end entertainment system for teens and young adults in an effort to appeal to an older population. Advertisements frequently highlighted the console's adult, edgier image in contrast to Nintendo's family-friendly branding.

One of the most notable games on *PlayStation* was *Final Fantasy VII*, which came out in 1997. The game is still considered as one of the best games of all time and in 2020 *Final Fantasy VII Remake Intergrade* and in 2024 *Final Fantasy VII Rebirth* games came out as

two parted remakes of the classic game. The classic version of the game made use of the CD-ROM technology on the system to create an experience similar to cinema with its artistic visuals, engaging story and memorable music. “With PlayStation's 32-bit processing power and the seemingly unlimited storage of CD-ROM, Sakaguchi was able to increase the artistic qualities of his games. Sakaguchi had always had an eye for cinematics, art, and intricate storytelling, but working with CD-ROM gave him the opportunity to enhance these features exponentially. Final Fantasy VII had epic dramatic cutscenes with symphonic music” (Kent, 2001, p. 542). In addition to making *PlayStation* the top gaming system of its age, *Final Fantasy VII*’s popularity demonstrated how crucial narrative-driven games are to attract players’ attention.

The impact of *PlayStation* went beyond only its games. In order to provide players with more accuracy in 3D surroundings, Sony unveiled a controller with two analog sticks, setting the stage for contemporary input devices. The console’s success was further cemented by the fact that its low cost and elegant design made it available to a large audience. The reason behind the success of *PlayStation* is the console’s better hardware than its rivals and making their games worldwide popular. Also, *Sony* challenged *Nintendo* and *Sega*’s hegemony in the industry. *Sony* deeply affected the industry as a new player by creating a harmony between artistic vision and technology.

The legacy of *PlayStation* ultimately rests on its capacity to make gaming a widely accepted cultural phenomena. In addition to challenging Nintendo and Sega’s hegemony, Sony reimagined the potential of interactive entertainment by creating a harmony between technology and artistry. The triumph of *PlayStation* paved the way for further advancements in gaming, guaranteeing that its influence would last long after its time had passed. It is still regarded as a turning point in the history of video games, having shaped contemporary gaming and advanced the industry. The success of *PlayStation* set the standard for upcoming advancements in the industry and the future *PlayStation* consoles would continue to impact the industry. This success of the first *PlayStation* is still a milestone in history thanks to its shaping contemporary video games and pushing the industry forward.

1.3.5.3. Rebirth of PC gaming

In addition to great developments in consoles in the industry, gaming on PCs (personal computers) gained popularity especially after more people started to get PCs in their houses. In that regard, PCs also played a part in industry which eventually increased the potential of

the sector in terms of both economic and new installments like new genres and e-sports. Unlike consoles which generally have specific hardware and exclusivity, PCs allow more freedom for both developers and players. In that regard, PCs adaptability made it important for the industry. Games like *Doom (1993)* and *Quake (1996)*, which were exclusive for PC, with their innovative first-person design and fast-paced action, demonstrated the potential of PC gaming.

> "Doom would prove to be a landmark release that would shake up the entire video game industry … His revised code allowed Id to build rooms of any height, create curved walls and use new lighting effects such as flickering ceiling lights. Adrian Carmack also upped the shock value of the artwork, creating a nightmarish carousel of twisted monsters and twitching bodies impaled on spikes. They sampled animal noises to provide the game's demonic opponents with intimidating growls and roars and added a pulsing, clanging musical soundtrack inspired by the work of industrial metal acts such as Ministry and Nine Inch Nails" (Donovan, 2010). As Steven Kent states in his book, these games, which were created by *id Software*, not only expanded the possibilities for game design but also made multiplayer gaming more widely accepted, setting the stage for the future of e-sport and online gaming culture (Kent, 2001, p. 460).

In the 1990s, Pc gaming also grew to be associated with RTS (real-time strategy) games. The RTS genre became a dominant force on PCs thanks to games like *Blizzard Entertainment's StarCraft (1998)* and *Warcraft: Orcs & Humans (1994)*. Consoles at the time were unable to match the complicated mechanics and depth of these games, which needed players to construct armies, manage resources, and strategize in real-time. The main reason for this is consoles generally target people of all ages including people who did not spend much time on gaming. Therefore, genres like RTS were not suitable for consoles because of their time demanding and complex structures. In addition to RTS games, PCs were also a good fit for role-playing games (RPGs) as an alternative for console RPGs. Games like *Diablo (1996)* and *Baldur's Gate 1998)* took RPGs to next level thanks to the PCs better hardware. Developers could build vast worlds and complex systems on PCs. In that regard, RPG games on PCs enabled better character customization, world design, NPC artificial intelligence and narrative.

Besides new genres, the emergence of online multiplayer features is one of the most revolutionary developments in PC gaming throughout the 1990s. With the widespread use of the internet, players were able to communicate with others worldwide which added a new level of social engagement. After the gained popularity of online gaming, a new genre also emerged. This genre is called MMO (massively multiplayer online) games like *EverQuest*

(1999) and *Ultima Online (1997)* can be given as first examples of this genre. Thousands of people can communicate, get together and compete simultaneously in these online environments. In other words, these games created virtual worlds that people spent a serious amount of time in these worlds. By establishing communities that went beyond the games themselves and included forums, fan sites as well as in-person gatherings, MMOs completely rewrote the idea of social gaming.

Additionally, PC gaming emerged as a venue for user-generated material and innovation in the 1990s. A culture of modding has flourished since games such as *Quake* and *The Sims (2000)* let users design their own levels, characters and plots. "The explosion of modding and machinima within Quake and later first person shooters had a direct influence on Wright's approach to The Sims, which, thanks to its house building, already had player creativity at its heart" ((Donovan, 2010). This focus on player freedom and creativity set PCs apart from consoles, which frequently offered less customization choices.

In summary, the 1990s saw an increase in PC gaming that was marked by unheard-of levels of experimentation and invention. Because of the platform's technical abilities and open nature, developers were able to experiment with new game genres, gameplay elements, and interaction styles. Many of these developers would later come to define contemporary gaming. PC gaming pushed the limits of what video games could do.

1.3.6. The modern era (2000s – present)

After the 3D Revolution in 1990s, the video game industry continued to grow rapidly in the beginning of 21st century too. The improvements in 1990s in terms of technology, narrative and design developed more in the 2000s. Consoles like *PlayStation 2*, *Microsoft's Xbox* and *Nintendo's GameCube*, which were the next generation consoles in the beginning of 21st century, were released with better hardware. In that way, developers were able to build more complex and advanced games. 21st century is also crucial for the industry since increasingly online featured or online based multiplayer games became more popular thanks to the widespread of internet around the world. Moreover, gaming slowly became one of the mainstream entertainment media in 21st century thanks to the advancements in technology and design which made video games compete with other media forms like films and television.

1.3.6.1. Sony's PlayStation 2

Sony's hegemony in the industry was cemented with the release of *PlayStation 2 (PS2)* in 2000, which also established a new standard for what a home console system could do. The console improved upon its predecessor's (*PS1*) features and added a number of new ones that revolutionized the sector for the modern age. *PS2* sold over 155 million units worldwide and became the best-selling gaming console of all time thanks to its mix of state of the art hardware, a vast game library and multimedia features (Zandt, 2024).

PS2's hardware was one of its distinguishing features. Its 128-bit Emotion Engine processor allowed developers to produce more intricate, vast and immersive games by providing notable improvements in visuals, sound and processing capability. The system was able to accommodate complicated gaming mechanism, dramatic narrative, and incredibly realistic 3D settings of its' time thanks to the hardware capability. (Wojnar, 2019). *PlayStation 2*'s integrated DVD player was another ground-breaking innovation in the sector. It provided a major competitive advantage for *Sony.* Because *PS2* could be used as both a gaming system and a media player, it was a desirable alternative to standalone DVD players at the time of its debut. Steven Kent states this marketing strategy of Sony in his book by addressing how powerful a component of a device could change the faith of a console. "DVD players had not sold as well in Japan as they had in the United States. In the first few months after its release, the number-one use for PlayStation 2 was as a DVD movie player, and the leading software title for the console was the DVD version of the Keanu Reeves movie The Matrix" (Kent, 2001, p. 571). This feature of the console contributed to PS2's extraordinary commercial success by helping it become popular with a larger audience.

Another factor contributing to the console's popularity was its wide selection of games. From casual gamers to hardcore ones, the console had something for everyone thanks to its more than 4000 titles launched during the active period of the console. Classic games like *Final Fantasy X*, *Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons of Liberty*, and *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas* demonstrated the system's capacity to produce captivating storylines, innovative gameplay and breathtaking visual for the early 2000s. Also, the console introduced gaming into social contexts apart from couch co-op style gaming. Thanks to games like *Guitar Hero* and *SingStar*, *PlayStation 2* attracted people who had not previously used the platform too by offering them to play guitar, drum or to sing songs. Thanks to the easy adaptability of these games, gaming became a common home pastime activity.

PS2 also contributed well to the evolution of online gaming. Even though there were previous attempts for online functionality of home gaming consoles like *Nintendo*'s *Famicom*, *PS2* was one of the pioneers of the online gaming feature in home gaming consoles. The system added online multiplayer capabilities in 2002 thanks to the initial release of Network Adapter, which allowed users to interact and compete with other players worldwide. Even while *PS2*'s online features were not as strong as those of subsequent consoles, they were nevertheless a significant step in the direction of making internet access a fundamental component of gaming systems which eventually paved the way for digital stores and online download options for games. Games like *Final Fantasy XI* and *SOCOM: U.S. Navy SEALs* showed off the possibilities of online gaming and set the stage for the completely linked experiences which would eventually define generations to come.

Even though Microsoft's *Xbox* and Nintendo's *GameCube* were competitors of the console, *PS2* remained the industry leader for the duration of its existence, and it is still the most sold gaming console of all time. *PS2*'s better game titles, affordability and well-established brand loyalty guaranteed its status as the market leader, even as its rivals debuted cutting-edge features like *Xbox*'s built-in hard drive and *Xbox Live Service*, which is the online service of the console. As the result of decades of development and expansion, *PS2* had come to symbolize the heyday of gaming by the time it was discontinued to support in 2013 with the focus on future consoles of Sony.

1.3.6.2. Nintendo GameCube

Nintendo GameCube was released on September 14, 2001, in Japan and November 18, 2001, in North America. It was the sixth generation of *Nintendo*'s consoles, and it was released after *Nintendo 64* which was not only one of *Nintendo*'s but also one of the most successful consoles in the history of video games. Even though *GameCube* got its place in the market, the console was to be never able to compete with *PlayStation 2* in sales and technology.

GameCube's small, cube-shaped form was one of its most unique characteristics. This design decision distinguished it from rival consoles, which were heavier and classic rectangle looking, by emphasizing mobility and simplicity. Mini-DVDs were a proprietary format used by the system that helped curb piracy but had less storage capacity than the conventional DVDs used by its rivals. Nintendo took a calculated decision to safeguard its intellectual property with this choice, but it also restricted the selection of some third-party

games and reduced the console's appeal to developers looking for more storage options (Ryan, 2011).

The collection of first-party titles on *GameCube* was its biggest asset. Games like *Pikmin, Metroid Prime*, and *Super Smash Bros. Melee* demonstrated Nintendo's dedication to quality and creativity. Specifically, *Super Smash Bros. Melee* became an icon, which became a mainstay of professional gaming as well as a casual party game, with a devoted e sports community that still exists today with new installments of the game. Notable third-party titles such as *Resident Evil 4*, which was first released as one console exclusive were also available for *GameCube. Resident Evil 4*, widely considered as one of the best games ever made, showed that *GameCube* could compete with other powerful consoles such as *PlayStation 2* or *Xbox* while pushing the limits of survival horror. However, the mini-DVD format and Nintendo's typically conservative licensing strategy contributed to the console's inability to consistently draw third-party support. This third-party support also shows Nintendo's loosening its policies in terms of family-friendly image since games like *Resident Evil* are completely opposite of the image of Nintendo. The main reason of it is that Nintendo had to allow these third-party games at some point to compete in the market.

GameCube's compatibility with *GBA (Game Boy Advance)*, which is a previous console of Nintendo, was one of its most innovative features. Foreshadowing the dual screen features of *Nintendo DS* and *Wii U*, this connection enabled players to utilize *Game Boy Advance* as controller or a second screen in titles such as *The Legend of Zelda: Four Swords Adventures*. Although developers did not use this feature very often, it did show Nintendo's interest in investigating creative approaches to improve the gameplay that they offered via hardware synergy. As Craig Harris wrote in 2001, which was before *GameCube*'s launch in North America, on console's feature; "The potential is there, but it's difficult to say if developers will take advantage of the system connectivity between the two systems … But imagine the possibilities -- football games where you use Game Boy Advance for play selection. Or first-person shooters that use the GBA as the map and radar. Or a casino simulator where each player is dealt with his or her cards on the handheld. And the list goes on." Even though these assumptions did not become reality, Nintendo used the technology in its future consoles (Harris, 2001).

Notwithstanding the console's inventiveness, *GameCube* encountered several obstacles after its release. Microsoft's *Xbox* gained popularity with its emphasis on online gaming and titles that were more appealing to adults, while Sony's *PlayStation 2* prevailed with its extensive library and multimedia features. Audiences looking for multipurpose

entertainment systems found *GameCube* less enticing due to its restricted online connectivity and absence of a DVD playback option. "This was the PlayStation all over again: a new rich kid in town with the best toys becomes the most popular. And what toys: the Xbox had a 733 MHz Intel processor, a DVD drive, and enough standard parts from PCs that it looked like a tower inside its large black case … Biggest of all was the Xbox Live service, letting players throw on a headset and chat with friends or strangers as they joined multiplayer games … For all the innovations Nintendo has pushed for its modems over the years, online game playing was not one of them. Its games focused on single-player campaigns (see: Mario), with a multiplayer option (see: Luigi)" (Ryan, 2011). This was two of the biggest problems of *GameCube* in terms of competitivity with *PlayStation 2* and *Xbox* in that period.

GameCube ultimately sold about 21 million copies worldwide, which is a small amount in comparison to its rivals. But with its ground breaking games, creative features and devoted fan base, its legacy lives on. Nintendo's dedication to innovation and quality is best demonstrated by *GameCube*, which provided unique, unforgettable and frequently avant-garde experiences. The console is nevertheless regarded as a revered piece in the history of gaming thanks to its audacity and uniqueness, even if it was not the most successful console of its time.

1.3.6.3. The newcomer: Microsoft's Xbox

With its initial launch in 2001, Microsoft's *Xbox*, a new competitor entered the market that would have a significant impact on how the sector would be in the future. *Xbox*, the company's first system, was a daring attempt to enter a sector that had previously been controlled by well-established gigantic companies such as Sony and Nintendo. It was also a daring attempt since the West became less dominant in the market for a long period of time after the initial crash in 1980s. *Xbox*'s powerful technology, emphasis on online connectivity and iconic title, *Halo: Combat Evolved*, not only made Microsoft a big competitor in the market but also set new benchmarks.

Xbox's better technology was its main selling point. The console provided competitive gaming experience in the market thanks to graphics capabilities and hardware technologies. However, the two main differences between *Xbox* than *PS2* or *GameCube* were the ethernet connector feature. Since its hard drive replaced memory cards, developers were able to create more intricate and expansive game worlds and save games more easily than memory cards of other consoles. "The console finally helped Microsoft wedge its way into the living room

with a device that people craved. Now that box is a gateway to internet services, from online games to streaming video. The Xbox Live online gaming service, launched a year after the Xbox in 2002, represents Microsoft's greatest achievement in the social market that has become key to engaging users for the long term" (Takahashi, 2011). Microsoft made an ambitious and calculated move when it entered the console industry. With the introduction of *Xbox Live* in 2002, *Xbox* fulfilled its goal of making online gaming a primary feature, in contrast to its rivals. By providing gamers with a single online service that included voice chat, matchmaking and downloadable content (DLC), *Xbox Live* transformed online multiplayer gaming, *Xbox Live* was used by games like *Halo 2* to offer a smooth online experience that increased the accessibility and appeal of multiplayer gaming.

Halo: Combat Evolved, which was the *Xbox*'s flagship game, was a major factor in console's success. *Halo*, a groundbreaking first-person shooter that debuted as a launch title, demonstrated console's technical prowess while offering a captivating story and creative multiplayer gameplay. As Joe Fielder from Gamespot, which was one of the most recognizable video game magazines of 2000s, wrote about *Halo: Combat Evolved* as; "Still, it's hard to say enough good things about the game. It's one of the few first-person shooters that manages to transcend its genre, meaning that it's not only an excellent first-person shooter, but it's an excellent game, period" (Fielder, 2001). This review shows that *Halo* has not only become a face of a console but also one of the best games of its' genre.

Even though there was a great rivalry between *Sony's PlayStation 2* and *Nintendo's GameCube* in terms of both economic and technological success, *Microsoft's Xbox* also gained a noteworthy popularity. However, *Sony's PlayStation* and *Nintendo's GameCube* were more popular around the world because they had been in the industry for a long time while *Microsoft's Xbox*'s sales were mostly from North America. The main reason behind this is *Microsoft* targeted adult gamers and online gameplay features which attracted North American customers more.

Despite the fierce competition from Sony's *PlayStation 2* and Nintendo's *GameCube*, *Xbox* was nevertheless able to secure a sizeable portion of the market. The popularity of the console was especially noteworthy in North America, in which customers responded favorably to its emphasis on adult and online gameplay. Unlike Norh America, the success of *Xbox* was limited in other areas in the world, especially in Japan, since the console was stranger for Asia unlike *Sony* and *Nintendo* consoles. In other words, cultural differences and the lack of local content affected the sales of *Xbox* outside North America. However, the console was a groundwork for *Microsoft*'s capabilities in future. Thanks to the focus on

technological innovations like Kinect, which was a motion sensing input device, and online features, *Microsoft* developed one of the best gaming consoles of all time, *Xbox 360*. Retrospectively, *Microsoft* had a great influence on the industry thanks to their technological developments. In that way, *Microsoft* became one of the most important parts in the contemporary video game industry. *Microsoft* also brought features like DLCs (Downloadable Content), internet services which were integrated in the games and ecosystem relying on multiplayer to the industry that are now regular in the contemporary industry.

1.3.7. Technology is advancing: the era of HD gaming (PlayStation 3, Xbox 360, and Wii U)

The introduction of *PlayStation 3*, *Xbox 360*, and *Wii* marked the beginning of the high-definition (HD) gaming era in the mid-2000s. During this time period, technologies used in gaming advanced significantly with consoles providing better graphical quality, immersive storytelling and internet connectivity. Each system had a distinct approach to HD gaming, mirroring the goals and tactics of its own maker, and collectively they influenced the current state of gaming.

The first console to adopt HD gaming was *Xbox 360*, which debuted in 2005 and gave Microsoft a significant competitive advantage. *Xbox Live*, which is the online service of the console, raised the bar for multiplayer features and community interaction. There are couple of new features in the service like better and bigger matchmaking systems, achievements for the games and more DLCs. These were just a few of the services that *Xbox* provided. In that way, it formed a seamless ecosystem that kept gamers interested outside of specific games. Prominent games like *Gears of War* and *Halo 3* demonstrated the console's capabilities by fusing dynamic gameplay, online multiplayer options and better graphics. Jon Hicks mentions how *Xbox* manage to surpass its rivals, whom they were the leaders of the industry for decades, in the article called "How the Xbox 360 won the console war" by addressing that *Xbox 360* set some industry standards in that time. "No, it was the Xbox 360 that defined this generation in a way that no other console managed. It was on Xbox 360 that Gears of War made cover shooters the signature genre of the era (and, in Horde Mode, added a new standard to multiplayer gaming, alongside hoary stalwarts like Team Deathmatch) … On Xbox 360, meanwhile, a far more successful Achievement flourished. The digital rewards

that debuted with Microsoft's second console have become an industry standard" (Hicks, 2013).

The 2006 debut of Sony's *PlayStation 3* also marked the beginning of HD gaming era. However, unlike *Xbox 360* or *Wii U*, *PlayStation 3* emphasized multimedia and power of the console. With its cutting-edge Cell CPU and compatibility for Blu-ray discs, *PS3* established itself as a high-end entertainment system that could play Blu-rays and provide stunning images. Thanks to this, *PS3* became a desirable option for tech lovers, even if its original expensive launch price reduced its availability. But as time went on, the system gained popularity thanks to its amazing library of exclusive titles like *God of War III, The Last of Us*, *Uncharted 2: Among Thieves*, *Heavy Rain* and *Beyond: Two Souls*. Sony showed the importance that they gave on cinematic storytelling along with great graphics with these titles.

