

7 Communication Experts' Perspective on Esports

Angel Torres-Toukoumidis, Isidro Marín-Gutiérrez, and Mari Carmen Caldeiro Pedreira

Introduction

Esports have permeated different disciplines and fields of study, especially computer science (Qian, 2021), business administration (Radman Peša et al., 2017), physical education (Viscione & D'Elia, 2019), language learning (Fuentes & Navas, 2020a), psychology (Leung et al., 2021), law (Burk, 2013), gender studies (Groen, 2016), among others. However, one of the academic bases that has promoted the analysis and development of Esports has been the communication sciences, positioning the scientific contributions of this phenomenon in the academic world (Sell, 2015).

In fact, reviewing the connection between communication studies and Esports at Scopus and Web of Science, the most relevant scientific databases in the world, several common patterns are observed such as that the maximum number of authors are affiliated to Finnish universities, Tampere University and the University of Turku; the authors with most publications in five years have been Juho Hamari, Max Sjöblom and Joseph Macey, who belong to the universities mentioned above; for their part, the most productive year of these publications was 2020 with approximately 35 publications on this subject. Finally, the publisher with the greatest follow-up in the field of Esports has been Taylor and Francis with 28 publications. In short, this opens the discussion on whether this is a temporary trend in which academic experts in the communication area see this time as an opportunity for publishing in an ephemeral context and with an expiry date, or, on the contrary, it is a phenomenon that will be constantly evolving and will act as one of the main fields of media entertainment.

The contributions from the communication field to Esports have demonstrated their involvement by covering multiple lines of research, including audiovisual strategies (Taylor, 2016), media (Rodríguez,

2019), advertising (Byun & Kim, 2020; Fanjul-Peyro et al., 2019), narratives (Xue et al., 2019; Muñoz & Esteban, 2021), speech and linguistics (Boguslavskaya et al., 2020). The followings are some of these contributions:

- Qian et al. (2020) estimate that the relationship with the media and content industry has added several factors that increase the interest of Esports viewers, including virtual rewards, chat rooms, characteristics of casters and quality of transmission. The latter is a major factor for Esports competitions, so much so that the broadcast at mass levels together with the journalistic broadcast of these recreational activities has resulted in the games changing their esthetics adapted to the “Western” player, demanding a change of perception dependent on the trends shown by the media (Johnson & Woodcock, 2017).
- The rapid growth of Esports in the new digital media has meant that millions of people watch the broadcasts being attracted by the naturalness, spontaneity, knowledge and novelty of their players (Hamari & Sjöblom, 2017), i.e., beyond the game, viewers are captivated by the actions of the participants during the competitions and not directly by the videogame.
- Another of the spaces where Esports have been imbued are traditional sports, spaces with a linear attachment to the media. According to Finn (2020), the media coverage of traditional sports through Esports has attracted new fans and resulted in the development of new skills, which also occurred with motorsports. Also, concerning sports marketing and branding, Esports do not destabilize or reinforce the identity of the sports club among its fans, but they simply change the offer of a brand (Mühlbacher et al., 2021).

Finally, in addition to the contributions mentioned such as the extra value of the interfaces common to communication, the inclination of the players and the attachment to traditional sports demonstrated during the Covid-19 pandemic, the cancellation and postponement of sport events showed an opportunity for new media production to expand content dissemination strategies that included the use of streaming platforms with Esports and a professional moment for young people (Goldman & Hedlund, 2020). In assessing this context, what is ultimately the relation between Esports and communication? How do communication experts perceive this media phenomenon? Indeed, these questions, still unresolved from academia, are intended to be addressed in this research, analyzing the theoretical and technical contributions of competitions to the media.

Methodology

The aim of this research is to analyze the relation between Esports and the media. Thus, the specific objective is to examine the perception of communication experts regarding the contributions of Esports in aspects related to transmission, narration, professionalism, journalistic genres, roles of journalists, vocabulary, content, dissemination and learning.

The research has a descriptive qualitative design, defined as the processing of data and properties of a social phenomenon with the purpose of determining situations and patterns in the data (Lahitte & Sánchez Vázquez, 2013). To this end, 20 semi-structured interviews were conducted with communication experts from Europe and Latin America. For the selection of experts, profiles were reviewed through a non-probabilistic sampling with at least ten years of experience in higher education, in the field of communication and new technologies coming from institutions of the following countries: Ecuador, Venezuela, Mexico, Chile, Colombia, Argentina, Portugal and Spain; the experts who participated belong to the Salesian Polytechnic University (Ecuador), the Private Technical University of Loja (Ecuador), the University of Cuenca (Ecuador), the Technical University of the North (Ecuador), the Autonomous University of Chihuahua (Mexico), FLACSO (Mexico and Ecuador), Silva Henríquez University (Chile), the University of Playa Ancha (Chile), Universidad Metropolitana (Venezuela), Universidad Católica Andrés Bello (Venezuela), Universidad Santa María (Venezuela), the University of Valle (Colombia), the University of Rosario (Colombia), the University of Palermo (Argentina), Universidade Beira Interior (Portugal), the University of Seville (Spain), the University of Santiago de Compostela (Spain) and the University of La Laguna (Spain).

