No Rivalry Without Commentary: 
*Misja Esport* Case Study

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**ABSTRACT**
This paper is aimed at assessing a specific type of professional eSports coverage and commentary broadcast designed for multi-platform purposes. The analysis is based on a case study of a Polish program *Misja Esport* (“Mission E-sport”) launched in October 2018 simultaneously on Twitch.tv, Facebook, YouTube, Esportmania.pl (Polish commercial website dedicated to eSports) and Onet.pl (the largest Polish web portal). The show managed to attract significant attention and became a crucial asset in the Onet’s intensive campaign intended to popularize eSports among the Polish speaking audience. *Misja Esport* maintained its initial weekly one-hour format along with self-proclaimed “influencer” status among the core eSports fans in the region.

The experts’ coverage predominantly pertains topics such as current major eSports events and players’ transfers between teams, but areas of expertise are not limited to the business side of competitive video games. Invited spokespeople share their thoughts on especially interesting gameplay strategies displayed in the pro scene, rises and declines in popularity of particular eSport titles, and predictions concerning future development of the eSport scene. The unique features of *Misja Esport* involve its format, inspired by a football-centered VOD show *Misja futbol*, the extremely high production values, and elements inherited from the predominant Polish sports show format: lack of women, focus on the most popular topics as well as relatively limited interactivity with the audience.

The methodological scaffolding of the research will be based on media-related theories developed by the British Cultural Studies, especially Paul du Gay’s model of the circuit of culture (Tudor et al. 1997). I would argue that the employment of this popular, albeit clear-cut framework would help to cover the basic characteristics of the subject while still providing enough room for selected specific inquiries. Thus, the content analysis of *Misja Esport* series would encompass the following topics: the specifics of its representation, characteristics of identities associated with it, means of production and consumption, and mechanisms regulating its distribution and consumption (Turner 2003, p. 228).

Thus, the detailed research questions include the following: how does the aesthetics, as well as visual and rhetoric codes of the analyzed show relate to professional eSports inter- and post-match coverages during major broadcasted tournaments (such as Intel Extreme Masters series)? How does the modularity of the coverage (e.g. selected clips from the main program) relate to the way in which certain topics are presented? Do the TV-esque production values, very different from these exhibited in the prevalent video podcast format, interfere with the viewers’ interactivity? And if that is the case, how is *Misja Esport*’s format mediated between the platforms on which the program operates?
The contribution to the area of game studies that this paper seeks is twofold. First, the aim of this research is to expand upon the media theories pertaining the live coverage of sports events (see Rowe 2014), taking into consideration a case study of a program oscillating between traditional sports and eSports broadcast aesthetics (see Hutchins and Rowe 2009). Second, this paper wishes to reflect upon the ongoing process of commercialization of eSports (see T. L. Taylor 2012; Jin 2010), based on the example of Misja Esport from the perspective of its content and implemented visual rhetoric.

Even though electronic sports are becoming an increasingly researched field within game studies, with papers ranging from the analysis of corporeal (Ferrari 2013; Kari and Karhulahti 2016) to gender and business (N. Taylor 2009; T. L. Taylor 2012) dimensions of this phenomenon, I would argue that the newly emerging, paratextual media formats dedicated towards core eSports audience deserve a separate and special academic interest. With the advent of more in-depth approaches to the interconnectedness of eSports and newly established platforms of gaming and cultural interaction (see Taylor 2018), this paper’s aim is to contribute to the ongoing debates pertaining the various modes of mediated engagement in the area of electronic sports.

*Misja Esport* is a unique example of an eSports focused, well-funded and professional program format which goal is to reach as wide audience as possible on multiple platforms simultaneously. The initial research findings suggest that it appropriates the existing sports TV codes, while simultaneously trying to facilitate new forms of active engagement from its targeted audience. Hence, I would argue that this case study may be an interesting reference point for discussions on the current globalization of eSports, and its validity is not limited to the local market only.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**