Unlike *Sony* and *Microsoft*, *Nintendo* went a different way with the release of *Wii* in 2006. *Nintendo* decided to focus more on accessibility technologies with *Wii*. The console is based on motion sensing technology with its Remote and Nunchuk controllers. In that way, *Nintendo* shifted its focus on simulated experiences which ultimately charmed people of all ages. The usage of console was quite easy thanks to the motion capturing technology. In that way, *Nintendo* showcased the game *Wii Sports* which included casual sport simulations like tennis, bowling, boxing, golf and baseball. Both the game and the console became a global hit thanks to its different approach to gaming. *Wii* became a great activity for social gatherings which ultimately emerge a totally new audience. Also, the console price was more affordable than *PlayStation 3* or *Xbox 360*. In that way, *Wii* became quite popular, especially with people who were not regular players. This resulted in enormous sales success. *Wii* became one of the most sold systems in 2013 after selling over 100 million copies. The console did have its drawbacks though. Third-party developers concentrating on visually demanding games found it less interesting due to console's HD capabilities unlike *PlayStation 3* or *Xbox 360* and relatively powerful hardware. Nintendo's robust selection of original games, such as *Super Mario Galaxy, Mario Kart Wii* and *The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess* make sure the system remained a popular favorite despite this. "The Revolution, by contrast, was not trying to be the biggest or the baddest. In fact, its modest abilities led to one frustrated developer saying it was just a pair of Gamecubes duct-taped together … This frustrated Nintendo's third-party developers: the spectacular graphics that they made for the 360 and the PS3 had to be severely dumbed down to be ported to Nintendo's new console" (Sheff, 1993). HD gaming period was a turning point in the

development of video games. Each platform made a distinct contribution to the market. *PS3* advanced interactive narrative, *Xbox 360* revolutionized online and multiplayer features, and *Wii*'s motion controllers and social play broadened both the gaming community and culture. Together, these technologies not only improved gaming's technological quality but also broadened its creative and cultural scope, laying the groundwork for today's immersive networked gaming experiences.

In the period following these consoles, Sony released *PlayStation 4* and 5, Microsoft released *Xbox One, Series S* and *X,* and Nintendo released *Switch* consoles. Both *PlayStation* and *Xbox* followed similar paths by creating new ways to raise their sales. They worked on new IPs like *Horizon* series of *PlayStation* or *Hellblade* series of *Xbox*, made TV series like *The Last of Us* or *Halo*. On the other hand, Nintendo released handheld console called *Switch* and focused on making more exclusive games like *Mario* franchise or *The Legend of Zelda* franchise for its console and most of these games were critically acclaimed. In other words, Nintendo steadily increased its' selling thanks to the exclusive games while still maintaining the family-friendly image.

1.4. Uprising Against the Industry: The Rise of Indie Games

Even though indie games were around with the early stages of video games, it was quite hard to maintain being a successful game developer since nearly all of the developers aimed to develop their games on consoles which were demanding since developers had to find distributors to release their games. In other words, most independent developers could not release their games on their own. However, in the 21st century, especially in 2010s, indie games started to grow in numbers thanks to the emergence of digital distribution. With widespread internet access, video games could be able to distribute digitally which ended up in developing online stores like Steam. In that time period, independent developers were able to sell their games developed for PCs online directly to the customers without any need for distributor which enabled them to have full control over their games. Also, game development has become more accessible thanks to some free engines like Adobe Flash or Unity. Therefore, indie games became "antithesis" to video games that developed under big studios with higher budgets. Especially after some successful indie games like *Cave Story (2005)*, Platforms like Steam or Microsoft Xbox Store started to showcase and sell indie games on their stores which eventually leads up the rise of indie games in the 21st century.

After the emergence of digital distribution, independent developers searched the ways to find funding for development. In that regard, platforms like Kickstarter became a hotspot for indie developers to promote their games or even their ideas directly to customers to gather financial support as voluntary. Independent developers gather great amounts of money on Kickstarter in years. For example, *Double Fine Adventure* gathered $3.3 million from 87.142 individual supporter (*Double Fine Adventure*, 2016). This example shows people's request for different and unique games unlike mainstream highly budget and similar games made by big studios. Today, the number of indie games is quite higher than big budget games and it is still growing.

Today, indie games have become one of the driving forces in gaming. There are lots of critically acclaimed indie games with low budgets that can easily compete with big-budget games. The starting point of this success of indie games was *Journey*'s winning the Game of the Year Award in 2012. It was the first time that any indie game won a major award which was generally given to AAA games. After the success of *Journey*, the industry started to give importance on indie games which ultimately led indie games make cultural impact in the future with different titles.

For example, starting as an indie game but turned into a global phenomenon *Minecraft (2011)* can be a perfect example of how a video game can impact cultures. It is basically an open-ended sandbox game which players try to survive in this cube shaped world. Even though *Minecraft* was developed by one developer, whose name is Markus Aleksej Persson (Notch), at start, it became the best-selling video game of all time. Moreover, it became a brand on its own which has merch, toys and even movies which came out in 2025. *Minecraft*'s success is one of its kind. In other words, it is nearly impossible to get a similar success as *Minecraft*. However, the game demonstrates that indie projects can achieve great commercial scales.

Another great example for the impactful indie games is *Undertale (2015)*. It was developed by Toby Fox and it is a retro-style RPG game. However, what sets *Undertale* different than other RPGs is that players can beat the game non-violently. Players can choose how to approach the obstacles and enemies throughout the game. They can either fight or talk, which is quite unique for that period. "*Undertale*'s premise — that one can resolve violence through peaceful means — cut through the cacophony of commercial video game development predicated on violence and linear character progression. This, combined with the game's offbeat sense of humor and catchy soundtrack, made it an instant classic. But *Undertale* didn't just sell millions of copies. It shaped the entertainment tastes of an

entire generation. For its largely younger fanbase, *Undertale* took on a new life through memes" (Diaz, 2020). *Undertale* is also a great example for both industry shaping games and successful indie games.

Another indie game that developed by one person, Eric Barone, can be also a great example for successful indie games. However, *Stardew Valley (2016)* is not just successful. It also revitalized a game genre that was not popular. *Stardew Valley* is a farming and life simulation game that players take over the grandpa's farm. The game offers charming and open-ended farm life experience as well as simulated life. Players can earn money by harvesting crops, animal breeding, fishing and mining. Moreover, players can befriend townspeople NPCs, and they can even marry them if they want. After its release, *Stardew Valley* became a great hit and it is always a great example of indie games with impact on the industry.

There are lots of different examples that can be given for successful indie games like *Super Meat Boy (2010), Shovel Knight (2014), Cuphead (2017)* or *Celeste (2018)*. All of these games have their own unique artistic style and gameplay mechanics that inspired the industry. In that regard, the rising period of indie games is one of the most important milestones in the history of video games. Even though it reached peak in the last two decades, indie developers have always been in the industry since the beginning of video game industry. However, the main difference is it is easier to develop and release their games for indie developers than in 80s and 90s. Indie games proved that players want artistic vision and innovation than similar big budget games which ultimately became a driving force of the industry recently. In that regard, it is important to analyze the structure of the contemporary global gaming industry in depth in terms of hardware, software and distribution.

2. STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS OF THE GLOBAL GAMING INDUSTRY

The global gaming industry is not only a growing part of the entertainment system but also a part which reshapes technological, economic and cultural dynamics. The industry evolved from an experimental digital product to the center of billions of dollars investments, global platforms and complex development chains. This transformation gained speed thanks to the development of hardware technologies, accessibility to the software and the spread digital distribution.

This type of growth caused development processes to become more institutionalized and systematic. Also, it made creative production closely tied to structural conditions. The idea that games are not just artworks, but also commercial products has led to a system where the relationships between developers, publishers and distributors are defined by economic scales. This relationship can be considered as a part of a larger two-stage process which is described by Stöber in his article called "What Media Evolution Is: A Theoretical Approach to the History of New Media". He stated "media are not merely the consequence of technical inventions, but derive from a two-stage process of inventing and 'social institutionalizing'… Society 'institutionalizes' inventions by discovering new possibilities of communication; it adopts and formats new media" (Stöber, 2004). Stöber's perspective on new media forms indicates that neither hardware nor software developments in the global gaming industry gain popularity or cultural and economic importance merely with technical innovation. Instead, a process of social adoption is needed to turn them into institutionalized components in the industry. For this reason, consoles, engines and distribution platforms in the industry have become more than technical products. They become systems that can shape the industry. For this reason, it is crucial to understand what these systems are. In this chapter, hardware, software ecosystem, economic actors, production cycles, distribution models and the impacts of corporatization on creative processes are examined through the structural analysis of global video game industry.

2.1. Hardware, Software and Distribution Ecosystem

Digital gaming industry has three core elements at its' foundation. These elements are hardware, software and distribution. These elements shape not only the technical foundation of video game production but also the economic organization and cultural circulation of the

industry. In terms of hardware, game consoles like *PlayStation, Xbox*, *Nintendo Switch*, *PCs* and mobile devices offer a variety of different gaming experiences by targeting different user profiles. Console manufactures like *Sony, Microsoft* and *Nintendo* have established a vertical monopoly by offering not only physical devices but also integrated software and platform ecosystems. However, PCs offer more freedom to the users in different aspects like hardware choices or technical customization thanks to their open architecture which makes PCs more attractive to independent developers.

On the other hand, software is also crucial part of this ecosystem. Game engines like *Unity* and *Unreal Engine,* physical engines, sound and music tools as well as artificial intelligence systems shape the technical infrastructure of games and determine the production costs. The widespread use of these tools has made video game development more accessible while also leading to standardization in the industry. While larger studios continue to produce games with their custom engines like *REDengine* and *RAGE*, smaller teams can enter the market thanks to open access engines like *Unity* or *Unreal Engine*. Thanks to this development, indie games have increased.

Both hardware and software in global gaming industry have transformed throughout history. This transformation can be evaluated through Stöber's statement. "At first, in the phase of invention, the new technology improves something old… After that, society discovered that the new technology was not only an improvement of an old medium, but could be used for new purposes and forms of communication" (Stöber, 2004). According to Stöber, there is a pattern in which technology or products are renewed roughly every five or six years. This pattern is also present in video game industry. A new console for the hardware or graphic technology for the software has been introduced. Every new introduction of technology enhances the visuals and capabilities of video games as well as rising user expectations. On the other hand, these innovations also affect studios or publishers since new technology means new production workflow, strategic planning and priority. According to this cycle, when new technology is introduced in the video game industry, the technology has impact on game production, consumption and monetization as well as technological improvement.

On the other hand, the distribution ecosystem has radically transformed throughout the years. Traditional distribution models which are based on physical media like CDs have been replaced by digital platforms since the early 21st century. Digital platforms like *Steam, PlayStation Store, Xbox Store* or *Epic Games Store* have made it possible to distribute games globally with low cost and easier accessibility. In other words, games which are purchased

from digital stores can be accessed immediately after the online installation. Furthermore, services like *Xbox Game Pass* or *PS Plus* which are based on subscription and cloud gaming systems like *GeForce Now* and *Xbox Cloud Gaming* reduce the hardware dependency and make accessibility easier. The cloud systems need only internet connection and users can play games through online streaming. Even though there are still physical distributions available, the majority of sales are done through online. Special Editions or Collector Editions are still distributed physically.

2.2. The Rise of Software Companies and Economic Scale

As it was mentioned before, hardware manufacturers mostly shaped the sector in the early days of the global gaming industry. Companies like *Sony* and *Nintendo* adopted and integrated a model which handles both hardware and software development internally. Nevertheless, starting from the 1990s, the rise of software development companies paved the way for independent developers who specialized in game development. Companies like *Electronic Arts (EA), Ubisoft, Blizzard, Activision, Take-Two Interactive* or *CD Projekt RED* not only developed video games but also established their own distribution and publishing networks like *EA App, Ubisoft Connect, Battle.net* or *Rockstar Social Club* which eventually transformed them into major global powers.

The economic impact of these software companies can be clearly observed in the budgets of the games that they develop. For example it has been reported that the development cost of one of the *Sony*'s greatest hits *The Last of Us Part II* was $220 million, while another big IP of *Sony*, *Horizon: Forbidden West* was $212 million (Bailey, 2023). Because of these kinds of high budget projects, video games turned into high-risk projects with calculated returns on investments instead of creative artworks. In that regard, software companies have become corporate actors that must develop not only technological but also financial strategies. Strategies like player data tracking, microtransactions, seasonal content, downloadable content or Battle Pass systems can be given as examples for these strategies which target sustainable revenue.

2.3. Digital Game Production Cycle (AAA, GaaS, Indie)

Today's digital game production can be divided into three basic production models with different structures. *AAA (Triple-A)* games, like service games which are developed with *Games as a Service (GaaS)* model, and *independent (indie)* games. Each model exhibits

distinct differences in terms of production process, financing structure, level of creative control and the relationship established with players. These differences also define the boundaries and possibilities of creative production within the gaming industry.

AAA games is a term to refer to video games that are produced with large budgets, large teams, long development processes and marketed globally. These games are usually produced with the most advanced technologies of industry. Also, the visuals, sound, art, environment and other aspects are highly detailed and high-end. On the other hand, the scenarios of *AAA* games are generally more detailed than lower scaled games. In that way, the games aim to provide cinematic experience. Examples like *Red Dead Redemption 2, Cyberpunk 2077* or *The Last of Us Part II* show that *AAA* games require years of production with large teams and extensive marketing budgets. The production cycle of these types of games is generally divided into different phases like pre-production, beta and post-launch updates. Nevertheless, *AAA* games, in other words high budgets, mean high risks for the producers. For this reason, the pressure of commercial expectations can limit creative freedom.

On the other hand, *GaaS (Games as a Service)* game model refers to a structure in which games are designed as a continuously updated and developed service rather than a one-time product like single player games. Games like *Fortnite, Genshin Impact, Dead by Daylight, Destiny 2* and *GTA Online* can be given as an example of this model. Producers aim to generate continuous income through seasonal content, event, cosmetics and microtransactions with *GaaS* model. Even though *GaaS* model can extend player engagement with the game throughout years, it can subject development teams to constant production pressure and shift their creative focus for the game to a non-stop content production cycle like a factory. Furthermore, the developer teams' influence is balanced by algorithms and user data because in-game economies are shaped by player behavior. In other words, things like in-game content prices or new content are mostly user driven. For this reason, this situation can also harm the creativity for production since the creative decision-making processes are in danger of becoming automated.

Indie (independent) games, on the other hand, are games which are developed by small teams or individual developers with low budgets. However, they have high creative freedom and control. Different factors like the rapid growth of digital distribution, easy accessibility of game engines such as *Unity* and *Unreal Engine* and the ability to publish through digital platforms like *Steam* without finding a publisher have made the rise of *indie* games possible. Games like *Undertale, Celeste, Stardew Valley* and *Hades* have strong artistic and visual

styles, thematic depth and unique mechanics. *Indie* games generally align more closely with classical auteur analysis rather than *AAA* games in contemporary gaming industry since the creative vision of the developers is reflected more directly in their game's aesthetics and narrative. However, both the lack of commercial pressure and the number of *indie* games released every day make indie developers to be experimental and push beyond genre boundaries if they want their games to be successful.

These three production models in the contemporary gaming industry are important since they demonstrate the structural diversity of the industry and the economic and political effects on creative processes. Particularly from the perspective of this study, creative authority in *AAA* and *GaaS* structures and decision-making management teams, while *indie* productions offer more freedom in production.

2.4. Platforms, Publishing and Distribution Models

Alongside production in the digital gaming industry, the market platforms, publishing and distribution models in the contemporary gaming industry which enable games to reach players on a global scale are crucial to understanding how the dynamics of the industry work. These structures from the core framework that not only determine the technical foundation but also content control, economic sharing and creative interventions.

Platforms like *PlayStation, Xbox, PC* or *Nintendo Switch* are the systems on which games are run, and they serve as an ecosystem for users through hardware integration. Console manufacturers like *Sony, Microsoft* and *Nintendo* are not only hardware providers but also platform owners. These platforms have their own content stores like *PlayStation Store, Xbox Store* and *Nintendo E-Shop*, user subscription systems like *Xbox Game Pass, PlayStation Plus* and exclusive titles like *Bloodborne, Halo* and *Super Mario Bros.* On the other hand, as an open platform PCs offer a more democratic structure in terms of both game development and accessibility. Most of the console exclusive games are also released for PC.

On the other hand, publishing models shows differences depending on who develops, finances and distribution a video game. Publishing models can be divided into three parts. The first one is first-party publishing model. In this model, a game is produced by developer studios or directly supported by the platform owner. One of the most popular franchises of the industry *Last of Us* can be given as an example for this model. The game is produced by *Naughty Dog,* and the studio is owned by *Sony*. For this reason, the game is released for

PlayStation as a console exclusive even though it was released on PC 9 years after its release. The second publishing model is third-party publishing model. In this model, games are developed by independent studios, and these studios are financed through development, and their games are distributed by major publishers. *Titanfall (2014)* can be given as an example for this model. The game was developed by *Respawn Entertainment,* which is an independent studio, and the publisher of the game *Electronic Arts (EA)* fully funded the development of the game as well as marketing and distribution in exchange for IP ownership. The third model of publishing models is the self-publishing model. This model allows developers to release their games directly on digital platforms. This model generally aims for independent developers since they do not need to find a publisher for releasing their games. In that regard, they can sustain their creative autonomy as well as direct profit. They only have to pay release and distribution fees to digital platforms like *Steam*.

Distribution models, on the other hand, have also transformed with the digitalization of the industry. Until the early 2000s, video game distribution through physical media like CDs or cartridges has been replaced by digital stores like *Steam, Epic Games Store* or *GOG*. These stores provide global access which enables both large and small-scale games to reach players around the world. In addition to these digital stores, subscription systems like *Xbox Game Pass* or *PS Plus Extra* shift the game ownership model to access-based consumption. In that way, the consumption habits of users drastically changed.

All these structures show that video game production in contemporary gaming industry is not only a technical activity but also that control over content is shaped by platform owners and publishers. This situation largely ties the direction and boundaries of creative production to economic and structural factors which reveal how institutional authority influences the creative process which is the emphasis of this thesis.

2.5. Impact of Institutionalization on Creative Processes

The institutionalization of the global contemporary video game industry has had both direct and indirect effects on creative production processes in the industry. As it was mentioned before, video game production had started as experimental productions within the universities then it evolved into small teams. However, the point where the global gaming industry is standing today is much more complex and bigger than before. In today, video games are high-budget productions, and these games are developed by multinational companies with teams of hundreds of people. This transformation has led video games to

transform into products instead of technical and artistic artworks. In other words, the institutionalized video game companies produce their games through different factors like corporate planning, investor expectations and market analysis. This structural transformation can be seen as the main factor of how creative processes work and who are the decision-makers for creative processes.

One of the most noticeable effects of institutionalization of industry is that creative decisions in the development processes are made by the structural hierarchy instead of individuals like directors. This situation can be clearly seen in the big corporates like *Ubisoft*. The central editorial team of *Ubisoft* make decisions independently of studios or directors and they decide all the creative aspects from top to bottom like theme, gameplay mechanics and even the narrative. "It was the editorial team that drove the company towards open-world and systemic games, pushed online elements and insisted that its narratives had a thematic basis in the real world, but avoided taking a political stance" (Robinson, 2020). This situation shows that creative teams of the studios are positioned as implementers rather than creators. *Ubisoft*'s formulaic game approach which covers open-world design, repetitive mission types or avoiding political commentary in order to please everyone can be the clear examples of this type of hierarchical structures. Similarly, *Konami*'s creative restrictions on *Hideo Kojima* and *Kojima*'s departure from *Konami* can also be given as example for this issue.

> "A so-called Konami employee, who refused to reveal his identity, gave a certain number of sensational scoops to the Super Bunnyhop website, stating in particular that the CEO of Konami, Kagemasa Kozuki, hated Kojima, that he thought him too costly despite the profitability of his games, which was not enough in his eyes. The informant revealed a whole host of problems (frequent desk changes, power outages, unworking security doors) inflicted on hundreds of employees, who were about to lose their jobs. The apocalyptic environment depicted, according to this person, lay in a real madness in the upper management, who allegedly decided to completely refocus on the mobile platform gaming market while sacrificing the home console market. In the wake of these revelations, the playable teaser of Kojima's long-awaited Silent Hill reboot was removed from the PSN, which many then saw as a definitive axing of the project. The Mexican director Guillermo del Toro and the actor Norman Reedus, two people involved in Silent Hills, announced together its cancellation which was later confirmed by Konami. Were they too well informed? Rumors of a collusion, a large-scale marketing plot overseen by Kojima flourished but without a dénouement…" (Brusseaux et al., 2017).

