

3 Trends on YouTube That Prove Gaming Culture Isn't So Niche

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There's an enthusiastic and influential community on YouTube around video game culture. Can't quite imagine what gaming videos are all about? Have no fear. Here we break down three kinds of gaming content growing on YouTube that prove gaming videos aren't so different from other kinds of videos.

Whether you've noticed it or not, gaming is deeply ingrained in pop culture today: Game tunes are showing up in electronic music, workout classes are getting "gamified" and Hollywood is rolling out the red carpet for movies about games like "Ready Player One".

Gaming has gone mainstream – so much so that, according to gaming trends analyst Newzoo, it's one of the most-watched content categories on YouTube today.¹

This presents a big opportunity for brands, game-related or not. Gamers are a highly engaged and influential audience on YouTube. But what are they tuning into? What is gaming content all about?

You may think gaming content is niche, but it's not that different from other content people are watching on YouTube – like competitive sports, how-to and unboxing videos. Here's how those content trends play out within the gaming category.

1. Competitive sports: Because sports videos thrill – whether for esports or football

Like traditional competitive sports, esports – organised, multiplayer video game competitions – have all the same trappings: crowd-pleasing players, recognisable team uniforms, official playoffs, die-hard fans and the thrill factor. So it's no surprise esports have become a cultural phenomenon, with tournament footage drawing 320M people worldwide and counting.²

Watch time of esports videos has grown by over 90% in the past year.³ Try searching for “LOL”. You won't find “laugh out loud”, but rather videos about “League of Legends” championships.

Skilled esports challengers like Nadeshot or Scumperjumper have amassed millions of subscribers to their channels where they share exciting gameplay strategies, favourite plays and behind-the-scenes videos. Need to see it to wrap your head around it? This video features Nadeshot reliving the intensity of his first Major League Gaming championship.

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Brands are starting to join in the esports fun too. Red Bull has created its own esports channel, sponsors teams, and hosts competitions, for example. Arby's and Dell have both teamed up with ELeague, a professional esports league.

2. How-to: Because gamers want to improve too

Advancing through the levels of a video game is designed to be challenging. As with any other hobby, participants hone their skills by practising different strategies, creating new and dynamic gameplay. That's where YouTube comes in: 74% of YouTube gamers say they watch YouTube videos to learn how to get better at a game.⁴

It's no wonder that there are over 20M gaming how-to videos uploaded to YouTube.⁵ To put that into perspective, that's as if half the population of Canada uploaded a gaming how-to video.⁶



Source: YouTube Data, Global; classification as how-to (incl. walk-through and let's play) videos was based on public data such as headlines, tags, etc., and may not account for every such video available on YouTube, 21 April 2017.

How-to videos on gaming range from walk-throughs of the most difficult parts of a game to tips and tricks for accumulating maximum points and discovering Easter eggs.

Since the "Pokémon GO" craze started, British YouTuber Ali-A has been creating daily videos to document his adventures catching Pokémons around London. Between his two channels, Ali-A has already amassed 13.3M subscribers, thanks to his entertaining personality and impressive skills.⁷ Check out this video where he brought viewers along on a "how-to" hunt for the new Pokémon that had just launched – Ditto.

3. Unboxing: Because anticipation for new gaming toys runs high

Most YouTube fans are now familiar with the concept of unboxing videos where people open a package containing a new phone, beauty product, or other special delivery, live on camera.

Gamers also turn to unboxing videos to get a look at new gaming toys, such as consoles, collectables and, of course, game swag. Last year, there were over 40M hours of gaming unboxing videos watched on YouTube – on mobile alone.⁸ That's more than 4,500 years' worth of continuous watch time!



Source: YouTube Data, Global; classification as unboxing video was based on public data such as headlines, tags, etc., and may not account for every such video available on YouTube, Jan. - Dec. 2016.

Brands have started to take note. For example, when Nintendo introduced the Switch earlier this year, they made sure to send the product ahead of launch to popular creator families such as the Eh Bee Family or big-name

technology fans such as iJustine so they could unbox the Switch for their fans. iJustine shared her own unscripted enthusiasm with her fans as she got a first glimpse at the product in real life.

Get in the game of video game culture

As you can see, when you break down gaming content, it's really not all that different from other types of YouTube content. Popular trends transcend categories. So whether or not your brand is part of the gaming industry, there's a valuable opportunity to connect with gamers, an important audience that offers broad reach and deep engagement. Make the most of these gaming trends by collaborating with gaming creators, considering media placement alongside this popular content, and leaning in to major gaming moments like E3.

And just like that, you're no longer a n00b.

Sources

¹ Newzoo/Nevaly, "Let's Play Global 2016: How Video Influencers Are Revolutionising the Gaming Industry."

² Newzoo, via BBC Sport, "Esports 'set for £1bn revenue and 600 million audiences by 2020'", 21 Mar. 2017.

³ YouTube Data, Global; classification as esports video was based on public data such as headlines, tags, etc., and may not account for every such video available on YouTube, Jan. - Dec. 2015 and 2016.

⁴ Google/Ipsos Connect, "Human Stories", May 2017.

⁵ YouTube Data, Global; classification as how-to (incl. walk-through and let's play) videos was based on public data such as headlines, tags, etc., and may not account for every such video available on YouTube, 21 April 2017.

⁶ United Nations, "World Population Prospects 2015", via Wikipedia.

⁷ YouTube Data, Global; for Ali-A's two channels Ali-A and MoreAliA, subscribers totaled 13,391,849 on 31 May 2017.