

Game on: The next big brand opportunity to embrace

By  [Shaune Jordaan](#)

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You could certainly be forgiven for thinking that gaming is a niche interest - the reserve of kids, nerds and techies. Because until fairly recently, it was! But that's no longer the case. Like so many other industries, gaming has been markedly impacted by the coronavirus pandemic - in the most positive way.



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There are currently 2.7 billion gamers worldwide, who spend an average of 6.5 hours playing each week, according to an [article](#) in *The Drum*. Numbers like these simply cannot be ignored by brands that want to remain not just relevant and competitive, but in business.

Virtual connections

In the past year many forms of entertainment, including professional sports, have had to take a backseat due to COVID-19 lockdowns in various parts of the world. But the coronavirus crisis appears to have had the opposite effect on gaming.

Gaming was ideally positioned to fill the void left by the more traditional forms of entertainment, considering it delivers action, engagement and – perhaps most importantly – connection - albeit via a virtual platform. In the words of Christina

Turner, Marketing director for Duracell in the UK, a brand that has embraced gaming as a massive opportunity: “The events of (2020) have elevated the ability of games to provide both kids and adults some connection with their friends and make them feel like they’re participating in some social part of the world.”

Gaming as a strategic brand priority

While few brand marketers could have foreseen how quickly gaming would become a “culture touchstone”, as [Digiday](#) describes this new trend, the fact is that brands want to be where people are. And people, it appears, are gaming.

Back in January 2019, Netflix CEO Reed Hastings called the online video game Fortnite a bigger threat to the streaming service than networks like Disney and HBO. Those paying attention would have already had gaming on their radar, but most would have believed it would take far longer to reach the point of critical mass when it becomes a brand priority.

Today, the question for brands isn’t whether or not to get involved in the gaming space, but rather what is the best way in. And marketers – as is their renown – are finding increasingly innovative ways to bring brands into games. Whether it’s sponsorships of teams and individual players, branded characters, in-games ads or strategic partnerships with the video games developer, brands are becoming a seamless part of the gaming experience.

It’s an industry that’s showing no sign of slowing down either, with one estimate suggesting the industry will be worth \$180 billion this year. And brands that want to share in the bounty need to get in the game as soon, and as strategically, as possible.

Elevated engagement

No matter the medium or the platform, engagement is always the brand objective – from a marketer or advertiser’s point of view. And gaming provides a level of engagement that makes it possible to forge real connections with fans, as highlighted in an *Econsultancy* [article](#).

And if engagement is the reward for compelling content, the result of offering users an engaging, memorable experience, then the brand’s role in gaming is not unlike what is expected of it elsewhere – to connect with consumers in an authentic way.

ABOUT SHAUNE JORDAAN

Shaune Jordaan is the co-founder and chief commercial officer at Hoorah Digital. He is passionate about delivering world class results to brands and building a digital culture that drives change. He is the former co-founder/CEO of an award winning performance digital agency with an extensive global client list. He's worked extensively across the globe, growing digital portfolios and leading digital transformation. He is one of Africa's most experienced digital leaders.

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