Konami's demands on creative processes interfere with the creativity of an artist which shows the conflict between individual creativity and hierarchical authority.

Another consequence of institutionalization of the industry is the dismissal of untested or radical creative ideas in order to avoid financial failure. In today's industry, game production is shaped by user behavior determined by algorithms, sales projections and return on investment analyses which eventually leads up choosing the safe option. "Developing new games is costly. The success of new stories and games is an uncertain process. On the other hand, by pursuing a strategy aimed at a large audience ready to purchase new episodes, games that are sequels to games with high sales performance are being developed. In this way, game companies are earning more revenue with less risk" (Dikmen, 2019). This situation results in repeated production and creative monotony. The best example for this issue is *GaaS* games. While the content of the games is constantly updated, most of the updated contents are repetitive rather than creative.

However, indie games and independent studios are emerging as against these oppressive corporate structures. Independent developers have gained creative freedom thanks to digital distribution networks and crowdfunding tools. Games like *Undertale, Disco Elysium, Papers Please* and *Hades* can be given as examples for successful indie projects with creative boldness and innovation. Even though the biggest part of the contemporary global gaming industry has turned into institutionalized and hierarchical structures with limited creative freedom as well as financial expectations, the other part of the industry with indie developers and studios can be seen as Auteur's of today's industry like important individuals from different stages of the industry that can be seen as Auteur's like *Shigeru Miyamoto, Hideo Kojima* or *Hidetaka Miyazaki*. For this reason, it is important to understand the classic *Auteur Theory* in terms of video games. However, it is important to note that this study will approach classic *Auteur Theory* from critical perspective instead of using it to analyze the current state of global gaming industry.

3. AUTEUR THEORY AND IT'S APPLICABILITY ON VIDEO GAMES

3.1. Origin and Development of Auteur Theory

Auteur Theory is basically a theory on the most important and defining figure in film production is the director. "Auteur", which is a word of French origin, can be translated as author in English. However, as Hillier states in the English translated version of Cahiers du Cinéma, the word "auteur" does not have a direct translation into English. "In particular, I should point out that the French auteur is usually, but not always, retained when 'author' would have been the straight translation, and mise en scene when 'direction' would have been the likely translation. Both terms have entered critical discussion in English, but auteur in particular did not always have the meanings currently attached to it: we have tried to be sensitive to the varying usage of the two terms" (Hillier, 1985). In the regard of the theory, director is considered not only the technical leader of the film but also the leader in creativity and artistic values. In other words, an auteur director has the ability to create an individual work of art from a film through personal vision and unique narrative style. As Hillier states in the edited version of Cahiers du Cinéma, "At these levels, authorship was for Cahiers a relatively simple concept, essentially the idea that the film auteur was to be considered as fully an artist as any of the great novelists, painters or poets" (Hillier, 1985). In that regard, the theory states that auteur directors always leave their signatures on their movies. These signatures can be themes in their movies, aesthetic choices, camera angles, colors and narrative structures. Alfred Hitchcock's thriller and crime themed movies or Wes Anderson's camera angles and pastel colors can be given as examples for directors' cinematic signatures.

Auteur Theory contributed to the acceptance of the cinema not only as an area of entertainment but also as an art form, especially in the mid-20th century. Thanks to the theory, directors have been recognized as individual artists rather than just workers of a studio system. In that way, there has been an important paradigm shift in film criticism and film analysis which provided an opportunity to examine the artistic influence of directors on their films in more depth. This shift in film criticism emerged during the French New Wave period in the late 1950s from *Cahiers du Cinéma* magazine.

The origins of the Auteur Theory developed in 1950s France, especially among film critics around the *Cahiers du Cinéma* magazine as previously mentioned. During this period, French cinema, especially films shot within the studio system, were generally shaped by the script and the demands of the producers. Nevertheless, some critics believed that these structures limited the artistic potential of the film. André Bazin, who is both film critic and film theorist, supports this argument of the theory. "I feel I should point out that the essential characteristic of American cinema is that unexceptional films, those commercial films which are its principal ingredient, are precisely genre films. American cinema thrives financially if the genres thrive. Production can keep going at an average or even above average rate as long as there are good genres" (Hillier, 1985). In other words, Bazin believes that American film industry, as known as Hollywood, preferred to make movies that were financially successful rather than artistic and unique films which can be interpreted as Hollywood had less auteur directors than Europe, specifically France and Italy. This statement can highly be considered as true since most of the American made movies in that time period were not prominent director's films except some names like Alfred Hitchcock. If you look at the IMDb Top 250 Movies list and narrow the search between 1940 and 1955, there are twenty-three movies in total. However, five of these movies are not American movies. One is Italian and four are Japanese movies. (*IMDb Top 250 Movies*, n.d.). In that regard, there are 18 American movies left in the list. Most of the directors of these movies are not generally considered as auteurs since these movies were made in the classic Hollywood studio system which resulted in collective production and directors of these movies were not very involved in the script of the movies. Eventually, these directors did not have much impact on their movies as auteurs. Nevertheless, there are also auteur directors on the list such as Alfred Hitchcock and Billy Wilder. If Hitchcock's or Wilder's movies are compared to other movies in this list, multiple differences appear starting from pre-production to post-production since both Hitchcock and Wilder had great impact on their movies from script to shooting.

The article which is called "Une certaine tendance du cinema français (A Certain Tendency of French Cinema)" by François Truffaut set the actual stage for the theory. The 1954 article emphasized the director's own creative capacity while criticizing French cinema's standard studio productions like most of the Hollywood. According to Truffaut, films from studio productions and he identified these types of movies as "literary cinema" were lack of originality and direct adaptations of novels rather than offering a creative and unique perspective. Truffaut also states that a genuine filmmaker has to be able to show his own world and viewpoint through the work (Truffaut, 1954). After the emergence of these

ideas from film critics, the French New Wave emerged in French Cinema in 1960s. In this period film critics like Éric Rohmer, Jean-Luc Godard and Claude Chabrol started to make their own experimental films. In that regard, the auteur theory started to become a cinema practice rather than only a film theory.

After its emergence in France, the Auteur Theory started to gain an international recognition. One of the most important figures in the gaining popularity of the theory is Andrew Sarris, who is an American film critic. He published an article which is called *Notes on the Auteur Theory*" in 1962 and put the theory in a systematic structure. By doing this, the Auteur Theory gained wide range of acceptance in the United States of America.

3.2. Creative Control and the Figure of the Director in Cinema

According to Sarris, in order to consider a director as an auteur, there should be three criteria to meet which are technical competence, personal style and interior meaning. To start with technical competence, directors must know and master the basic cinema language which are camera angles, focus, movements, mise-en-scéne, lighting, sound and music, editing and performance. Thanks to these qualities, a director can successfully direct a movie technically. On the other hand, directors must have a personal style to put in their movies in order to be considered as auteur. In other words, there must be repeated aesthetics and narrative elements in different movies with different plots. In that way, the director can leave signatures in the movies. For the third criteria, interior meaning is the final must for auteur directors. Deeper philosophical or emotional meaning are essential for auteur directors. These structures are generally revealed through the film's themes, narrative structures or character dynamics (Sarris, 1962). This approach of Sarris became widely popular in New Hollywood Era in 1970s. In this time period popular directors like Martin Scorsese, Francis Ford Coppola, Stanley Kubrick and Steven Spielberg were able to express their personal visions without any studio pressure. In addition to Hollywood and European Cinema, the theory started to be recognized in world cinema.

To elaborate, the popular directors who mentioned above have different approaches to their movies which make them considered as auteurs. For example, Martin Scorsese stands out as an auteur director even though he is in the Hollywood system. His films generally explore American Dream, crime, morality, and masculinity. Movies like *Taxi Driver*, *Raging Bull*, *Goodfellas* or *The Wolf of Wall Street* can be given as examples for these themes in Scorsese movies. On the other hand, Scorsese's unique visual and narrative style can be

given as other aspects for considering him as an auteur. In the movie *Goodfellas* (1990), Henry Hill, who is portrayed by Ray Liotta, and his wife Karen Hill's scene, where they enter the restaurant and walk through it, can be a great example for one of the Scorsese's visual signatures. In other words, the scene is one-shot with nearly three minutes length and the scene also include lots of extras and takes place in different sets including restaurant entrance, stairs, kitchen and restaurant itself (Scorsese, 1990). This narrative style can also be seen in different Scorsese movies such as famous "You talking to me?" mirror scene of Travis Bickle's (Robert De Niro) from *Taxi Driver* (1976) or Jake LaMotta's (Robert De Niro) entrance to the ring for the fight in which the camera follows LaMotta from the backstage to the ring (Scorsese, 1980). Besides long shots, Scorsese also uses fast-paced editing, voice-over narration and extreme close-ups in his movies. Another widely known American director, Stanley Kubrick, is also another director who considered as an auteur. His films can be easily recognizable thanks to their thematic depth, visual style, storytelling and complete control on his movies. Kubrick's films are generally based on dehumanization of humanity, violence and the fragility of humanity, existentialism and psychological breakdowns. His movies like *2001: A Space* Odyssey (1968), *A Clockwork Orange* (1971), *The Shining* (1980), *Barry Lyndon* (1975) and *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999) are all include these themes. On the other hand, Kubrick's distinctive visual style and aesthetic choices are another aspect that makes him an auteur director. His style includes symmetric set designs like hallway in *The Shining,* interiors of the spaceship in *2001: A Space Odyssey,* slow paced tracking shots like Danny's riding tricycle through the hallways in *The Shining*, Bill's wandering through the enigmatic masked party in *Eyes Wide Shut* can all be given as examples. In that regard, Kubrick builds the tension for the audience from a unique way of his. Also, Kubrick generally made literature adaptations which can also be considered as a distinctive feature for a director.

Another important names from all around the world like David Lynch, Akira Kurosawa, Wong Kar-wai, Michael Haneke, Andrei Tarkovsky, Zeki Demirkubuz, Gaspar Noé and many more directors who left their mark in the history of cinema can be examined in terms of the "auteur theory". Each of these directors have distinctive recurring themes, distinct visual styles, narrative styles and creative control over their movies. In that way, they are considered as auteur directors.

3.3. The Search for Creative Authority in Video Games

In present, video game industry is one of the biggest stakeholders in the entertainment business. There are more and more people who buy and play video games. Even though players who access video games through illegal ways are not included in total numbers, there are millions of people playing video games each day. In that regard, video game industry stands out among other stakeholders like cinema or TV. As it was mentioned previously, video game industry developed greatly from its emergence. Today, the production budgets of video games surpass the production costs of films. As Tassi states "It was a big deal when it was revealed Sony spent $220 million on The Last of Us Part 2. Eyes popped when it was reported that Marvel's Spider-Man 2 cost around $300 million, triple the budget of the first game" (Tassi, 2025). The amount for production of a high-quality video game is quite high at first glance. However, these numbers are for the heavy weights of the industry. In other words, the biggest companies of the industry such as Sony, Take-Two Interactive, Ubisoft, Electronic Arts and Activision can spend these numbers periodically because they are expected to release high-profile and high-budget, which is also known as "AAA Games". In return, they expect high profits and sale numbers which generally meet the criteria over the years. However, there are also lots of smaller and indie studios around the world whose expectations are lower than the big companies, but they still can make great profits if their games are liked by huge numbers of players. In this context, there may be possible questions to arise such as can every video game be analyzed through auteur theory or every video game developer or developer studio can be auteurs? In that regard, it is crucial to remember that not every video game can be considered in the context of auteur theory just like how not every movie director is considered as auteur. For this reason, defining the key aspects of how Auteur Theory is applied on video games is a must. Applying Auteur Theory in order to analyze video games can be possible via adapting the main principles of the theory such as distinctive style, thematic elements, personal vision and creative control. However, these aspects can become more complex in terms of video game production since there are more people working in. In other words, there are interactive and team-based environments in video game production.

3.4. Potential for Auteurism Among Game Developers

3.4.1. Creative vision

Creative vision is one of the key aspects of video game auteurship. It refers to unique and consistent artistic approach to game development. Creative vision covers every aspect of video game production. In other words, narrative structure, visual aesthetics, gameplay mechanics and player experience are all part of the creative vision. Demirbaş' book which is called Video Game Auteur describes the application of Auteur Theory on video games as "the main characteristic of a game auteur is the use of games as an expressive medium" (Demirbaş, 2022). In that regard, all of the aspects of creative vision serve the Auteurs to express themselves. Therefore, their games are distinguished from other games within the same genre and players tend to perceive their games not just as a product but as a work of art.

On the other hand, creative vision also manifests how the game feels to play. For example, Miyamoto's games like *Super Mario Bros.* or *The Legend of Zelda* are formed around the sense of discovery, joy and childlike wonder with gameplay mechanics or Kojima's games like *Metal Gear* or *Death Stranding* include war and isolation through cinematic cutscenes and narratives. Through these examples, it can be understood how creative vision in game development is crucial since it is the one giving game a soul. Without creative vision, video games become too standard and easy to forget.

3.4.2. Aesthetic and visual signature

Visual and Aesthetic Signature can be given as another key feature of video game auteurs. It refers to distinctive artistic style and atmospheres which consistently appear in individual auteur's or development studio's works. Just how film auteurs are recognized for their choices in filmmaking like color, frame, light or art design, video game auteurs are also recognized through their choices in game development like color palettes, environment design, narrative choices, character controls and other features. "These can be translated to claim that the game auteur should be a competent designer and a creative game world builder with a critical world-view reflected in her/his games" (Demirbaş, 2022). This claim supports the idea of a video game auteur should be recognizable through their creative designs in their games.

For example, Hidetaka Miyazaki's games like *Dark Souls, Bloodborne* and *Elden Ring* are known for dark and gothic aesthetics with castles, haunting landscapes and faded color palette which all show consistent aesthetic and visual signature of Miyazaki. On the other hand, Miyamoto's games like *Super Mario Bros.* or *The Legend of Zelda* uses bright and vibrant world designs full of playful shapes. In other words, Miyazaki's games emphasize joy and happiness. In that regard, these aesthetic and visual signatures show the auteurs' philosophy while expressing their ideas through their art, in other words video games.

3.4.3. Creative control

Creative Control is also another key feature for video game auteurs. It refers to the game developer's influence on work. The developer can be an individual auteur like Miyamoto and Kojima or a studio itself like Konami or Ubisoft. This influence is on narrative, artistic and technical decisions on the work. It shows how the creator can freely express their creative vision without corporate oversight, publisher demands or market pressures. In games with auteur leads, high percentage of creative control is generally seen on the final product. In other words, small to big details serve the auteur's choices.

However, this level of control is quite rare in the video game industry because of multiple reasons. First of all, video game development has become more expensive and complex throughout history. For this reason, games are generally developed by teams, tight deadlines and high budgets. "Games are made by game workers in the political economy sense. This is a double-sided identity. On one hand game workers are under the control of an industry driven by the mechanisms of capitalism, which create surplus value based on exploitation of work power. On the other, they have creative powers over the reproduction of a hegemony which is limited and manipulated" (Demirbaş, 2022). For these reasons, most of the video games become market-driven and demand products instead of a work of art. Even though video game industry is mainly market-driven. Some individuals and studios, excluding low budget indie developers, manage to develop through their passions like Hideo Kojima, Hidetaka Miyazaki and Sandfall Interactive.

In this context, these three aspects should be considered as fundamentals of a video game auteur since it makes distinction between a product and art. In order to illustrate these aspects better, the following section will explore a series of examples from the video game industry. These examples range from individual auteurs like Hideo Kojima to studios like Ubisoft.

3.4.4. Examples from the industry

When it comes to applying the traditional Auteur Theory on video games, there are possible names which are both individuals and studios for the theory. Especially after the 1983 Video Game Crash and the revival of the industry. The works of individuals and developer studios became more visible and distinct. For this reason, the key aspects of traditional Auteur Theory could be applied to the works that came from the industry. In that regard, this section of the thesis will be about some examples from the industry throughout the period. The examples are both individuals and studios since the industry has become more and more corporatized. Therefore, developer studios have come to the forefront instead of individual names.

3.4.4.1. Childhood imagination to digital games: Shigeru Miyamoto

Shigeru Miyamoto was born in 1952 and grew up in Sonobe, Kyoto where it is a rural town of Kansai Region of Japan. He joined Nintendo in 1977 after his father's arrangement for him to work as a designer in Nintendo. Miyamoto's entry into the video game industry was coincidental. His first work as a designer was *Donkey Kong (1981)*, which was a huge hit and precursor to several popular franchises of Nintendo in the future. The game is also important because it was the first time players controlled for the first time one of the most popular video game characters of all time, Mario, in the game. Miyamoto's early success enabled him to be promoted as hardware developer, producer, director and game designer in his future career. Therefore, Miyamoto has impacted the whole industry around the world during his forty-year career at Nintendo. His success in game development brings success to Nintendo. In that regard, Miyamoto's career can be intimately associated with Nintendo's success in contrast to many other significant game developers. However, it is also important to consider that Miyamoto is the creative force and mind after this success thanks to his unique and creative approaches to game development.

Miyamoto believes that video games ought to be more than simply goods. They were supposed to be a way for people to have adventures and create stories. The games that he developed such as *Super Mario Bros.* and *The Legend of Zelda* are good examples for this approach. "For Miyamoto it was a game that, like The Legend of Zelda, recreated the joy he felt as a child exploring the countryside around Sonobe. And for a generation of American and Japanese children whose freedom to wander, explore and play outside was being curtailed by urbanization, it was a virtual substitute" (Donovan, 2010, p.187). His creativity

not only allowed him to set standards for the video game industry but also brought legendary characters like *Mario* and *Link* to the world. In that regard, it can be stated that Shigeru Miyamoto is the first auteur in video game industry. Even though he developed more titles like *Donkey Kong* or *Pikmin*, he is best known with two titles *Super Mario Bros.* and *The Legend of Zelda*. These two franchises not only popular all around the world not just in Asia or specifically Japan but also impact greatly the industry when a new game is out. "He is a star of the game industry, but everything he has done has been geared towards the game industry" (Demirbaş, 2022, p. 56). For this reason, it is important to analyze both franchises in detail in order to understand how Miyamoto's ideas, creativity and vision has impacted the whole industry throughout the years.

Even before the first game of the franchise which was launched in 1983, Mario first appeared in 1981 video game *Donkey Kong*, which was also the first video game that Miyamoto worked on. *Donkey Kong* was developed for arcade machines, and the objective is saving the princess from the gorilla's, *Donkey Kong,* captivity. This storyline is altered and adapted on future Mario games with addition of new characters like Mario's twin brother Luigi, Toad, Yoshi, Bowser, Princess Peach and Princess Daisy. With the release of *Mario Bros*. in 1983, the legendary game series came to life. From that point, the game was basically about Mario's attempts to save Princess Peach from the evil giant turtle Bowser who wants to marry with Peach.

> "One day the kingdom of the peaceful mushroom people was invaded by Koopa, a tribe of turtles famous for their black magic. The quiet, peace-loving Mushroom people were turned into mere stones, bricks and even field horse-hair plants, and the Mushroom Kingdom fell into ruin. The only one who can undo the magic spell on the Mushroom People and return them to their normal selves is the Princess Toadstool, the daughter of the Mushroom King. Unfortunately, she is presently in the hands of the great Koopa turtle king. Mario, the hero of the story (maybe) hears about the Mushroom People's plight and sets out on a quest to free the Mushroom Princess from the evil Koopa and restore the fallen kingdom of the Mushroom People. You are Mario! It's up to you to save the Mushroom People from the black magic of the Koopa!" (deWinter, 2015, p 39).

The main story of *Super Mario Bros.* mainly focuses on hero's journey rather than beating the stage or level. When the player starts to play the game, the main objective is not getting the highest score, which is a common feature of games that are released in that time

period. In other words, video games did not need stories specifically. Instead, the developers tried to develop hard stages and levels. In that way, people could compete with each other and just play the game by memorizing the stages. However, Miyamoto's vision brought a different approach to the game development of 1980s. Even with a cliché storyline, he gave the players an aim instead of pointless competitive approach to the games. "This game focuses on a hero's call to adventure rather than on winning points. Picking up the controller is the moment that the player crosses the threshold to start training, to 'maybe' become the hero … the space that Miyamoto created is more playful, often diverging away from the narrative while still serving it with forced directions and timers. Further, this structure had tremendous influence across the gaming industry" (deWinter, 2015, p 39). With the release of different decades, Mario games still give the same feeling to the players.

