**Abstract**

 **Identifying the transmedia object of esports fandom**

Josh Jarrett

University of Staffordshire

Josh Wales-Ferguson

University of Staffordshire

Identifying the object of an esports fan is a multifaceted task. In contrast to traditional team based sports fandoms that are typically defined by a geographic place and long histories in a respective sport (Wann and James, 2019: 51), esports fans do not choose teams based on location, long sporting histories or even the game. For many esports teams, often called esports ‘organisations’, their brand will extend across games and increasingly include wider networks of games related content creators (Schube, 2022). Moreover, esports teams are increasingly adopting a variety of transmedia affiliations across popular culture, for example in Team Liquid’s branded ranges with *Marvel* and *Naruto* (Daniels, 2021). Indeed, for some esports teams, their defining feature are transmedia affiliations, for example with Moist

Esports, founded by popular content creators ‘MoistCr1tikal’/ ‘Ludwig’, or with Karmine

Corp, founded by French streamer ‘Kameto’. The line of address to audiences and fans of these teams is noteworthy as the games related content creators behind these teams often blur distinctions between professional and amateur or commercial and non-commercial to appeal to its audiences, similar to wider co-creative relations (Taylor, 2018). Crucially, these teams and their respective fandoms evidence a model of engagement that decentres the traditional appeals of sports fandom, representative of what Scholz (2020: 4) has called the ‘postnetwork’ origins of esports media.

This paper utilises the growing body of literature surrounding transmedia engagement (Evans, 2020; Ruotsalainen and Välisalo, 2021) and affective value (Hills, 2015; Jarrett,

2021) to analyse expressions of fandom associated with Karmine Corp and Moist Esports. Examples include social media posts created by the teams, fan banners or memes created by fans and real time responses from audiences in Twitch chats. Taken together, these expressions of fan identity exemplify what Evans (2020: 8) calls the paradigm of transmedia culture where audiences move between ‘technological devices, distribution platforms and forms of content’ with ease. Moreover though, this paper evidences the affective lines of address teams are adopting to both establish and expand their fandoms as esports decentres itself away from the traditional markers of sports fandom.

**Bibliography**

Daniels, T. (2021) ‘Team Liquid unveils apparel collaboration with Naruto’, *Esports Insider,* 8th February 2021. Available at: https://esportsinsider.com/2021/02/team-liquid-unveilsapparel-collaboration-with-naruto

Evans, E. (2020) *Understanding Engagement in Transmedia Culture,* Abingdon: Routledge.

Hills M (2015) Veronica mars, fandom and the ‘affective economics’ of crowdfunding poachers. *New Media & Society* *17*(2): 183–197.

Jarrett, J. (2021). Gaming the gift: The affective economy of League of Legends ‘fair’free-toplay model. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, *21*(1), 102-119.

Ruotsalainen, M,. and Välisalo, T. (2021) “Esports Fandom in the Age of Transmedia: The Reception of the Overwatch League”. *Eracle. Journal of Sport and Social Sciences* 4 (1), 11 -

35.

Scholz, T. M. (2020). Deciphering the World of eSports. *International Journal on Media*

*Management*, *22*(1), 1-12.

Shube, S. (2022) ‘FaZe Clan’s grand plans’, *GQ Magazine*, 7th June, 2022. Available at:

https://www.gq-magazine.co.uk/culture/article/faze-clan-interview

Taylor, T, L. (2018) *Watch Me Play: Twitch and the Rise of Game Live Streaming*. Oxford, UK: Princeton University Press.

Wann, D. L., and James, J. D. (2018). *Sport fans: The Psychology and Social Impact of Fandom*. Routledge.