The interview had ten questions adapted from the indicators presented by Fuentes and Navas (2020b), Rodas Noguera (2021), Martín Muñoz and Pedrero Esteban (2021), Gallego Acosta (2019) organized in two sections in which two explanatory videos were used as support material to the experts. The first section refers to general questions about Esports and communication composed of four questions about their perspective toward this social phenomenon, its role with traditional media, digital and streaming platforms. The second set of questions has been called “specific questions about Esports and communication” composed of six questions concerning narration, vocabulary, technical professionalism, pre-production, assembly, production, post-production, journalistic genres, the work of commentators, financing and the notion of communicative education.

In contrast, digital media will take an active, professional, primary and dominant role in Esports by integrating them into the broadcasts, enabling the consolidation of audiovisual resources, involving them in specialized programs and establishing revenues in the broadcast. Some of the phrases submitted by the experts were:

They will look for options and mechanisms to integrate them into their broadcasts. I think a symbiosis of digital infotainment will be experienced.

The creation of an Esports-specific section

Although streaming, Twitch and YouTube will play a central role by formalizing the growth of Esports seen in the reach, diversity, easy access and positioning, several of the experts mention that Netflix and Facebook projects prospect the transmission of live competitions of Esports with metaverse.

Regarding specific questions, the relation of Esports with the narration and vocabulary of the commentators, technical professionalism of pre-production, assembly, production and post-production, journalistic genres, journalistic works, funding and type of education related to media literacy was taken into account.

In relation to the narration, a positive estimate is observed in the commentators of these competitions, specifically when mentioning new profiles for the sports narrative specialized in tournaments, rules, tactics and strategies with a non-professional voice that narrates the events that seek to be transmitted with energy, emotion, power and rhythm. Similarly, the appropriateness of the language at the Esports events is asked based on this question, where most experts concentrate on two issues; the first one refers to emotionality and passion, falling into informality which is an attractive aspect for the public. The second question concerns game-specific technicalities expressed through a variety of anglicisms for a specialist audience on the subject. In other words, these events combine colloquial and everyday language with terms that are consubstantial to video games.

Considering the technical professionalism of pre-production, assembly, production and post-production, a fairly high level is prescribed at the audiovisual level with a high-quality management and a high investment. Experts demonstrate that transmissions tend to be linear, lacking depth and image interleaving; therefore, they recommend that it can be optimized with a 4D system, slow motion, use of

different camera angles and associated resources, providing a much more colorful and dynamic broadcast.

Complementing this idea, experts examine the journalistic genres that could be coupled with these kinds of events in which, although it mentioned the incorporation of journalistic chronicles that consists of the orderly and detailed narration of a series of events from beginning to end, news is also suggested for competency results, interviews for featured participants and reports to broadcast in-depth explanations. They also consider that genres can classify journalistic styles, while the notion of formats could be added. They provide a more interactive space which leads to greater user participation through live streaming and coral interviews.

In another significant finding of the study, there are heterogeneous subjects who can exercise journalistic works at the Esports events such as ex-players, players, experts and journalists. Balanced groups should be made where the journalist guides the interaction by diversifying collaborations with multidisciplinary teams. These teams must provide dynamic narration combined with knowledge of Esports. In short, Figure 7.2 demonstrates the most common profiles in Esports events

Regarding financing, communication experts responded thoroughly, saying that resources can originate from a series of business models ranging from total sponsorship to hypersegmentation of income with support from the technology industry, the entertainment industry



Figure 7.2 Who do you think should perform journalistic works during Esport events?

and the video game industry. In the field of communication, there are different financing options:

- Broadcasting rights granted to television companies and streaming platforms.
- Broadcasting rights.
- Subscription and content memberships, also known as micropayments by Pay Per View (Arjona & Muñoz, 2020).
- Sports Team Sponsorship.
- Direct advertising. It is observed in brands.
- Indirect advertising. Monetization from clicks.

There is great openness to new business models in Esports, especially when the services offered combine both conventional and non-conventional strategies, thus extending the magnitude of these events.

Finally, Esports also provide teaching related to the educommunication and media environment. However, experts are wary of their responses as they consider Esports to be an emerging space where it would be difficult to objectively assess the effectiveness of short-, medium- and long-term learning. In short, it can be seen that Esports are a type of informal learning aimed at interconnectivity in which participants are taught in digital, hypermedia and locutionary competencies. They also take into account that it promotes immersion into new cultures and languages.

Conclusions

The media breadth produced by Esports has interested communication professionals by demonstrating that this phenomenon is present and that the experiences could modify the interactive activities in new generations by articulating new participation thresholds. In other words, to understand Esports it is necessary to assimilate the new information and communication channels used by young people.

In summary, experts mention that traditional media will adapt to transmission as future sponsors, while the role of digital media will be considered for Esports, relating it with streaming platforms through accessibility, diversity and positioning.

Another characteristic observed in these events is related with the technical aspects: narrators normally combine informal language with specialized language, favoring the incorporation of new technological systems like 4D, integration of rigid multidisciplinary teams by professional communicators, players and former players, multiple

millionaire industries, entertainment, computing and communication that guarantee a successful future.

In short, it is uncertain if the communication experts' perspective on the future of the Esports is apt; however, they have certainly changed the digital world by building a new information paradigm.

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