Miyamoto not only contributes to his creative ideas for story and general design. He also contributes with technological advancement and new approaches for the developers in game development, especially with *Super Mario 64*. Even though it was not the first 3D video game, *Super Mario 64* changed and set the stage for 3D games. "So in developing Super Mario 64, Miyamoto and crew spent a massive amount of time on their main character, giving him a whopping 193 different animation patterns to make his movement in the world seem believable" (Jensen, 2021). Since the Mario is in the center of the game and the camera moves behind the character, it should be both engaging and smooth. Otherwise, players had difficulty in playing the game. For this reason, Miyamoto tried something new that had not been tried before for 3D design. Previously developed 3D games had generally had first person point of view camera angle or fixed camera angle so that players could move the characters in these 3D worlds easily. However, Miyamoto used a camera angle that follows Mario throughout the levels from third person perspective. Additionally, players could move the camera angle to 360 degrees around Mario. "Rather, Miyamoto designed the controller because he had a vision of how the analog stick and the three dimensional controls would affect different possibilities in gameplay" (deWinter, 2015, p. 49). Therefore, players were able to fully experience the 3D world such as moving around a giant cube box and see every side of it and finding a ledge to jump on.

On the other hand, *Super Mario 64*'s gameplay design is also another important factor that shows Miyamoto's vision. Unlike his previous games, Miyamoto decided to put different levels in non-linear way. In other words, players are not restricted to playing the levels in a specific order as long as they collect required number of stars. "Mario needs to go through a world and explore the environment. He has to collect all seven stars, and in

order to do so, he has to do certain tasks in a certain order. Unlike earlier Zelda games, however, Mario can return and just play in different environments. It is in *Mario 64* that Miyamoto more fully realizes his design goal of a playground, providing terrain for players to jump, double jump, run, sneak, and fly. The narrative is loose at best, and here, we can see the beginning of a shift to Miyamoto's experience games- games that abandon narratives for simulation, for gameplay, and for communal fun" (deWinter, 2015, p. 52). This approach of his continues on future Mario games as well and whenever a new Mario game comes out it contributes greatly to the industry with new additions to platformer genre. Miyamoto's design philosophy has great impact not only on industry but also his future works as well, especially his other great franchise called *The Legend of Zelda.*

Miyamoto's another significant contribution to the gaming world is *The Legend of Zelda.* World design, character design, world physics and many more features of modern video games are influenced by this franchise. *The Legend of Zelda* series is an action-adventure game at its core full of puzzles. "*The Legend of Zelda* is a groundbreaking game, and this mostly has to do with challenge. The booklet that introduces the game provides a narrative backdrop that is legendary in tone. Like *Super Mario Bros*., the kingdom was invaded by an evil magician--Ganon—and like *Super Mario Bros*., the players must rescue the princess who can return everything to normal. At the end of this textual call to adventure is this phrase: 'Can Link really destroy Ganon and save princess Zelda? Only your skill can answer that question. Good luck. Use the Triforce wisely'" (deWinter, 2015, p. 42). The story of the series is similar to *Super Mario Bros.* It is classic hero's journey. However, Miyamoto can still charm players to the world of *The Legend of Zelda* thanks to the technical innovations in the games. With its first release in 1986, the franchise has total of twenty-eight *Zelda* games in total as of 2024. Even in the first game of the series, which was developed with technological inadequacies in 1980s, Miyamoto's vision on world design was ahead of his time. In that time period, video games generally had similar level designs with similar assets. In other words, most of the world's designs of that time gave maze feeling to the players. However, Miyamoto created large outdoor map with different environments since the main character *Link* wanders around Hyrule in order to collect eight fragments of Triforce since it is an adventure game and Miyamoto gave the players the feeling of adventure, in other words hero's journey, with diverse world design.

However, just like *Super Mario 64*, *Zelda* game that was developed for Nintendo 64 made the franchise superstar around the world as well as defining the standards of open world games in future. The game is called *The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time* and it is

still in the first place for "Best Games of All Time" by Metacritic with its' 99 Metascore (*Best Games of All Time*, n.d.). The game was released in 1998, and it was revolutionary for its time. Miyamoto improved the 3D camera movement system that was used in *Super Mario 64* in *Ocarina of Time*. Also, the game introduced target-lock system which is still used in modern games. "This game has both a more complicated plot and more sophisticated gameplay mechanisms, such as Z-targeting, which introduces context-sensitive actions in combat" (deWinter, 2015, p. 142). With the introduction of Z-Targeting, in other words target-lock system, players could concentrate on a single monster in combat which facilitates effective battle maneuver execution and navigation in 3D space. The following *Zelda* games follow a similar path and improve greatly. *The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild (2017)* won multiple Best Game Awards from multiple organizations thanks to its innovation in both design and gameplay mechanics.

In the light of all this, Shigeru Miyamoto should be considered as an auteur in video game industry. He fits the features of the Auteur Theory. His creative vision and control on his games, simplicity yet complex and unique gameplay philosophy like *Super Mario Bros.*, themes that he explored in his games which emphasize on discovery and adventure, colorful, playful and vivid visual aesthetics and, of course, revolutionary innovations on gameplay. "Analyzing Mario games, at least in the perspective of gender roles, but also as reflections of Miyamoto's personality can reveal Miyamoto's author status, his signature design and narrative choices. Video game auteurs should be taken into consideration not because of their reputation, but because of their choices and solutions in game design" (Demirbaş, 2022, p. 57). Therefore, Miyamoto is not only a game changer for the video game industry but also an artist who has the key elements of an auteur.

3.4.4.2. Cinematic experience in video games: Hideo Kojima

Hideo Kojima was born in August 24, 1963, in Setagaya, Tokyo. He greatly influenced by Japan's vibrant pop culture in his childhood. This type of exposure to pop culture made it possible for Kojima to develop long and successful storytelling. As it is stated in the book *Metal Gear Solid: Hideo Kojima's Magnum Opus*, Kojima described a near-death experience in which he had to hung from a bridge in order to evade approaching train, which probably had a lasting effect on him. Kojima's love for telling intricate stories was first discovered via writing. By the time he was a teenager, he was writing long stories and sending them to magazines. However, they were constantly rejected because of their length. Kojima's passion

for movies also greatly influenced his artistic vision. He tried to shoot short films with his friends by using an 8mm camera, which is also another aspect of his interest in visual art and storytelling. He eventually went to college to get a degree in economics, but he still wanted to work in writing and film industry. Kojima's uniqueness was noticeable around his colleagues, particularly after he incorporated a short narrative into his thesis which did not impress his professors (Brusseaux et al., 2017). Kojima's passion on storytelling and visuals shifted towards video games since he can mix both of his passions to express himself as an artist via video games. Therefore, he joined Konami which was one of the biggest companies of the industry in those times. In Konami, Kojima developed his great works starting with *Metal Gear* series which would become his magnum opus. Thanks to *Metal Gear* series, Kojima left his mark to the gaming industry indefinitely.

The series is about special forces operatives whose mission is to find a superweapon, which is called Metal Gear, with the ability to launch nuclear weapons around the world. Players usually control two different characters throughout the series who are called Solid Snake and Big Boss. If remakes, ports or remastered versions of the series are not counted, there are total of seventeen *Metal Gear* games at present. Five of these games are for handheld consoles like PSP, one is for mobile devices while eleven of them are main games which are related to each other in terms of lore, characters and stories. Besides the story structure of the series, there are several different factors that can make *Metal Gear* series one of the milestones of video game history especially after *Metal Gear Solid (1998)* with the transition to 3D.

Metal Gear series is the game that refined and defined the stealth games. In other words, even though there had been stealth games before *Metal Gear* such as *Manbiki Shounen (Shoplifting Boy)* released for Commodore in 1979, *Metal Gear* series defined how a stealth game should be with its innovative gameplay as well as the quality of enemy artificial intelligence throughout the games. "Guards have tiny vision cones, shown on the 'Soliton' radar, and patrol fixed routes in predictable ways. There are a few great touches such as how they hear steps in water and can see footprints in snow - though both techniques are infrequently used. The rudimentary AI is also disguised by great additions like radio chatter, bespoke animations for going to the bathroom and so on. When they spot Snake an alert is triggered where all guards home in on Snake like typical shooter baddies and can kill him quickly, though once you're out of sight their attention soon slips, giving the inevitable panics an exciting cat-and-mouse feel" (Stanton, 2015). Even today, there are few games that can match *Metal Gear*'s artificial intelligence design. Besides, the camera angle designs

are also crucial for *Metal Gear* series. For the case of *Metal Gear Solid (1998)*, there are different camera angles in the game. When the game starts players experience and FPS (First Person) view. Then, the game switches to fixed camera angle with different positions such as top-down or side-on. In that way, players are able to experience the 3D world of the game better. "The top-down camera angle that Metal Gear Solid favours is above Snake's shoulders and slightly angled - but the genius is that it switches both dynamically and to fixed positions. When Snake is moving through an area certain locations will trigger a change to a new fixed camera angle, which can be anything from side-on and distant to up-close and claustrophobic" (Stanton, 2015). Thanks to switching camera angles, players are able to come up with different and creative ways for approaching the target in levels.

Besides the technological and in-game design innovations, the series is also crucial for Kojima's style as an auteur. "What makes Kojima such a recognizable auteur in the medium is the consistency of his games' mechanics and themes. It's difficult to play through a Kojima made video game and not be able to recognize its creator, they are just that different from the rest of the industry. From his overarching themes of war and its horrors, to his personal brand of humor slapped on to break the tension, to the unforgiving mechanics a player must master to progress, every Metal Gear game has the director/writer's fingerprints all over it" (Patalita, 2018, p. 80). Throughout the series, there are great amount of cutscenes. Players watch these long cutscenes between the levels and what set *Metal Gear* apart from other games in terms of cutscenes is *Metal Gear*'s cutscenes are literally like movies. In other words, the quality of these scenes is quite high since they have deep dialogues, characters that feel like they're alive instead of modelled digital bodies, different camera angles, mise-en-scéne, and deep storytelling. In that way, players can experience quite a different gameplay experience by playing game while watching a movie. In 2015, *Metal Gear Solid V: The Phantom Pain* released, and it became the last main game of the series. After its' release and the problems throughout the development period of the game between Kojima and Konami, Hideo Kojima left Konami and established his own video game studio called Kojima Productions. After that, he started to work on his first game as sole director and producer.

Death Stranding is a 2019 action video game, and it is the first game of Hideo Kojima after splitting from Konami in 2015. The game is set in an alternative dystopian United States which follows a horrifying event causing evil creatures roaming the Earth and the character that players control is a courier whose name is Sam Porter Bridges, whom is played by Norman Reedus, is tasked with delivering packages to isolated places around the world while

doing his job he also has to reconnect the places through a wireless communication network (Kojima, 2019). The game received positive reviews with 82 critic reviews on Metacritic thanks to its visuals, story, soundtrack, actings and gameplay functions. Besides Norman Reedus, there are also another popular actors and actresses took part in the game such as Mads Mikkelsen, Léa Seydoux, Margaret Qualley, Troy Baker and Guillermo del Toro (Kojima, 2019).

Another important feature that needs to be mentioned about *Death Stranding* is multiplayer functionality of the game. Even though it is a single-player game, players can communicate and help each other throughout the game via different ways. For example, there are lots of rough and steep paths throughout the game that players have to create their own routes with equipment that they have on them. However, when a player uses a ladder or rope to climb, they can leave their ladder or rope for helping another player to use or players can leave different signs to remind or alert other players about their ways. These features received positive feedback from the players and *Death Stranding* won several awards including Best Game Direction on The Game Awards 2019.

In the light of all of these, Hideo Kojima should be considered as an auteur. Even the documentary about himself which is called *Hideo Kojima: Connecting Worlds (2023)* mentions Kojima as the first auteur of the video game industry (Milner, 2023). His artistic vision, design choices, innovations and passion on making games makes Kojima a unique name for the industry. "In the end, the only term that could suit it is the name of its creator: Hideo Kojima. Although the titles that make up the entire series have been developed by a team, its progenitor's aura is so inextricably linked to his work that the game cannot be appreciated without studying the man behind it" (Brusseaux et al., 2017). From the storytelling to the gameplay, Kojima's designs and products stand out as unique and he, of course, has been inspiring many names in the industry.

3.4.4.3. Indirect storytelling and unique experiences: Hidetaka Miyazaki

Hidetaka Miyazaki who was born on November 17, 1974, is a Japanese video game director working with one of the biggest names in the industry, *FromSoftware*. Miyazaki received widespread recognition for creating difficult and visually unique action role-playing games (RPGs). However, Miyazaki's contribution to the industry is more than developing critically acclaimed games, his games accepted as a new genre, which is called "Souls-like" in gaming and these games have been inspiring many developers both big and

small companies throughout years. “Most film authors are creators of new genres. The game author like New Wave auteurs can create, use and break genre codes. New techniques, innovations or critical ideas are components of the engine of genre creation. In this respect the search for different forms by the game auteur becomes important” (Demirbaş, 2022, p. 51). According to Demirbaş’ statement, Hidetaka Miyazaki should also be considered as an auteur in the modern video game industry thanks to his contributions to the industry and creating a brand-new genre. Starting from taking over a failing project called *Demon’s* Souls from *FromSoftware* to *Elden Ring (2022)*, Miyazaki continues to improve his contributed genre to the industry. Players who play “Souls-like” games are motivated to learn from their mistakes and play the game more attentively by its rewarding and difficult structure. Additionally, both the storytelling and design choices of Miyazaki make him an auteur since he offers a unique experience to the players through his artistic vision. In that regard, it is important to analyze his games in order to understand Miyazaki’s works as an art.

Dark Souls is a dark fantasy action role-playing game series. The first installment of the series, *Dark Souls*, was released in 2011 and it had two sequels which were released in 2014 and 2016. The series got worldwide attention thanks to its high difficulty. The series is basically about a player’s chosen character’s journey to the dangerous lands while fighting against dragons, knights, demons and other grotesque supernatural creatures. The narrative of the series has accretion, loss and recovery of souls as themes around it. In other words, these features of the narrative can be interpreted as fighting with demons within oneself since players have to decide whether reignite the flame or allow the flame to fade at the end of each game. Therefore, it can be stated that players have to decide whether they defeat their inner demons or not throughout the journey.

However, these are all interpretations because Miyazaki’s storytelling in his games is quite different than ordinary storytelling of the games. There are no cutscenes where different characters talk with each other for a time or videos that tell the story of the game. Instead, players must wander around the world and engage with NPCs (non-Player Characters) to understand the story piece by piece. Eventually, players put the pieces together like a puzzle to finish the story. In that way, the story can be interpreted differently from player to player since the stories include lots of symbolism. This choice of Miyazaki paved the way to one of the biggest online communities in the world. Players engage with each other to understand and tell them what they find throughout their gameplays to improve other’s experiences. “Inspired by the Western fantasy fiction he enjoyed growing up, Miyazaki's Souls games offer a uniquely Eastern perspective on the conventions of the genre.

He drew inspiration from the Fighting Fantasy series, a collection of choose-your-own-adventure stories, many of which were written by Eidos president Ian Livingstone. He has cited his lack of English command while reading these books as an inspiration for the storytelling in the Souls series, which forces the player to use their imagination to fill in the blanks in a similar manner" (Hosie, 2013). Thanks to this method, players have a different level of engagement not only with the game but also with each other since the worlds of Miyazaki's games are punishing and players have to watch out their every step carefully.

Elden Ring is the latest video game Miyazaki. The game was released in 2022, and it is also a "Souls-like" action role-playing game. The game won multiple rewards including 2022 Best Game Award, Best RPG, Best Art Direction and Best Game Direction. However, *Elden Ring* is quite different from Miyazaki's previous games. "This is where the parallel with modernist literature does prove illuminating, because DS games immerse players in worlds that are at least as hard to decipher as the combat is hard to master. The same can be said about FromSoftware's latest offering, Elden Ring (2022), which reimagines DS on a larger canvas, affording a far more open experience than previous DS titles. The three DS games and ER refuse to hold the player's hand; instead, they craft a world that, while brimming with myth and history, appears remarkably reluctant to share its stories or introduce its systems" (Caracciolo, 2024). Miyazaki raised the bar higher with *Elden Ring* after the *Dark Souls* trilogy. *Elden Ring* can be seen as improved and polished version of *Dark Souls* even though both titles have differences such as open-world design, character customization and narrative.

Despite the differences, *Elden Ring* still includes the themes that Miyazaki uses in his games such as existential decay. Also, the designs of the game are similar to *Dark Souls*. Open-world, architecture, dungeons and boss designs are gothic and grotesque like in Miyazaki's previous games but in greater and bigger scale. He also mentions *Elden Ring* as his "closest ideal fantasy RPG game" (Fenlon, 2024). In that regard, Miyazaki should be considered as an auteur video game director who improves himself in his every new game. Besides *Dark Souls* and *Elden Ring*, there is also another video game of Miyazaki that is worth of mentioning with its different approach to the "Souls-like" genre.

Sekiro: Shadows Die Twice is an action-adventure game that was released in 2019. The atmosphere, design, narrative and gameplay mechanics are quite different than usual "Souls-like" games of Miyazaki. The game takes place in fictionalized late Sengoku period of Japan, and the main character is a shinobi, in other words ninja, whose name is Wolf. The main plot of the game is Wolf's quest to rescue his lord. Even though *Sekiro* is a "Souls-like" game,

Miyazaki did something different than his previous games as gameplay mechanics. *Sekiro* focuses on stealth and combat. However, combat is not based on dodging and looking for an opening. Instead, players have to move parry the attacks of the enemies to break their guards and counterattack leading to single blow. In that way, Miyazaki managed to adapt the samurai's sword fights into the game. Additionally, the character progression and weapon options are quite different than previous games of Miyazaki. In the game, there is no character creation and the leveling up is limited to few stats. Even though the game is quite different than previous Miyazaki games, *Sekiro: Shadows Die Twice* received great reviews, and it was critically acclaimed. The game also won Game of the Year and Best Action/Adventure Game Award in The Game Awards 2019.

In the light of all of these, Hidetaka Miyazaki should be considered as an auteur video game director in modern age of video game industry since all of the games that he directed have artistic vision, common themes and creativity. Additionally, Miyazaki is also a pioneer in the industry thanks to his new genre contribution called "Souls-like". His imagination, past experiences and artistic vision allow him to create works of art. Miyazaki also uses unique way of storytelling by using indirect storytelling using NPCs around the worlds that he created. In that regard, Hidetaka Miyazaki can also be given as an example of video game auteurs in the industry.

3.5. The Limits of the Auteur Theory in Modern Video Game Industry

As it was mentioned before, classical *Auteur Theory* is based on the assumption that the director is at the center of the creative process in cinema and structures of a film like aesthetic, narrative or themes reflect the director's vision. The same situation is also available for video game industry. Game directors or developers can also be considered as Auteur's. Individuals like *Shigeru Miyamoto, Hideo Kojima* or *Hidetaka Miyazaki* are all have personal creative visions that reflect on their games. However, this approach falls short when directly applied to the contemporary video game industry because of the structural and productional differences of the industry. Video games are multidisciplinary and interactive media form by nature. Game development requires many areas of expertise to work together like software engineering, visual arts, music, artificial intelligence development and user experience. Thus, identifying the creative process with a single individual is highly problematic for the contemporary industry. Especially for the *AAA* productions, creative

decisions are generally made by central authorities or internal company hierarchies within teams of hundreds of people which make it difficult to pinpoint an individual auteur figure.

On the other hand, while the approach of classic *Auteur Theory* emphasizes the director's control over the script, editing and visual language of a film. However, when it comes to video games, player's actions, decisions and interactions within the gameplay can disrupt of redefine of the narrative. This shows that the narrative of games is constructed not only by the developer but also by the player. In that regard, the classical *Auteur* approach overlooks the interactive nature of games and fails to adequately explain the shared structure of creative control.

Finally, video game production processes in the contemporary global industry are mainly shaped by company policies, investor expectations and market research. Creative vision often has to align with commercial strategies, and this limits the auteur's creative freedom in the company. Most of the prominent figures in the industry like *Hideo Kojima* faced corporate pressures which resulted in the cancellation or censorship of creative projects like *P.T.* For this reason, the classical *Auteur Theory* in the contemporary video game industry whose main focus is on individual creativity, is no longer sufficient to adequately explain industrial structure of the global gaming industry.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1. Purpose and Importance

This study examines the dynamics of creative control between game developers, company executives and designers. By doing this, it questions the direct applicability of Auteur Theory to the video game industry. It aims to analyze how the concept of "auteur" attributed to the director in cinema has changed in the interactive and collective video game world. In this context, a need for a new framework is proposed to discuss how creative control is shaped in big budged and indie games. The thesis aims to investigate whether individual or collective creativity dominates the video game development process by evaluating the artistic authority of game developers in combination with the influence of industrial pressures and institutional structures.

On the other hand, video game industry has become one of the biggest sectors in the entertainment industry. "Gaming is no longer purely entertainment, it has become a large social and cultural fabric of society, impacting relationships, culture, fashion, and how we spend our time" (Hussain, 2025) For this reason, both the video game industry in terms of development and companies and video games themselves can be studied. There are, of course, studies on video games in academia but most of the academic works on video games are generally on their impact and dangers. However, video game industry should also be studied more in different aspects like as an artwork and industry. In that regard, this thesis is one of the few studies that have been conducted on the creativity part of the video game industry. In other words, the number of academic studies on video game development in terms of creativity is insufficient. By doing so, the study also emphasizes the importance of video games as an artwork since theory adapts a film theory which is based on creativity. However, there is a catch. Especially after the expanding of the video game industry, video game development period, which was once based on creativity heavily, has turned into products pursuing economic gain because of the big corporations. For this reason, this thesis not only gives importance on the creative aspects of video game development but also the transformation of the industry into project production centers lacking creativity.

4.2. Problem

The main problem of the study is questioning the viability of the traditional Auteur Theory to video games by examining how creative control is shaped in the modern

industrialized video game sector, which is one of the biggest stakeholders in today's entertainment and media space. The thesis aims to reveal the dynamics of creative authority between game developers, designers and corporate executives. It also aims to offer a new theoretical perspective to the game industry by analyzing the creative differences between Indie and AAA games, and whether an individual or a collective artistic process is dominant. In this context, the thesis aims to contribute to both academic research and both game design and development processes.

4.3. Research Method and Sample

This research utilized a qualitative research design based on the interpretivist paradigm, which aims to understand the individual's experiences in video game industry. Given the subjective and multifaceted nature of creativity, authorship and power dynamics in the video game industry, qualitative methods are well suited to uncover the nuanced perspectives of industry professionals. "Qualitative research is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. The process of research involves emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participant's setting, data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes, and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data. The final written report has a flexible structure. Those who engage in this form of inquiry support a way of looking at research that honors an inductive style, a focus on individual meaning, and the importance of rendering the complexity of a situation" (Creswell, 2009). Thanks to the qualitative research method, the paper aims to introduce and evaluate a new theoretical framework for the traditional Auteur Theory which advances the traditional theory by adapting it to a collaborative and generally corporatized nature of video game development.

In contrast to classical auteur theory, which emphasizes that the creative force generally comes from the director of the film, the study tries to question how creative authority emerges in video game development. In that way, the theory aims to reveal whether developers have authoritarian control on their creative and artistic decisions. While revealing this question, factors like organizational structures, financial motivations as well as managerial hierarchies which might intersect with creative authorship are also taking into consideration. To investigate these themes in the video game industry, the research aims to focus on the career experiences of sector professionals whom are currently working in the Turkish video game industry.

The universe of this study consists of professionals from the video game industry of Turkey. The sample consists of 15 participants from different departments in the companies. The departments of the participants are game design, art, technical art (game engine), sound design, narrative design, community management, marketing, human resources, production and management.

Participants were identified through the researcher's personal contacts and professional networks (LinkedIn). Each of the 15 participants included in the study is actively working in game studios in Turkey. The participants included professionals working in the same company as well as professionals working in different cities, countries and in different types of organizations. This diversity allows for a framework which underpins the research, to comparatively examine the authority structures, creativity and decision-making processes. By doing so, the study examines how these factors are experienced in different scaled companies in a country where the video game industry is rapidly growing.

The interviews covered demographic information, understanding of creativity, and experiences in the corporate structure as it was mentioned previously. Both the company names and participants' identity information were kept confidential in accordance with their wishes. For this reason, the companies were named with their scales which are the large, the medium and the small. Also, the participants' names are anonymized by numbering them from P1 to P15 in the analysis. The sample group not only reflets the individual perspectives of people working in video game development but also aims to provide a comprehensive view of the creative production structure of the video game industry in Turkey.

The general profile of the 15 participants of the study shows a well-educated people who are in their mid-careers from different departments in the Turkish video game industry. The ages of most of the participants are between late twenties and late thirties. Also, all of them graduated from university and had bachelor's degree while a few had master's degrees. Most of the participants are from Art Department with different professions like 3D Artist, Concept Artist and Graphic Designer from junior level to senior level. People from other departments are also experienced in their fields thanks to their years spent on their professions. The table also shows the interdisciplinary nature of the industry. While some participants directly entered the industry without any other prior experience or department, others entered the industry after fields such as advertising which suggest that people can access the video game industry through multiple creative and technical ways.

The participants' work conditions are also varied. Most of them reporting fixed weekly schedules around 40-45 hours even though these numbers can be varied depending on the

"crunch" period of the companies which refers the time period when a game is close to publishing and every department have to work more to release the game as smooth and finished as possible without any problems. Other participants noted flexible working hours. However, people with flexible working hours are founders, managers and directors of the companies. In that regard, they have to focus on multiple departments and work in the companies. For this reason, it is inevitable to make a fixed working schedule for them. Also, most of the participants were hesitant to disclose salary information because of company policies. Finally, even though only two of the participants are female, the study does not consider gender as a determining factor in the analysis. The focus of the study remains on professional experience, creativity and corporate dynamics with the aim of offering a comprehensive view of current practices and structures in the video game development ecosystem by giving examples from three different companies from Turkey.

4.1. Table Interview Participants

	Age	Gender	Education	Department	Previous Experience	Working Hours	Income
P1	32	Male	Bachelor's Degree (4 years)	Game Design / Producer / Management	Other Game Companies	Flexible	Not Specified
P2	24	Male	Bachelor's Degree (4 years)	Game Design / Sound	Other Game Companies	Fixed (Approx. 40h)	50,000 TL
P3	40	Male	Bachelor's Degree (4 years)	3D Artist	No Previous Dept	Fixed (Approx. 45h)	Not Specified
P4	38	Male	Bachelor's Degree (4 years)	Art	Advertising/Creative Agency	Fixed (Approx. 45h)	Not Specified
P5	41	Male	Bachelor's Degree (4 years)	Art	Advertising/Creative Agency	Fixed (Approx. 45h)	Not Specified
P6	31	Female	Bachelor's Degree (4 years)	Art	No Previous Dept	Fixed (Approx. 45h)	Not Specified
P7	37	Female	Bachelor's Degree (4 years)	Art	No Previous Dept	Fixed (Approx. 45h)	Not Specified
P8	29	Male	Bachelor's Degree (4 years)	Community	No Previous Dept	Fixed (Approx. 45h)	Not Specified
P9	23	Male	Bachelor's Degree (4 years)	Art	No Previous Dept	Fixed (Approx. 45h)	Not Specified
P10	36	Male	Bachelor's Degree (4 years)	Audio	No Previous Dept	Fixed (Approx. 45h)	Not Specified
P11	37	Male	Bachelor's Degree (4 years)	Art	No Previous Dept	Fixed (Approx. 45h)	Not Specified
P12	39	Male	Bachelor's Degree (4 years)	Technical Artist	Animation / VFX / Rigging	Fixed (Approx. 45h)	Not Specified
P13	26	Male	Master's Degree	HR / Finance	No Previous Dept	Flexible	Not Specified
P14	29	Female	Master's Degree	Marketing / Narrative	HR / Management	Fixed (10:00 - 19:00)	Not Specified
P15	34	Male	Master's Degree	Game Director	Other Game Companies	No Fixed	Not Specified

Total 15

4.4. Data Collection and Analysis

The data collection phase started with the preparation of a question set. After the preparation, the interview phase of the research started. Total number of 15 participants agreed to participate in the study. The participants are from three different video game companies from Turkey. These three companies can be classified as large, medium and small-sized. All three companies are from Turkey. 13 out of 15 participants accepted to conduct the interviews face to face while the other two participants answered the questions via e-mail and online interview. The face-to-face interviews were conducted at companies'

headquarters at times selected in line with the participant's requests. Online interviews are also conducted in time scheduled by the participant. Finally, the interview through e-mail was conducted after the interviewer's sending the questions through e-mail to the participant and the participant responded in a week. All the face-to-face interviews were conducted in Ankara, Turkey. The participant, who requested an online meeting, lives abroad while the participant who accepted participation via e-mail lives in another city in Turkey. Both face-to-face participants and online participants were asked for their permission to record the interviews before starting the interview.

On the other hand, the data which had been obtained through field research were analyzed thematically. After that, the data was coded by dividing them into basic categories and subcategories through ChatGPT. The categorical distinction was made in the context of the theoretical framework on which the thesis is based. Also, the field data and the theory were interpreted in a relational manner in order to understand is the claims of "Auteur-ity Theory" are true. However, the artificial intelligence ChatGPT was only used to coding the obtained information from field research. It was not used to analyze the data collected. While the main categories are demographics, creativity, authority & structure and career satisfaction & aspirations, the sub-categories are background information, work conditions, views on creativity in game production, creativity in their role/department, creative freedom & compatibility, organizational structure (hierarchy vs. flatness), decision-making & feedback dynamics, satisfaction with current rule, future aspirations.

4.5. Research Questions

This thesis revolves around the question of how creative authority is shaped in video game industry. Game production processes are generally shaped by team structures and corporate controls rather than being based on the vision of a single creative figure as in classical Auteur Theory suggested for the cinema. In this respect, the model of individual creativity which is offered by the classical Auteur Theory conflicts with the reality of video game production, and it becomes inadequate. Especially in big budget (AAA) studios, it is seen that creative decisions are generally made not only through individuals but also corporate authorities in line with economic strategies and market expectations.

In that regard, the main concern of the study focuses on the question of whether creative control in video game industry is individual or corporate. It also examines how the classical Auteur Theory works in the context of video games at which points it is limited and

how the experiences of developers contribute to this debate. Ultimately, the thesis aims to provide a unique perspective that considers both individual creative influences and the structure of industrial authority together.

4.6. Methodology and Limitations

This research utilized a qualitative research design based on the interpretivist paradigm, which aims to understand the individual's experiences in video game industry. Given the subjective and multifaceted nature of creativity, authorship and power dynamics in the video game industry, qualitative methods are well suited to uncover the nuanced perspectives of industry professionals. **"**Qualitative research is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. The process of research involves emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participant's setting, data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes, and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data. The final written report has a flexible structure. Those who engage in this form of inquiry support a way of looking at research that honors an inductive style, a focus on individual meaning, and the importance of rendering the complexity of a situation" (Creswell, 2009). Thanks to the qualitative research method, the paper aims to introduce and evaluate a new theoretical framework for the traditional Auteur Theory which advances the traditional theory by adapting it to a collaborative and generally corporatized nature of video game development.

In contrast to classical auteur theory, which emphasizes that the creative force generally comes from the director of the film, the study tries to question how creative authority emerges in video game development. In that way, the theory aims to reveal whether developers have authoritarian control on their creative and artistic decisions. While revealing this question, factors like organizational structures, financial motivations as well as managerial hierarchies which might intersect with creative authorship are also taking into consideration. In order to investigate these themes in the video game industry, the research aims to focus on the career experiences of sector professionals whom are currently working in the Turkish video game industry.

On the other hand, as it was mentioned before, video game industry is one of the biggest industries in the world at the moment. Even in US, 61% of the population plays video games for at least one hour every week ("2024 Essential Facts About the U.S. Video Game Industry," n.d.). If this data is adapted to the rest of the world, a significant number

of people play video games. Video game production is also quite common around the world both as an indie and corporate. In that regard, it is impossible to reach every video game company around the world. On the other hand, this study excludes mobile video game companies of which there are a considerable number around the world. In the case of Turkey, the number of mobile video game companies is more than computer and console-based video game companies excluding indie developers and small businesses which have less than 10 workers. For this reason, the collected data is based on Turkish video game companies, and the findings can be varied for the rest of the world. In other words, the study is limited with the Turkish video game companies.

4.7. Rationale for the Theoretical and Conceptual Background

This thesis draws on classical Auteur Theory not only as a point of departure but also as a toll of concept in order to understand the dynamics of creative authorship in contemporary video game industry. Even though Auteur Theory was originally formulated within the context of cinema, it still provides a framework to discuss how individual vision shapes art works. Nevertheless, as this study claims, the application of Auteur Theory to video games remains problematic due to the multi layered and corporate nature of video game development.

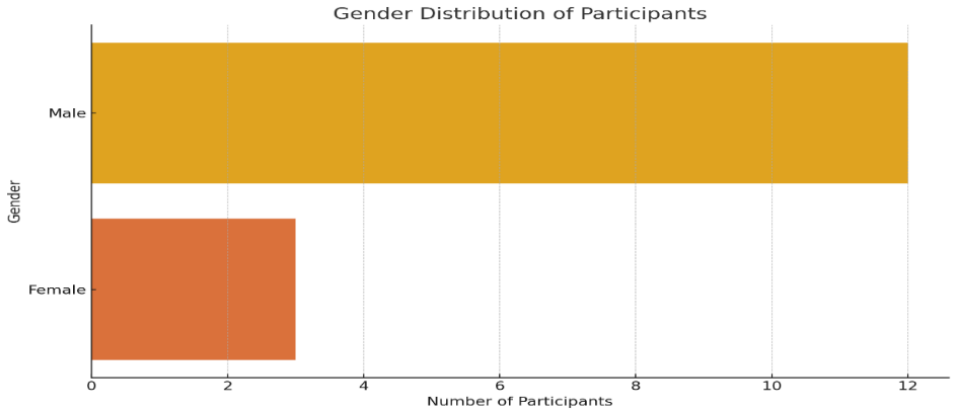
In that regard, the study recognizes the limitations of a pure individualistic framework, and it proposes an alternative approach that combines creative authorship with corporate authority. The rationale behind this lies in the structures of the video game industry. In the industry, the decision-making processes are distributed across departments and generally regulated by hierarchies like classic corporate structures. By critically engaging with and extending the boundaries of traditional Auteur approach, the thesis aims to provide a more accurate and context-sensitive theoretical framework to examine authorship in modern video game industry.

5. QUALITATIVE RESEARCH: INTERVIEWS WITH GAME STUDIOS IN TURKEY

In this part of the study, the data collected from the participants which are the employees from three different scaled video game companies from Turkey. A sample interview consent form can be found in the appendix section of the study. The originals of the interview consent forms are stored in accordance with the Personal Rights Protection Law. In that regard, neither the participant names nor the company names that the participants work for are given in the study. On the other hand, the collected data has not been processed with any data processing program. Instead, the collected data was transcribed, and the data was uploaded to ChatGPT in order to create visual tables. In this study, artificial intelligence was used in accordance with YÖK's (Higher Education Institution) artificial intelligence usage guidelines.

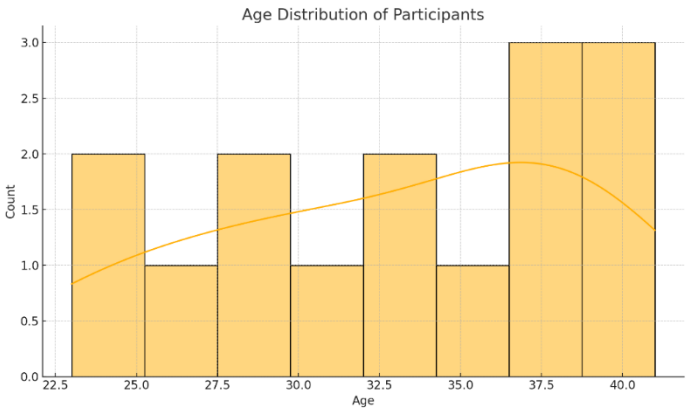
5.1. Demographic Data of Participants

The total number of industry professionals who accepted to participate in the study is 15. While 13 of them are male, 2 of them are female. Nevertheless, the study is not gender-discriminated and it does not treat gender as a determining analytical factor since the aim of the study does not seek a gender related topic. Therefore, the difference between two genders only serves to show the professional landscape that the participants operate in.



Graph 5.1: Gender Distribution of Participants

Unlike gender, age can be an important aspect in study. The age distribution of the participants ranges from 23 to 41. Most of them are in their late twenties and early thirties.

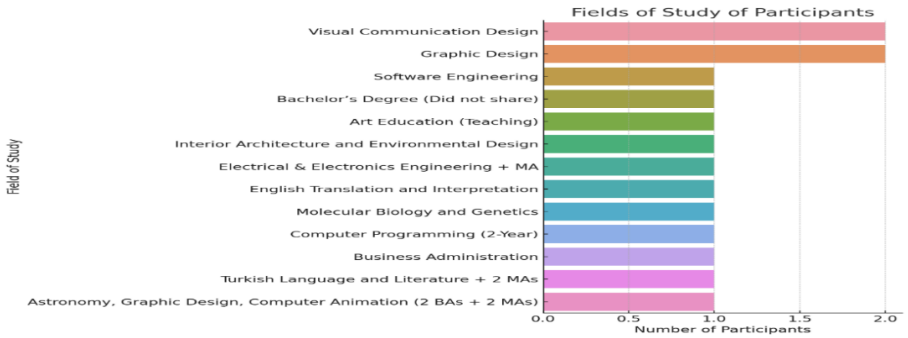


Graph 5.2: Age Distribution of Participants

This spread of ages shows that professionals of Turkish video game industry are in their early to middle stages of their careers. On the other hand, the participants who are in their early to mid-twenties also show that the industry can be accessible at a relatively young age.

The chart allows the study to analyze deeply how dynamics such as creativity, authorities and hierarchies are perceived among different age groups in Turkish video game industry. In other words, the diversity in age groups (23-41) can show the different perspectives of people on organizations and practices in companies from different generational viewpoints without considering demographic differences such as gender.

Besides the age and gender, participants were asked about their educational backgrounds. According to their answers, the profile of the participants shows a diverse academic background from different educational backgrounds which are both related with video game development and not related with.



Graph 5.3: Fields of Study of Participants

The most common fields of the participants are “Graphic Design” and “Visual Communication Design”. Participants who have art-related educational background generally work in the Art Departments or art-related departments. These art-related disciplines suit some skills which are required for artwork of the video game developments such as character and environment design, modelling, UI (User interface) design and UX (User experience) design. Also, participants who have bachelor’s degree in “Art Education (Teaching)” and “Interior Architecture and Environmental Design” also works in Art Department which suits with their educational backgrounds.

On the other hand, computer related Bachelor’s Degrees like “Software Engineering”, “Computer Programming” and “Computer Animation” are also related fields with video game development. In that regard, participants with computer-related educational backgrounds are also crucial thanks to their technical foundations. They work in game design, technical art or programming departments. In addition to computer related programs, a few participants have bachelor’s degrees in social sciences and humanities which are “Turkish Language and Literature”, “English Translation and Interpretation” and “Business Administration”. These people work in different departments and positions in companies ranging from founders to community support. In that regard, it can be said that video game industry is not one of the first profession options for people with same or similar educational backgrounds with social science-based programs. However, video game industry also needs professionals from these backgrounds with possible contributions in narrative, localization, communication and management.

To put it all in a nutshell, participants of the study come from different educational backgrounds. However, all of them have at least one type of university degree ranging from associate degree to master’s which shows that Turkish video game industry professionals have high educational backgrounds with possible interdisciplinary paths since seven of the participants have unrelated educational backgrounds with video game development. For this reason, it can be interpreted that interdisciplinary paths are popular among Turkish video game professionals. These various academic profiles of the participants suit with the multidisciplinary structure of video game development. Additionally, different professions can, of course, contribute greatly with different perspectives and skills in all of the development stages of a video game.

For the final finding of demographic data of the participants, they were asked about their monthly incomes. The participants work in different positions ranging from junior artist to founder. However, 13 out of 15 participants did not want to share their monthly income

because of both company policies and not wanting to share. Participants who share their monthly incomes are working in the same company. One of them is the founder of the company while the other is game designer in the company who works remotely. Participant number two (P2), who is the game designer, shared his average monthly income as "50.000 Turkish Liras". However, the founder of the company, participant number one (P1), states "There is no specific number, it depends entirely on the number of monthly sales. Since it is a new company (less than 1 year), there is no data to make an average number. One game can sell 100.000$ while another game can sell 10.000$". Even though the answers are not enough to build data in terms of monthly income. Nevertheless, both P1 and P2 are from "the small" company. For this reason, participants from the other two companies might earn even more because of the scales of the projects that they work in and the investments that the other two companies received.

5.2. Possible Motives Behind Working in Video Game Industry

As it was mentioned before, game and gaming are one of the earliest human activities and it has always been a fundamental cultural activity. As Huizinga states "Thus defined, the concept seemed capable of embracing everything we call 'play' in animals, children and grown-ups: games of strength and skill, inventing games, guessing games, games of chance, exhibitions and performances of all kinds. We ventured to call the category 'play' one of the most fundamental in life" (Huizinga, 1949). In that regard, the participants were asked why they are working in video game industry. Their answers are various. The most common answer to this question is about their gamer backgrounds. In other words, most of the participants stated that they have been playing video games since their childhood.

> *I've been playing games since I was a child, and it's fun to create something for something I love. (P4)*
> *I have been a gamer for as long as I can remember. While I was in college, I realized that I could work in the gaming industry, and I developed myself to reach this point. (P11)*
> *I have been a gamer since I was a child. At some point, I became interested in the production of games, which led me to want to enter the industry. (P13)*
> *I have loved playing games since I was a child, and it was my childhood dream to work in this industry. (P7)*

A significant number of participants stated that they have been playing games since childhood. This indicates that the majority of the industry is familiar with the gaming world and understand its' dynamics, even if they are only at a gaming level. In this case, it can be

interpreted that playing games from early ages has been influential in evaluating the video game industry as a career and job opportunity later on.

However, no participant did not state the same. In other words, it is possible to say that this situation is not always the case.

> *I'm not someone who plays a lot of games, but I had a friend who studied Fine Arts in Istanbul and worked in the gaming industry, and I entered this industry at his recommendation. Even if I don't play games, I like the idea of creating something for games. (P6)*
> *Conditions brought me here. While I was in college, I thought I would become an illustrator. After learning 3D modeling, I realized that there was a shortage of craftsmen in Turkish video game industry. That's why I turned to this sector. (P3)*

Although P6 has very little experience in gaming, its network has enabled it to enter this field. P3, on the other hand, has transitioned into game design with its expertise in 3D modeling. Therefore, it can be said that while gaming is a very strong starting point for entering the industry, there are also those who take different approaches.

Also, two of the participants stated totally differently than these two groups. They believe that video game industry has great job opportunities and entrepreneurship potential.

> *Generally speaking, it's more open-ended, that's why. (P9)*
> *We started out as entrepreneurs because we wanted to develop our own game, and then we got funding and got to where we are now. (P14)*

It is possible to say that video game industry's constantly renewing new dynamics have created this situation. In other words, as job categories diversify, opportunities also diversify. At the current state of video game industry, it is far more different and bigger than before. Companies have grown and the development budgets get bigger each year. Also, the indie side has grown considerably. In that regard, as discussed in Chapter 2 (see p. 44), it can be stated that people might choose video game industry since its' current state which can offer many opportunities.

Finally, the other two participants stated totally differently than other participants. They reported that, in light of the reasons discussed previously, more individual preferences are effective in taking steps in the video game industry.

> *Because there is interaction. I decided to work in the video game industry since I think it is the best way to interactively convey the ideas in your mind to people. (P12)*
> *There are several reasons for this. First, it was something I wanted to do. I had the opportunity to work in space science, albeit to a limited extent, but it was a very slow field,*

so I wanted to move to another sector. The gaming sector was more satisfying professionally. The gaming sector is a great medium for expressing your ideas. (P15)

According to their answers, individual dimensions such as interaction, creativity, and professional satisfaction are decisive elements for working in this field. It's important to note that *P12* is the leader of game engine department and *P15* is both the founder of the company and the game director. In that regard, it can be interpreted that people who decide to enter the industry with individual preferences have more chances to become an auteur of the industry since they give more importance to personal satisfaction than earning money, opportunities or interest in gaming.

To put it all in a nutshell, participant answers are varied for this question and they provide quite valuable insights for the current state of the industry with employees who have different kind of motives in working in video game industry especially in a country where the industry is developing instead of currently large and well-established industry like American or Japanese video game industries. "Simply put, precarity is productive of subjectivities especially because it is entrenched in love. It doesn't exist just because there are fewer jobs. On the contrary, precarity is strong especially due to the game developers' ideological tendency toward abstract promises of play and the materiality of glamorous employment" (Bulut, 2020). In accordance with this, employees of video game industry are generally driven by emotional motives like love for games and creative fulfillment, especially in a rapidly growing industry like Turkish video game industry.

5.3. The Harmony Between Expertise and Desired Position

In this part of the interview, the participants were asked about their departments. The first question is your position compatible with your area of expertise. Their answers are varied for this question. Although they did not provide much detail, they provide valuable insight. Six people work in departments that they feel are not in line with their area of expertise.

Both yes and no, because I learned 3D modeling outside of school, on my own. (P5)
They are not unrelated, but they are not closely related either. (P6)
It's not very compatible, actually, but I'm trying to focus on narrative design. (P14)
No. I got to this point not because of what I learned in college, but because of how I developed myself. (P4)
It's not really compatible with the field I studied. (P12)
No. (P7)

It can be interpreted that these are people who have not yet proven themselves or who, like P5, are already trying to do something on their own. P14, on the other hand, is trying to open up space for himself. In this sense, the industry is fragmented, contrary to what general thought is. Specialization does not seem to mean much in video game industry. One of the possible answers for this issue is that there are still a limited number of video game design programs, especially in Turkey. Also, people who want to work in this industry generally develop themselves in terms of which area of expertise they want to focus.

On the contrary, some participants stated that their area of expertise and current departments are compatible. These individuals can be considered a fortunate minority. However, it is important to consider that participants who answered positively for this question have generally been working for more years in the industry than others. In that regard, it can be inferred that those who have been in the industry for a longer period are more likely to work in their areas of expertise since they become expertise in their areas.

On the other hand, participants who are managers or founders of the companies should be evaluated separately. P1, P13 and P15 are either managers or founders of their companies. For this reason, their answers are varied for this question since they stated that they must deal with many things including work that they do not want or have zero experience as a part of management.

> *Not really, but I can say yes to some extent. (P1)*
> *I would say partially compatible, partially not. Because I work in multiple departments. (P13)*
> *Yes. (P15)*

Since both P1 and P13 work in multiple departments, they can work in their own areas of expertise, but they also take on tasks in areas they are unfamiliar with. However, P15 stated that his expertise is compatible with his position despite not having any experience in the gaming industry previously or his education. This means that he self-developed himself and became an expert for his position.

For the second question for this part of the interview, the participants were asked whether they worked in their desired departments or not**.** There is a contradiction in this section. Although six participants stated that they worked outside their area of expertise in the previous question, they indicated that they worked in their desired department in this question. This situation can be interpreted as them enjoying their department because they are working in a position that they can do, even if they do not have expertise in it. In other

words, this can be interpreted as the video game industry's ability to utilize its workforce in different locations and fields.

On the other hand, three participants, for the first question, who said they worked outside their area of expertise and, accordingly, did not say "no" directly, but indicated that they were partially satisfied with the department they worked in and were more consistent.

> *To a large extent, yes. There are jobs I don't want to do, yes. (P1)*
> *To be honest, I wasn't thinking about working in the art department, but I decided to continue because I liked the company. (P9)*
> *More or less, yes. I am interested in departments where I can both utilize my own expertise and contribute to the company in areas outside my own expertise. (P13)*

These individuals have good relationships with their companies, and therefore it can be inferred that they are able to suppress their reluctance. However, two of these three individuals are company founders. For this reason, they are forced to work in areas that they do not want to work in or where their expertise is limited. It is important to note that their answers are therefore close to negative.

In that regard, most of the participants work in positions that do not match their expertise. "Because of this complexity the industry demands a variety of skills, ranging from technically oriented computer programming, to scenario writing, and graphic artistry" (Izushi & Aoyama, 2006). However, it can be interpreted that people have tendency to feel more expert for their positions after years. In other words, the more time they spend, the more experience they get. On the other hand, due to the limited number of game design programs in collage, especially in Turkey, people are obliged to develop themselves in order to get in the industry. Besides their expertise, people generally work in their desired departments or positions. Except some managers or founders since they have to deal with multiple departments which they have limited or zero experience in.

5.4. Participants' Relationships with The Game World as Players

As most of the participants stated that they have a long history with video games, it was important to ask the participants about their relationship with the game world. In other words, participants were asked about their inspiring games, inspiring game directors and which games they are currently playing recently. In that regard, their responses can offer valuable insight into how they got influenced by other figures in the industry. In other words, which names and video games shape their understanding of video game development.

For the first question, participants were asked about whether there is a game developer who inspires them or not. Even though some participants reported same individuals, the answers are varied.

	Are there any game developers who inspire you?
P2	Valve, Westwood Studios, Edmund Mcmillen, Sean Murray, Maeda Jun, Concerned Ape, Will Wright, Jim Vessella, Knuckle Cracker
P3	Cory Barlog, Hideo Kojima, Hidetaka Miyazaki
P4	Alex Alvarez, Lucas Arts
P8	From the perspective of my profession and department, Blizzard's community management and communication are exemplary. The same can be said for Valve.
P10	Stefan Strandberg (Battlefield 3 Audio Director)
P11	Hidetaka Miyazaki, Dan Hauser, Rockstar, CD Projekt RED
P12	Rockstar, Valve
P13	Rather than naming specific names, the platform and genre of the game we want to make, as well as the users we want to reach, vary. For example, if you want to make a souls-like game, the person you should look to for inspiration is Hidetaka Miyazaki.
P14	David Cage
P1	There are no specific names, but there are games.
P5	None right now.

Table 5.1: Inspiring Video Game Developers

The individual names that they named are generally considered as auteurs of the industry like *Hideo Kojima, Hidetaka Miyazaki, Cory Barlog* and *David Cage*. These names are known for their personal styles and creative control over the projects. As discussed in Chapter 3, names like *Kojima* and *Miyazaki* have unique author qualities within the industry. For this reason, these names should be considered as expected responses. Some participants also named lesser-known developers like Edmund Mcmillen, Sean Murray, Will Wright and Stefan Strandberg. These names suggest that creative developers can influence individuals even if their games are global hit or their names are globally known. These responses clearly indicate that classic Auteur Theory can be applied on video games since these names, as they were mentioned previously in the study, have common features with auteur film directors. However, a considerable number of participants named developer companies instead of individual names. They named companies like *Valve, Blizzard, Rockstar Games* and *CD Projekt RED*. These responses also prove that developer studios are generally known more than individual names, which underlines one of the key points of the study.

For the second question, participants were asked about video games that inspired them. 14 out of 15 participants reported multiple games both old and recent. Most of the responded games are story-rich, atmospheric and critically acclaimed games like *Half-Life Series*, *Dark Souls Series, Silent Hill, Death Stranding, Bloodborne, Disco Elysium, Journey, Minecraft,*

The Elder Scrolls Series, Baldur's Gate II, The Witcher III: Wild Hunt and *Red Dead Redemption 2.* All these titles are not only critically acclaimed but also leading the industry.

Are there any video games that inspire you?	
P1	There's no end to it, I can name 100 games. I'm influenced by everything I see. That's what art is all about. If I had to give a general answer, it would be Warcraft 3, Age of Empires 1 (Rome Expansion Pack, Age of Mythology, Age of 3), Yu-Gi-Oh!
P2	C&C: Renegade, The Binding of Isaac, Half – Life 2, Portal, Creeper World
P3	Dark Souls 1, Hollow Knight, Street Fighter, Death Stranding, Silent Hill.
P4	All of the games on PC Gamer's Top 100 Games list are games that have inspired our generation.
P7	Bloodbourne, Elden Ring, Disco Elysium, Journey.
P8	Half Life Series, Elder Scrools IV: Oblivion, Minecraft.
P9	Subnautica, Minecraft, Overwatch, Mouthwashing, Cult of the Lamb, Hades.
P10	Battlefield 3 ve 4 (for Sound Designs), Quake 1 ve 2.
P11	Baldur's Gate 2, The Witcher 3, Red Dead Redemption 2, Elden Ring, Fallout 2.
P12	Ultima Online, World of Warcraft, Counter Strike.
P13	Elden Ring, Metro Exodus, Baldur's Gate 3, Crysis 1 and 2
P14	Heavy Rain, Baldur's Gate 3, The Witcher 3, Elder Scrols V: Skyrim.
P15	Total War series, XCOM, Paradox Interactive's games

Table 5.2: Inspiring Video Games

Also, every title mentioned is generally praised for their unique artistic styles, unique storytelling and mechanics. On the other hand, most of these titles were developed by both the names and studios that participants mentioned for their inspiring game developers. For example, P3 stated Hideo Kojima and Hidetaka Miyazaki as his inspiring video game developers, and he stated Dark Souls 1 and Death Stranding for his inspiring video games or P10 stated Stefan Strandberg and Battlefield 3 and 4 as his inspirations.

Lastly, participants were asked about whether they were playing video games or not. If their answers were yes, they named the games that they were playing. The most common genres are adventure and RPG games. Genres like strategy, simulation, action and casual games were also mentioned. Notably, games with strong narrative and immersion were generally preferred. Even though participants generally named big budget titles like *Silent Hill 2 Remake, Cyberpunk 2077, Path of Exile II, Crusader Kings III, Indiana Jones and The Great Circle* and *The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion Remastered*, they also mentioned that

they were trying to play indie games as many as possible. A significant portion of the answers include indie titles like *Forgive Me Father, R.E.P.O. Mouthwashing* and various indie titles.

	Which games are you playing?
P1	Legend TD 2, LOL, Overwatch 2, various new indie productions like Balatro and Turmoil.
P2	Yes, Dota 2, No Man's Sky and various indie games.
P3	Silent Hill 2 Remake, Path of Exile 2, Forgive me Father and various indie games.
P4	I try to play whenever I can. However, in recent years, I have mostly been playing indie games that catch my interest.
P5	Cyberpunk 2077
P7	Two Dots (Mobile Game)
P8	Dota 2, Counter-Strike 2, Crusader Kings III, Elder Scrols IV: Oblivion Remastered
P9	Minecraft, Overwatch, R.E.P.O., Marvel Rivals.
P10	Indiana Jones and The Great Circle.
P11	The Elder Scrools IV: Oblivion Remastered, Helldivers 2
P12	I haven't been able to play much lately. The last game I had a chance to play was Frostpunk 2.
P13	I can divide my gaming into two categories. The first is games I play to learn about the projects we are working on, and the second is games I play for my own enjoyment. Some of the games I play for my own enjoyment include Dota 2, Vallheim, and Medieval Dynasty.
P14	Liar's Bar, Path of Exile 2, X Com, Baldur's Gate 3.
P15	Due to my job, I regularly play different games, even games I don't like. Every month, I buy 25-30 games and try to play them for a few hours. The last game I played was Into The Breach.
P6	No. I watch gameplay videos on YouTube.

Table 5.3: Games That Are Being Played

One of the possible reasons for choosing indie titles over big budget games can be the reason that indie titles have been more creative recently. For this reason, participants who prefer indie games play them for their experimental mechanics, storytelling and unique art styles thanks to the creative freedom that independent titles have. In other words, big budget titles cannot easily take risks for trying experimental things in their games. Their answers show a hybrid situation. The participants are both consumers and developers. For this reason, they can still find inspiration from mainstream video games as well as unique indie titles.

On the other hand, it is important to address the responses of managers and founders separately since their answers provide a great insight in order to understand the mindset of industry leaders. P1, who is the founder of the small-scaled company, stated some multiplayer games and various indie titles like *Balatro* and *Turmoil* which are quite popular and businesswise successful games. Both of these examples also correspond with P1's sources of inspiration since the artistic style, UI design and gameplay structures of the games that they develop are similar with these indie titles. For this reason, it can be interpreted that P1 plays indie titles to get inspiration. On the other hand, both P13 and P15, who are the

managers and founders of medium-scale companies, stated similar answers for this question. Both reported that they play games according to their jobs. In other words, they play for market analysis and review for the sake of their projects. It is also crucial to highlight that neither of them plays big budget titles. They play indie projects thanks to the creative experiments that indie games try.

5.5. The Relationship Between Video Games and Creativity

In this part of the interview participants were asked to describe the relationship between video games and creativity. The answers are divided into four sections. 6 out of 15 participants responded overwhelmingly positively to this question which indicates that there is a solid common agreement on creativity being the key element of the industry.

> *One of the metrics for a game's success is that it is original and interesting, which is why creativity is one of the most critical factors. (P1)*
> *The subject matter of video games can be unique thanks to creativity. Designs can stand out thanks to creativity. I think there is an unbreakable bond between them. (P7)*
> *As with most creative fields, video games require creative drive. You need to be creative in your workflow. You need to find solutions to problems. In addition to this, I think creativity is also necessary in the aesthetic side of the job. (P10)*
> *I think it's at its maximum because, compared to all other sectors, we see a ready-made product in terms of entertainment. However, in video games, I think creativity comes to the fore because people can interact with the product that is presented. (P12)*
> *One of the most important aspects of video games is creativity. Creativity must be used to keep players engaged. In short, all departments must demonstrate their creativity from start to finish. (P13)*
> *You form a bond with a character while playing a game. I think this is the biggest factor that distinguishes games from movies and books, because a bond is formed interactively. This naturally requires creativity. (P14)*

These participants believe that creativity is essential in every development process which requires innovation, problem-solving and imaginative game designs. “The study underscores the importance of imagination as a key factor in the link between gaming motivation and creativity. This mediating effect... offers practical implications for game designers, who can focus on designing elements that stimulate both imagination and creativity to enhance player engagement” (Cheng, 2025, p. 11). This argument of Cheng clearly verified through these answers since participants believe that creativity is one of the key points of increasing the player engagement. As discussed in Chapter 3 (see p. 55), creative control is essential for both the developers and players since it is the key for uniqueness and interactivity which is the main feature that distinguishes video games from other media.

On the other hand, some participants reported that it varies depending on the genre and type of games.

> *It's hard to define. I divide games into three different categories. You can think of it as a triangle.*
> *1. Games that entertain players (Standard Creativity)*
> *2. Games that make money (Economic Creativity)*
> *3. Innovative/artistic games/experiences*
> *Based on this triangle, the type of creativity used will vary depending on the type of game being developed. In innovative games, creativity is not limited to game mechanics; art, music, narrative, and sometimes technological innovations are also included in the process. In such projects, a multi-layered creative approach drawing from different disciplines is required. The goal may not be solely to entertain or generate revenue, but to leave a lasting impression on the player, touching their emotions or thoughts. If the goal is to make money, a different approach is needed. Creative efforts are required to engage the player in the game in the most optimal way and encourage them to spend money. At this point, economic knowledge, market knowledge, player psychology, and the ability to gamify these elements are absolutely necessary. (P2)*
> *Yes, there is creativity in indie games, but there isn't much creativity in big games like ours. The company owner has a vision, and you are hired to realize that vision. In my position, we are expected to do what has been decided. (P3)*
> *There is an indispensable relationship between the two. But not every game has to have the same level of creativity. We see a lot of copycat games, but the more creative a game is, the more different it is, and as creativity increases, they become more different from each other and add value to the industry. (P8)*
> *It's generally more noticeable in the indie scene. Because in video games, you can break away from real life and become a completely different person. In situations like this, you need creativity to write your own story in games. I think creativity is also necessary for the game development process. (P9)*

The main reason behind this motive is because bigger scaled video game companies generally tend to develop games that can benefit instead of trying new things which require creativity. "Big companies like to play it safe and stick with what works. This keeps ROI high, risk low, and investors happy. What this doesn't do is inspire or allow for creativity in the workplace. If one were to look at an array of recent AAA games, it's easy to pick out many common threads. For instance, because of the success of titles like *Fortnite* and *Overwatch* there have been many similar games released or announced trying to piggyback off of the acclaim and hype of those titles" (Eckert, 2024). Recently, especially after the budget of the video games has become bigger, companies have tendency to take their steps carefully since they do not want to make a financial loss. Additionally, some participants only tried to make a definition or expressed any definition. This situation may lead to the conclusion that they have not thought about this issue.

The interactivity of imagination. Just as cinema can interpret imagination in a static way, video games can do so interactively. (P4)
If I were to answer specifically about the development part, it is necessary to solve the problems encountered in a creative way. (P11)
I can't give a clear definition. (P6)

However, only one participant reported negatively for this question. P15, who is the game director and the founder of the medium scaled company, believes that there is a quite limited creativity in the industry.

There is very limited creativity. You might say, "I'm making the game I imagined," but it won't sell. In order for the game to sell, you have to give players what they want. Yes, creativity is necessary, but you are not completely free. You are not as free as a painter. (P15)

It is obvious from the answer that the participant put financial success over creativity or passion projects. However, his argument is true within the context of business since most of the passion projects do not sell as well as popular titles like *Call of Duty, EA FC* or *NBA 2K* which are annually released and globally best-seller video games every year. In that regard, developers have to make a choice between developing games that they are passionate about to fulfill self-satisfaction or developing games which are appealing to the majority.

5.6. Opinions on Creativity and The Gaming Industry in The Context of Experience

In this part of the interview, the participants were asked about their opinions on creativity in the industry within departments and personal opinions. This part consists of four different parts which focus on different aspects of creativity in the industry. In that regard, the participant answers provide valuable insight into questions whether the industry requires creativity or not, whether there is any department which does not require creativity and how creative participants can be. Therefore, a map of how creative the industry can be drawn up.

For the first question, participants were asked about their opinions on whether the video game industry requires creativity or not. It is observed that the participants' answers are divided into two groups. One group strongly believes that creativity is a must in the industry.

Yes, it does. (P6)
Yes, it does. It requires creativity in two ways: both in terms of workflow and in terms of what you give to the players. (P10)
Yes, it is necessary. It is necessary both to solve the problems encountered and for the general game design, for example, the structure and design of the tasks within the game, etc. (P11)

It is incredibly necessary. (P12)

According to their answers, creativity is quite necessary in the industry. Not just for interesting and notably games but also for game development stages. They believe that creativity is important for problem solving and workflow since creative solutions can help them to take quick action and not to damage the schedule, especially if they work in strict schedule, which is also known as "crunch" period.

Another group of participants stated that creativity is important in the industry, but it is not necessary.

It is not a requirement, but it is necessary. (P8)
So generally speaking, yes. (P9)
Both yes and no. It depends on the universe you create. I'm talking about the art side of things. If you were to make a game set in the real world, the design of the rooms and spaces where you place objects would have to be consistent. Do you want the player to walk down an empty corridor? What should that corridor be filled with? These are the kinds of details you need to consider. Of course, there are games that don't have that, but design is always important. Because you need to offer something to people who don't understand the game or know its background, and all of that goes through design, of course. (P3)

According to their answers, there are some scenarios which do not require that much creativity since the way to do it is already defined. In other words, P3's answer for this question gives great insight into this question. Even if a video game is set in the real world, in this case there is a limited amount of material because of the design integrity. However, creativity comes to play when the already determined material is put in the game. In that regard, creativity is still an important factor in industry even if it is not a requirement.

Also, one participant stated a totally different idea from other participants. P2 states that "I no longer think it is necessary to 'make games.' But it is necessary to make good games". This statement reveals the current state of the modern gaming industry. Especially after the widespread usage of free game engines and the rise of the popularity of indie games and digitalization of the market, every day a huge number of video games are released. "Institutionalized creativity and leadership development were identified as important variables associated with its growth and success" (Zackariasson et al., 2006). In that way, most of the video games cannot receive much attention and sale numbers since most of them lack creativity. In that case, if a game is not mainstream, in other words a big IP, it should do something creative to show itself among other games. For this reason, as P2 stated, video game development requires creativity for making a good game.

For the second question, the participants were asked whether their department requires creativity or not. Participants' answers are also divided into this question too. The questions are divided into two groups, one of which believe creativity is required for their departments while others do not believe.

> *Definitely. (P4)*
> *Of course, yes. You cannot build a graphics engine without creativity. (P12)*
> *For the narrative part, yes. (P14)*
> *The company I work for requires minimal creativity. Since it is based on historical realism, we have to adapt things that are real. At the end of the day, the universe you create has a reference. That's why, unfortunately, situations like "Oh my God, my chakras are open, I'm designing" don't happen very often. But when you look at the big picture, of course it requires creativity. (P3)*

Even though most of the participants stated that their departments require creativity, P3's statement comes forward. Even though P3's colleagues within his department who stated positively for this question, P3 reported differently. This situation clearly shows that employees in the industry think differently about creativity, both individually and industry-wise.

However, P15, who is the founder of the medium-scaled company, should be evaluated separately for this question since he is not only an executive but also game director of his company. In other words, he is active on both the hierarchy and creativity in the company, which is directly related to the aim of the study.

> *My job does not require creativity. My job requires vision. I always have to make data-driven decisions. Of course, it requires creativity, but it is not a position where I can constantly listen to my heart. (P15)*

P15 is not like the others. He is both the owner of the company, and someone involved in the creative process. Because it is his own company, he has strong authoritarian tendencies. For this reason, even though he wants to do creative work, he feels compelled to do the kind of work that people want to play. In this context, it can be inferred that P15 is following this path in line with financial interests. In other words, in order to survive in the video game industry, financial interests take precedence over creating innovative games.

Participants also were asked about their opinions on how creative they can be in their departments. Even though all of the participants stated that they can be creative for most parts, it has been observed that some of the answers contradict their answers to the previous question.

I would say 60 to 40 or 80 to 20. I would say Pareto. (P4)
We don't have much freedom, so we can't be as creative as concept artists. Because we have a certain job to do. (P5)
I can't give you an exact percentage, but I would say around 60%. (P11)

These participants stated that their creativity is limited to some extent even though they stated their departments require creativity for the previous question. The possible reason for this is that they are given certain limits for the projects that they work on. For this reason, even though they can be creative, they cannot go beyond certain limits. This clearly shows the presence of hierarchy in the company. Therefore, even though they believe that their departments require creativity, their creativity is still limited by executives, which is consistent with the main argument of the study.

For the final question of this part of the interview, the participants were asked whether there is a department which does not require creativity in the industry or not. All of the participants believe that all departments other than administrative, technical, and financial are related to creativity.

If we exclude administrative departments, I don't think there is such a department. (P10)
These are actually the departments that every company needs. We can say accounting, human resources, and finance departments. (P13)
Human resources, community support, community management, or office support do not need to be creative. (P8)

According to these answers, departments which are directly related to game development require creativity. However, other departments like finance and human resources do not require creativity. Even though these kinds of departments do not come to mind first while talking about the video game industry, companies still need these kinds of departments which is clear evidence for video game companies' corporate structures.

5.7. Feedback Practices within The Gaming Industry's Working Conditions

In this part of the interview, the participants were asked questions about feedback practices in their companies. In that regard, the aim of this part is to understand better the overall company dynamics in Turkish video game industry. This part will be divided into six different parts, and each part consists different types of questions in terms of feedback practices within the companies.

The first part is about who supervises the work and whether there is a person or department responsible for the participants. Most of the participants reported that they have led, director or producer to supervise what they do. No matter what the scale the company is, all three of the companies have similar structures, in other words hierarchical structure.

Artist lead. The lead reports to the top boss. Each department has its own lead. They are in charge. (P3)
Our team leader and boss. (P4)
Game Director. (P14)
Producers working at the company. (P2)

On the other hand, some participant answers should be evaluated separately since they are the ones who supervise the works.

There is no clear answer because we have so many simultaneous projects, but I generally follow all projects. My partner and I usually follow them together. (P1)
Myself. I'm the team leader now. I'm the head of the Sound team. (P10)
Myself. (P15)
We have a board of directors. I am one of its members. We evaluate the work of the board members within the board. (P13)

According to both of these answers and answers previously, no matter what the scale of the company is there are leads in companies who supervise the works. However, it can be inferred that the scale of this structure varies depending on the size of the company. Since P3 and P4 are from the large-scaled company, they work in the same department. They stated that their work is supervised by Art Lead or P10 is the one who supervises the work of Sound department since he is the leader of the department. On the other hand, as P1 or P15 states, they supervise all of the work in the company. The possible reason behind this workload is that small business owners are also the ones who supervise everything. However, P13's statement is striking since his answer is quite different than P15's, who is the founder of the company, statement. While one says there is a board of directors, the other says he is the one who makes the final calls. In that regard, it can be inferred that even though Even if he is in a decision-making position, there is someone higher than him in the hierarchy, and that person makes the final decision which still shows a corporate hierarchy structure in the industry.

For the second part, participants were asked questions about feedback processes. First, participants reported how they receive or give feedback. When the three companies were examined separately, a hybrid feedback model emerged. Most of the participants stated that

face to face feedback models are the most common models. However, they also use programs like Discord or Slack, which are quite similar programs for communication. Using these programs is generally preferred while working remotely but face-to-face feedback is the primary method for both employees and leaders.

Usually face-to-face, and when working from home, via Slack. (P6)
I try to meet people face to face as much as possible. Other than that, there may be situations where I have to meet online due to reasons beyond my control. (P13)

Participants also reported the tone of feedback**.** All of the participants stated overwhelmingly positive for the tone of feedback. None of them experienced a negative situation.

I think it is very polite and constructive, and generally free of unnecessary details. (P2)
I haven't had any problems so far. I haven't experienced any situations that made me feel bad. (P6)
No problem. Very professional and as it should be. (P10)
A gentle and soft tone tries not to hurt anyone's feelings. (P11)

For this part, managers should also be evaluated separately from employees. Executive participants also stated similarly for this question which proves that employees' statements are valid.

I try to stay positive. I try to shoot down people in a polite and courteous manner. I always try to give a logical explanation. (P1)
I try to maintain as stable a tone of voice as possible. Especially when giving negative feedback, I try to maintain as clear and stable a tone of voice as possible. (P13)
It depends on the situation. If it is something really bad that disturbs other people's peace of mind, then the feedback will be harsher, otherwise it will be milder. (P15)

According to their answers, it can be stated that Turkish video game companies generally do not have any problem with negative attitude or negatives like mobbing. Instead, they try to maintain a friendly and safe working environment in order to maintain the development as smoothly as possible without any problems. However, it is necessary to pay attention to P15's statement since he is the only one who states slightly differently than other executives. Even though his statement is harsher than others, his statement is in the interest of other employees. For this reason, it can be interpreted from executives' responses that Turkish video game industry has quite friendly and safe working environments no matter the scale of the company which also supports by the statements of employees.

However, even though all of the participants stated positively for the tone of the feedback. Their answers vary for the question that how do you feel when your manager gives you negative feedback on a creative idea? There are four different attitudes when managers are separated. It has been observed that the majority of people agree with negative feedback. They believe that feedback is necessary. This feedback allows them to see their mistakes, catch elements that they may have overlooked in order to make a comprehensive assessment, and at the very least, it acts as a mechanism to show that their work has been seen.

> *I feel proud because I think that even considering it is a good thing given how busy they are. (P8)*
> *Generally, they don't give it, but if they do, it's because they know something or there's a reason behind it. (P9)*
> *They can. (P4)*
> *I feel very good because, in general, receiving feedback is very valuable in the workflow we are currently working on. As the production process progresses, all employees may gradually fail to see the errors that arise. That is why receiving feedback is very valuable. (P10)*

The second group consists of those who are emotionally affected. For those who are emotionally affected, negative feedback can be demoralizing, but since the leader's word carries more weight, it can be interpreted as an attempt to overcome this negative feeling because it is considered necessary.

> *Of course, I don't feel good about it, but at the end of the day, I have to earn a living, so I have to take their opinions seriously. At first, these negative comments were very demoralizing, but after a while, you get used to them. (P2)*
> *So, I may be sad, but I think that's the right thing to do. (P6)*
> *We experience this situation a lot, so of course it doesn't feel good. But at the end of the day, there is a middle ground, of course. (P12)*

Of course, it should not be forgotten that there is an influence here that has the final say. For this reason, it can be said that there is not much they can do about it. In that regard, it is precisely at this point that the statements of participants who responded neutrally stand out since these participants are more experienced in the industry than participants who stated they are emotionally affected. In other words, it can be said that not taking feedback personally and viewing it as part of the job is a phenomenon that develops with experience in the sector.

> *I don't feel much because, as you know, our game is based on historical realism, so we work within certain limits since we use references from history. Okay, let's continue. (P3)*
> *We see it as a job. We don't usually insist on anything. Since it's a professional job, it's important to take negative feedback on board. (P5)*

In this context, it can be concluded that those with more work experience in the sector view the situation objectively, while those with less experience either feel sad and eventually accept it with understanding, or directly see it as an opportunity for self-improvement.

The third group consists of people who reach a common ground through mutual discussion with the leader or manager.

> *Generally, we discuss among ourselves what might be better and come to a final decision. (P7)*
> *Since we discussed the feedback we received, we can decide which one is correct and move forward comfortably. That's why I don't feel bad. (P11)*
> *It could be possible. I see this as an opportunity. (P14)*

It can be said that this is the ideal feedback model. Especially when creative work is being done, it is very important for the employee and manager to find common ground. Otherwise, both the employees' creativity will be limited, and the creativity of the resulting work will be questionable. For this reason, mutual agreement is quite important in an industry with such a friendly and safe working environment. The same situation is also found in another study based in Spain. "The [next] thing I was doing was processing all that information and then coalescing it all into good action items and takeaways of ways that we can improve the game that we're working on" (Seering et al., 2019). According to this answer of industry employee from another study, structural feedback is quite important and preferrable since it directly helps to improve the game.

On the other hand, executive participants' statements also provide another perspective for negative feedback. They stated that negative feedback is inevitable in the interest of business. In other words, different aspects can lead to negative feedback. For this reason, employees should be ready and receptive for negative feedback.

> *I regularly give negative feedback because making a game can become an endless journey, just like making a movie. At this point, someone needs to stop it so that the project can be completed. (P1)*
> *Someone working in game design in particular needs to get used to having their ideas rejected, because one person cannot take all factors into account on their own. There may be multiple factors involved, such as finance, visual feasibility, and compatibility with the company. In this context, it is necessary to get used to ideas being rejected when valid reasons are given. (P13)*

Overall, participants' responses to this question show a professional culture which gives importance to proper negative feedback which is an important aspect for analyzing the authority factor in the industry within the thesis' framework.

For the next question, participants were asked whether they exchange ideas or not. All of the participants reported that they exchange ideas with others. Some of them state that idea exchange is crucial in the development since it can help boost creativity and develop new ideas as well as improve the already generated ideas. On the other hand, participants who are managers and founders of the companies in the study give importance on exchanging ideas. Even though they are the decision makers in the development processes, they give value to the ideas of the workers of the companies. Feedback does not come solely from supervisors. Participants can be said to operate feedback mechanism through constant discussion and cooperation among themselves.

For the final question of this part, participants were asked whether their recommendations are considered or not. All the participants stated positively about this question no matter what their positions are. This situation shows that professionals of Turkish video game industry welcome suggestions from their co-workers. In that regard, it can be inferred that the level of creativity is high, and people can boost others' works. However, when two of the executives are evaluated separately, their answers stand out in a different way. They believe that their suggestions must be taken into account.

Yes, necessarily. (P1)
My suggestions must be taken into account (P15)

These responses clearly indicate that there is a hierarchy in the companies even if they stated somewhat horizontal structure within themselves. For this reason, even if Turkish video game industry has quite positive, friendly and safe working environment, companies maintain a corporate structure which can eventually lead up restricted creativity and authority which is the main argument of the study.

5.8. Company Structures and Future in the Gaming Industry

In the last part of the interview, the participants were asked about the company structures. The questions are about whether there is a hierarchical or flat structure, what is the process when a new project starts or whether the participants want to establish their own video game companies in future. In this way, the aim of this part of the interview is to understand the video game company structures of Turkish video game industry.

For the first question of this part, the participants were asked whether your company has a hierarchical structure or a horizontal relationship? In response, participants' answers

are divided into four different parts. The first group believe a horizontal structure is being maintained within the departments.

> *We have team leaders and a hierarchical structure on paper, but we still manage to act as if we have a horizontal structure among ourselves. (P6)*
> *Actually, it's a mixture of both. (P7)*
> *My department has a horizontal structure, but other departments may have a hierarchical structure. (P8)*
> *Generally horizontal. Even if we have leads, they don't look down on us. (P9)*
> *We maintain a hierarchical structure officially, but internally we have a horizontal structure. (P11)*

According to their answers, a working environment, where people can exchange their ideas, give feedback to their peers and common problem solving through creative ways, can be considered quite positive because this type of departmental structure opens organic and better creative dynamics even if there are leads and seniors in the departments.

However, some of the participants also stated that their companies maintain a hierarchical structure.

> *We are trying to establish a hierarchical structure. (P14)*
> *We worked on making it horizontal for a long time, but the company's crowdedness does not allow for this. Some people are in decision-making and information flow positions as leads. But there is a horizontal structure within the teams. Overall, we have a hierarchical structure. (P10)*

In that regard, it can be interpreted that Turkish video game companies use a conventional corporate model like any other company. In this type of corporate model, the authorities of the companies are typically the decision makers. These decisions pass downward through the chains of command. Additionally, this type of hierarchy is generally responsible for business strategies, budget and final approval without including the production departments. In that regard, it is important to evaluate the manager's responses separately for this question since their answers give better insight for the company structure.

> *I try to give the Art Director as much space as possible. But ultimately, I am the one who has the power to say yes or no. Basically, there is a hierarchical structure, but we try to maintain a horizontal relationship. After all, there has to be a hierarchy because it is a company. (P1)*
> *Due to the number of people, we inevitably have a hierarchical structure, but it is not a rigid one. (P13)*
> *Actually, it's somewhere in between. Yes, there is a hierarchical structure, but it's not that rigid or strict. (P15)*

Even though all of the executives stated that they try to maintain a soft hierarchical structure within their companies, they are the final decision makers at the end of the day. As P1 stated, hierarchy is required since video game companies maintain a corporate structure. For this reason, it is quite unlikely to maintain a horizontal structure due to different reasons like employee numbers, financial goals or workflow.

For the second question of this part, the participants were asked that when there is a new project, are there meetings or requests for suggestions from employees? Or is the project presented directly to them? There are mixed answers to this question. However, the answers still lead to a hierarchical structure of the companies.

> *Usually, it is presented to us directly, but meetings are held and then it is presented to us. (P3)*
> *It varies depending on the job, but generally the team leaders hold a meeting and then present it to us. (P4)*
> *Usually, a meeting is held among team leaders, and then it is presented to us. (P5)*
> *After a decision was made, they told me what we were going to do. These kinds of decisions are usually made by the leads. (P6)*
> *After a decision was made, they told me, "We're going to do this." (P7)*

The general answers of the participants show that executives decide to start a project and they first hold meetings among themselves in order to decide whether to start the project or not. According to these answers, it can be stated that leaders and directors, in other words the auteur of the companies, make decisions on the projects rather than requesting suggestions from the employees. All of the participants from the large company reported the same situation. On the other hand, some participants from the large company stated that there is a mixture of both ways.

> *The meetings are held on a weekly basis, or perhaps even every two or three days. (P8)*
> *First, a general idea is put forward, and then our ideas are taken into account during subsequent meetings. (P9)*
> *Nothing comes directly from above. Instead, we discuss and decide based on ideas that come to our Game Director's mind. (P10)*
> *There are meeting requests, and we can attend meetings if necessary, depending on the situation. (P11)*
> *Once the project has been defined to a certain level, we discuss it and draw up our roadmap. (P12)*

It is important to note that participants who reported these answers are experienced employees. For this question, it is quite possible that experienced employees interact more with managers and leads.

Also, executive answers for this question should be evaluated separately for this question too. Executive participants' answers are similar for this question. They stated that they try to collect ideas from their employees for new projects once the project reaches a certain stage.

> *As someone who seeks external validation, when we start a new project, I present it to a few people on the team, and we move forward with the most popular idea that gets approval from them. (P1)*
> *When we have a new project, we follow certain steps. First, we assess whether we have the feasibility to carry out the project. Then we look at the financial status and situation of the market. Once we have answered these questions, we move on to the detailed design stage. At the end of the day, if there are still things that don't make sense to us, the whole team gets together and we brainstorm. (P13)*
> *Both situations can occur. (P15)*

According to their answers, it is clear that employees are directly given the defined projects even if they make small suggestions without affecting the base of the projects no matter what the scale of the company is. This structure of project development in Turkish video game companies directly prove the main argument of the study which covers the creativity process of the development is held by the executives.

The final question of the interview covers the question of whether the participants want to establish their own video game company in the future or not. Surprisingly, none of the participants, excluding the participants who already own their companies, want to establish their own video game companies in the future. Some of them had tried but could not maintain. The other participants clearly stated that they do not want to in the future. Possible reasons for this can be that they do not want to deal with managerial roles and responsibilities or they are happy with their current roles and want to keep it.

CONCLUSION

Video game industry has become one of the biggest stakeholders of the entertainment sector. In that regard, both the production quality and production costs have risen. Even the production of some AA and all AAA games' production costs much more than movie production costs. For this reason, video games and video game industry can be examined like the movie industry since both industries have similarities and playing is one of the oldest habits and interactions of humanity. In other words, one of the oldest interactions of humankind is playing and it has evolved into video games thanks to the technological developments.

Throughout the historical overview of the video games which is presented in the literature review section of the thesis, it can be easily interpreted that video game industry has been shaped by creativity, commerce and technology through history. Especially after the 1983 Crash, the video game industry was revitalized by *Nintendo*. After that point, the industry has grown and developed through different types of revolutions in terms of different aspects of video game development such as the cinematic cutscenes from *PlayStation*.

In regard of the video game development throughout history, the development process can also be analyzed through the classical *Auteur Theory*. The theory was originally developed for movie production. In other words, the theory is originally a film theory. The theory basically focuses on the individual vision, director for the movies. However, *Auteur Theory* can also be applied to video game development since the productions in both industries have similar structures. For this reason, when *Auteur Theory* is applied in video game industry, game directors like Hideo Kojima, Shigeru Miyamoto or Hidetaka Miyazaki come forward thanks to their unique artistic styles, unique storytelling, unique gameplay mechanics and ability to push the industry forward.

To elaborate how these names fit the *Auteur Theory*, the core aspects of the theory should be applied to these names to understand whether they should be considered as auteur or not. To start with their thematic consistency, these three individuals' works revisit similar themes in their games which build emotional or philosophical signature for themselves. Starting with Hideo Kojima, his games generally take place around themes like war, post-humanism and existential isolation. *Metal Gear Solid* Series and *Death Stranding* use have all of these themes. For example, *Solid Snake* and *Sam Porter Bridges*, who are the main characters of these franchises, are both characters experiencing existential isolation. Solid

Snake is a clone of Big Boss created as a weapon which results in emotional detachment from the world. On the other hand, Snake generally goes missions alone throughout the franchise. He infiltrates dangerous zones in isolation which are generally enemy territories. "I am just a man who's good at what he does: killing" (Kojima, 2008). This quote is from *Metal Gear Solid 4: Guns of the Patriots* and it shows how the character dehumanized, in other words experiencing existential isolation. On the other hand, *Sam Porter Bridges* has similar issues like *Solid Snake*. *Bridges* is a character who travels alone around a fictional collapsed United States of America to transport packages. Additionally, similarly to *Snake*, *Bridges* also has a mission "reconnecting America". In this way, *Bridges* also becomes a hero like *Snake* through his ultimate mission. On the other hand, Kojima has his own gameplay and narrative expression as well as his visual and aesthetic signatures. He generally uses long cinematic cutscenes, which was unusual for video games in the past, breaks fourth wall and complex gameplay mechanics like players have to use both triggers of the controller in order to maintain the balance of the character in *Death Stranding* which was a new approach to character movement when the game was released. Besides, Kojima's visual and aesthetic signatures like photorealistic graphics, military technologies and post-apocalyptic world designs are common in his games. Finally, Kojima's departure from *Konami* and establishing his own studio called *Kojima Productions* allows him to secure total creative freedom over his works.

Shigeru Miyamoto is also another game director who should be considered as an auteur of the video game industry. However, Miyamoto's approach to video games is different than other game directors mentioned in the study. Even though Miyamoto's works are generally whimsical at first glance, in other words joyful and bright colored worlds, his games have deeper design that were shaped through Miyamoto's artistic vision. All of his works include discovery, curiosity and interaction. In other words, Miyamoto's approach to game design basically aims to take the gamers to their childhoods and rekindle the joy that people feel when they discover new things. In terms of themes of Miyamoto's works, both *Super Mario* and *The Legend of Zelda* include exploration, curiosity and playfulness. For example, in *Super Mario* games, players do not have to play the game in linear order. Instead, they can play levels in desired order which encourage players to explore. On the other hand, many hidden blocks, warp zones and alternative roads in levels push players to stray from a direct path. Similarly, in *The Legend of Zelda* games, players are placed in an open world and expected to make their own way without any guidance which also encourages the exploration. On the other hand, Miyamoto's games generally have a basic base narrative

which focuses on a heroic journey. However, the narrative unfolds through the gameplay. In other words, characters' journeys tell the story. Similarly, in *The Legend of Zelda* games, ruined temples, ancient artifacts or NPC characters in the game worlds encourage people to explore and wander around the world to go deeper in the story and unfold it. Also, Miyamoto's own visual and aesthetic style can be seen through all of his games. He uses similar colors which are bright. Also, unlike Kojima, Miyamoto's games do not have photorealistic graphics. Instead, his games have bright and vivid colors which create a whimsical style.

Finally, Hidetaka Miyazaki is also another game director who should be considered as an auteur in the industry. His approach to video games is also different from previous names and he has built his own artistic style throughout his games. Miyazaki is also quite important for the industry since his games have created a totally new game genre in the industry and there are lots of successful and unsuccessful games that try the same formula as Miyazaki. This genre is called "souls-like" in the industry. When Miyazaki is approached through the aspects of *Auteur Theory*, he also has his own unique thematic consistency, gameplay and narrative approach and visual and aesthetic signatures. Starting with his thematic consistency in his games, Miyazaki uses themes like cycle of death, rebirth and struggle. On the other hand, Miyazaki avoids traditional and linear storytelling in his games, similar with Miyamoto, his games like *Dark Souls* trilogy, *Bloodborne* and *Elden Ring* tell their stories through world design, NPC dialogues and visual symbolism. In terms of his aesthetic and visual signatures, Miyazaki's games share common elements. The worlds that Miyazaki created have ruined cathedrals, castles and deserted cities which have gothic and medieval architecture styles. Also, in terms of color palettes, Miyazaki often uses pale colors to mirror the games emotional arcs. Similar to auteurs in cinema, Miyazaki creates worlds which reflect his own unique artistic style.

Even though there are some individual names in the video game industry who can be considered as auteur game directors, video game companies are generally the ones who stand out as auteur in the industry. This statement is verified through the answers from the participants of the study. Most of the participants stated game companies instead of individual names when they were asked about the influential names of the industry. The reason why they were asked influential names is because auteurs of the film industry generally inspire people who want to join the industry. The same situation can be the same for the video game industry too. When video game developer studios are analyzed through *Auteur Theory*, the number of studios is more than individuals. Different studios from around

the world can be given as examples. For example, *Remedy Entertainment,* which is known for games *Max Payne, Alan Wake, Control* and *Quantum Break*, has the traits of an auteur. All of their games have thematic consistency with blurred boundaries between reality and fiction, time, memory, perception and madness. On the other hand, gameplay mechanics of their games support the narratives like time manipulation in *Quantum Break* and *Max Payne*. In other words, the narrative is centered around the gameplay of *Remedy*'s games. Also, stark lightning and surreal overlays can also be seen through all of their games which are their visual and aesthetic signatures. Another example for auteur studios could be *Arkane Studios*. The studio is known for games *Dishonored, Prey* and *Deathloop*. All of these games include same themes as power obsession, morality and control. On the other hand, players are allowed to approach their targets from their desired paths. In other words, *Arkane*'s games give freedom to the players for gameplay and players can unfold the narrative of the games from different collectibles around the maps, conversations between NPC's and chains of missions. In that way, players' choices are crucial for the narrative since players have to pay attention to the details if they want to fully understand the narrative. Also, all of their games have similar visual and aesthetics like dystopian, retro-futuristic settings like *Deathloop's* 60s styled map and *Prey'*s space station. All of these features show the characteristics of developer studios and allow them to be considered as auteurs.

However, the main problem with applying the *Auteur Theory* to the video game industry is that theory is basically individual based at its' core. For this reason, it cannot be fully adapted for the video game industry except some individuals like Kojima, Miyamoto or Miyazaki because developer studios are companies and there are hierarchical structures in them which make the studios to fully function as auteur. In other words, video game developer studios, especially bigger scaled ones, generally have boards of directors or managers which is a totally opposite aspect for *Auteur Theory*. For this reason, there is a need for a new theory to explain the authority works in the industry. In that regard, this study proposes the *Auteur-ity Theory*. The theory is based on both traditional *Auteur Theory* and the concept of authority. The key point of the theory is that when video game development turns into an industrial production, it becomes impossible to do things as freely as film auteurs. In other words, creativity and freedom become restricted since there are different demands, expectations and concerns when production becomes industrialized.

In order to evaluate the arguments of *Auteur-ity Theory*, this study interviewed with sector professionals from different companies in Turkey. The main reason why this study's universe is Turkey is because even though most of the biggest video game companies in

Turkey generally develop games to mobile phones like *Peak Games* and *Dream Games* which received great amounts of investments from abroad, there are also different scaled video game companies which develop their games for PC and consoles. In that regard, the video game industry of Turkey is a developing industry, and it grows rapidly. More and more games release every month especially for PC. For this reason, conducting interviews with different scaled companies from Turkey provided great insights for the theory.

According to the data collected from the interviews which can be found in Section 4. (Findings), Turkish video game companies fit the arguments of *Auteur-ity Theory* no matter what their scales are. To start with, even though the participants stated that they have a flat relationship within the departments like art, sound or engine, the final decisions are made by the directors of the companies which eventually might lead to a lack of creativity in companies since they are only responsible for the tasks or directives that are given to them. This situation has a small difference to the company's scale. People working in small-scale companies have more freedom in terms of creativity and they can add something of themselves into the games since the hierarchy is not that structured like middle or big scale companies. On the other hand, the data collected from the interviewers also show that video game companies in Turkey generally follow the market trends instead of making projects of passion. One of the participants', whom is the founder of "the middle" company, statement summarizes this argument. When P15 were asked the relationship between creativity and video games, he stated "There is very limited creativity. You can say you're making my dream game, but it won't sell. For a game to sell, you need to give what the players want. Yes, you need creativity, but you are not completely free. You are not as free as a painter". This statement clearly shows the concerns of a hierarchical structure whose focus is on profit and sustainability. In that regard, Turkish video game companies provided great insights for the application of *Auteur-ity Theory*. Mostly AAA or AA studios have a clear hierarchical authority which leads up *Auteur-ity*. However, the feasibility of the theory should also be tested with video game companies from other countries around the world. More detailed and solid results can be achieved if the theory is tested with different companies since this study only focuses on companies from Turkey and this is the biggest limitation of the study. For this reason, the study suggests that the theory must be tested multiple times in companies from different countries and different scales since the results can be different based on culture, structure and the number of employees. In other words, this study serves as inspiration for future studies aimed at understanding how creativity has progressed in today's video game company structure. The study found that, despite having suitable and positive

working environments, the creativity of employees can be limited at certain points in three different-sized companies within the rapidly developing Turkish gaming industry. Additionally, it was observed that managers, in addition to company employees, were unable to be as creative as they desired due to concerns such as financial success. For this reason, it is necessary to interview individuals who have worked at a company for a period of time and then started their own company, such as Hideo Kojima, in similar or subsequent studies.

To conclude, individual and creative vision like in film industry contends with structured hierarchies. Companies have taken their steps cautiously because of different factors like profit, company image or receiving investment. For this reason, generally AAA and AA companies are not very receptive to original ideas since they are uncertain whether the game can make money or not, especially after a great amount of budget allocation. However, indie developers do not have these concerns since they must try original ideas and mechanics if they want to sell their games because dozens of indie games are released every day. Bigger companies, nevertheless, recently have been releasing their games without any major original ideas. In other words, they try to maintain the formulas that have already been successful because these companies do not want to take risks to lose money. In that regard, *Auteur-ity Theory* is introduced to explain these mechanisms of the video game industry. As video game development evolves and the industry gets bigger in the entertainment sector, it becomes mandatory to recognize not only the industry itself but also its dynamics for academia since video game studies are developing around the world of academy. For this reason, this study aims to contribute a valuable aspect and paving the way for further studies. Ultimately, studying game developers means analyzing the values and aspirations creating an art form with its own language. In that regard, *Auteur-ity Theory* is not a theoretical lens. Instead, the theory's aim is to prove games are not just entertaining products but cultural texts from multiple aspects.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. **Part (Demographical)**
   - How old are you?
   - What is your gender?
   - What is your education level?
   - What is your average monthly income?

2. **Part (Work Life)**
   - Which department are you working in?
   - Which departments have you worked in before?
   - What are your working hours? • How many companies in video game industry have you worked for in your career? If yes, which companies have you worked previously? • Are your actual specialization and the position you are working in compatible?
   - Do you work in the department that you want?
   - Why do you work in the video game industry?
   - Who is the person who supervises your work? • How do you feel if your supervisor gives negative feedback to a creative idea of yours?

3. **Creativity**
   - Can you define the relationship between video games and creativity?
   - Does video game production require creativity?
   - Do you think your department requires creativity?
   - Is there any department in the video game industry that does not require creativity?
   - Do you exchange ideas from the people you work with?
   - Are there any game developers you are inspired by?
   - Are there any video games that inspire you? If yes, which games?
   - Do you actively play video games? If yes, which games?
   - Does a video game have to have storytelling and design integrity?

4. **Auteur-ity**
   - Is there a hierarchical structure or a horizontal relationship in the company you work for?
   - Is there a person or department that you are responsible for or that is responsible for you? • How do you receive or give feedback (face to face, e-mail)?
   - What percentage do you think you can be creative in the department you are responsible for?
   - How do you evaluate the tone of feedback?
   - Are your suggestions taken into account?
   - When there is a new project, are there meetings or requests for suggestions? Or is it presented directly to you?

• Would you like to start your own company one day? (Do you have a goal to grow your company and take on larger-budget projects?)

APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

KATILIMCILAR İÇİN BİLGİLENDİRİLMİŞ GÖNÜLLÜ ONAM FORMU

Araştırma Başlığı: Auteur-ity Theory: Rethinking Auteur Theory in the Video Game Industry
Araştırmacı: Yiğit Tarlabölen
Danışman: Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Selver Dikkol Akçay
Üniversite / Enstitü / ABD: Başkent Üniversitesi / Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü / Radyo, Televizyon ve Sinema Ana Bilim Dalı,

Sayın Katılımcı,

Sizi, Auteur-ity Teorisi: Video Oyunu Endüstrisinde Auteur Teorisini Yeniden Düşünmek (Auteur-ity Theory: Rethinking Auteur Theory in the Video Game Industry) konulu yüksek lisans tez çalışmam kapsamında yapılacak görüşmeye katılmaya davet ediyorum. Bu görüşmede sizin deneyimlerinizi, düşüncelerinizi ve bilgilerinizi almak istiyoruz.

Bu çalışma, Auteur Teorisi'nin video oyun endüstrisine doğrudan uygulanabilirliğini sorgulayarak, oyun geliştiricileri, şirket yöneticileri ve tasarımcılar arasındaki yaratıcı kontrol dinamiklerini incelemektedir. Sinemada yönetmene atfedilen "auteur" kavramının, interaktif ve kolektif yapıya sahip oyun dünyasında nasıl değiştiğini analiz etmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu bağlamda, "Auteur-ity Theory" adı verilen yeni bir çerçeve önerilerek, büyük bütçeli ve bağımsız (indie) oyunlarda yaratıcı kontrolün nasıl şekillendiği tartışılmaktadır. Tez, oyun geliştiricilerinin sanatsal otoritesini, endüstriyel baskılar ve kurumsal yapıların etkisiyle birlikte değerlendirmeyi amaçlamaktadır.

Görüşmeye katılmanız tamamen gönüllülük esasına dayanmaktadır. Araştırmaya katılıma kararı verdikten sonra araştırmanın herhangi bir aşamasında çalışmadan çıkma hakkına sahipsiniz. Araştırmadan elde edilecek bilgiler yukarıda "araştırma amacı" kısmında belirtilen amaç dışında kullanılmayacak, kişisel bilgileriniz gizli tutulacaktır, anonimlik sağlanacak ve hiçbir kişisel veri üçüncü kişilerle paylaşılmayacaktır. Bu araştırmaya katılımınız için sizden herhangi bir ücret istenmeyecek ve size de herhangi bir ödeme yapılmayacaktır. Katılımınızla araştırmamıza yaptığınız destek için teşekkür ederim.

Görüşme, tahmini 30 dakika sürecek olup, ses kaydı veya online görüşme kaydı yöntemi ile kayıt altına alınacaktır. Dilediğiniz takdirde ses kaydı alınmasını reddedebilir ve sadece yazılı not tutulmasını tercih edebilirsiniz.

Aşağıda yer alan maddeler kapsamında görüşmeye katılmayı gönüllü olarak kabul ettiğinizi beyan etmektesiniz:

1. Araştırmanın amacı, kapsamı ve süreçleri hakkında bilgilendirildim.
2. Görüşmeye tamamen gönüllü olarak katılmayı kabul ediyorum.
3. Dilediğim zaman herhangi bir gerekçe göstermeksizin görüşmeden ayrılabileceğimi biliyorum.

4. Görüşme sırasında verdiğim bilgilerin anonimleştirileceğini ve yalnızca bilimsel amaçlarla kullanılacağını anlıyorum.
5. Görüşmenin ses kaydı ile kayıt altına alınmasını kabul ediyorum.
6. Online yapılan görüşmenin kayıt altına alınmasını kabul ediyorum.

KATILIMCI BEYANI

Yukarıda ayrıntıları belirtilen ve tarafıma aktarılan bu araştırma ile ilgili yapılan tüm bilgilendirmeleri ayrıntılarıyla anlamış bulunmaktayım. Gerek araştırma yürütülürken gerekse yayımlandığında katılımcı kimliğinin gizli tutulacağı konusunda güvence aldım. Ayrıca araştırma sonuçlarının eğitim ve bilimsel amaçlarla kullanımı sırasında kişisel bilgilerin dikkatle korunacağı konusunda bana yeterli güven verildi. Araştırma için yapılacak harcamalarla ilgili herhangi bir parasal sorumluluk altına girmiyorum ve bana herhangi bir ödeme de yapılamayacaktır. Araştırmanın yürütülmesi sırasında herhangi bir sebep göstermeden çekilebilirim. Bu şartlar altında aşağıda adı soyadı yazılı şahsım, araştırmaya gönüllü olarak katılıyorum. Bu formun bir kopyası bana verilecektir.

Katılımcı

Adı ve Soyadı

Tarih ve İmza

Telefon, eposta

APPENDIX 3: ETHICAL APPROVAL

Evrak Tarih ve Sayısı: 20.03.2025-444977

T.C.
BAŞKENT ÜNİVERSİTESİ REKTÖRLÜĞÜ
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1993

Sayı : E-62310886-605-444977
Konu : Yiğit Tarlabölen'in In Etik Kurul Onayı

20.03.2025

SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ MÜDÜRLÜĞÜNE

İlgi : 03.03.2025 tarih ve 438086 sayılı yazınız.

Enstitünüz Radyo Televizyon ve Sinema Ana Bilim Dalı Tezli Yüksek Lisans Programı öğrencisi Yiğit Tarlabölen'in, Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Selver Dikkol Akçay danışmanlığında yürütmekte olduğu, "Auteur-ity Theory: Rethinking Auteur Theory in the Video Game Industry" başlıklı tez çalışması değerlendirilmiş ve bilgilerinize ekte sunulmuştur.

Prof. Dr. Sadegül AKBABA ALTUN
Kurul Başkanı

Ek: Değerlendirme Formu

Bu belge, güvenli elektronik imza ile imzalanmıştır.

Belge Doğrulama Kodu :BS95Y6FK2E Belge Doğrulama Adresi : https://www.turkiye.gov.tr/baskent-universitesi-ebys

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10 Mart 2025

İlgili Makama

Üniversitemiz Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Radyo Televizyon ve Sinema Ana Bilim Dalı Tezli Yüksek Lisans Programı öğrencisi Yiğit Tarlabölen'in, Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Selver Dikkol Akçay danışmanlığında yürütmekte olduğu, "Auteur-ity Theory: Rethinking Auteur Theory in the Video Game Industry" başlıklı tez çalışması değerlendirilmiş ve yapılmasında bir sakınca olmadığı tespit edilmiştir.

Bilgilerinize saygılarımızla sunarız.

Başkent Üniversitesi Sosyal ve Beşeri Bilimler ve Sanat Alan Araştırma Kurulu

Ad, Soyad	Değerlendirme	İmza
Prof. Dr. Gözen Güner Aktaş	Olumlu/~~Olumsuz~~	
Prof. Dr. Sadegül Akbaba Altun	Olumlu/~~Olumsuz~~	
Prof. Dr. Fatih Çetin	Olumlu/~~Olumsuz~~	
Prof. Dr. Hasan Tahsin Fendoğlu	Olumlu/~~Olumsuz~~	
Prof. Dr. Filiz Kalelioğlu	Olumlu/~~Olumsuz~~	
Prof. Dr. Hidayet Hale Künüçen	Olumlu/~~Olumsuz~~	
Prof. Dr. Özcan Yağcı	Olumlu/~~Olumsuz~~	