

More brands exploring the e-sports and gaming space

By [Gabbi Brondani](#)

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The way PR is practiced and implemented has changed drastically in the past few years. The same goes for how brands communicate with their consumers.



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Gone are the days of brands speaking *to* consumers. These days, consumers want to be engaged *with* (yes, we've heard this before). And what better way to engage with consumers and build brand loyalty than when they (consumers) are in their "sweet spot"?

2017 was a year during which we saw more lifestyle and FMCG brands dipping their toes into somewhat uncharted territory to engage with a large, almost *untapped audience, which holds immense potential for many brands. That uncharted territory is gaming and e-sports.

In [an article by Barry Louzada](#), he noted:

“ Esports is one of the fastest growing markets in the world, which draws more viewers globally than the NBA and is currently growing at almost 12% per year with an estimated 180 million viewers expected worldwide in 2019. ”

In SA, the gaming and e-sports industry is seeing rapid growth with more teams competing at a professional level locally, and at tournaments internationally and more brands getting involved with tournaments, leagues and teams. Some big names who threw their weight behind gaming and e-sports in 2017 were Samsung, HP, Asus, Lenovo, Plantronics, Red Bull and Monster, to name but a few.

In 2018, we're going to see this list grow substantially with more "familiar" brands (not the usual gaming/tech brands who are already "at home" within the gaming space) making room in their marketing and PR budgets to explore the gaming and e-sports space.

There's big value for brands to get involved with the gaming and professional e-sports industry in SA – both in terms of the size of the gaming community, and the plethora of ways to interact with this community.

During a CS:GO tournament hosted by Mettlestate, content creators and a brand which hosts gaming events in SA in 2017, they had over 150,000 people tuning in to [their Twitch channel](#) over a two-month period.

To provide a bit of context, Twitch is a global streaming platform that most, if not all e-sports is streamed on, from casual game play to competitive e-sports. It's "Youtube for gamers," for lack of a better description.



Twitch reveals IRL feature that blurs lines between game, real life

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There are over 100 million unique users on Twitch who watch more video footage than the average Youtuber. Twitch was bought by Amazon for \$970 million, which shows just how valuable a platform it is. There are over 200,000 people from South Africa watching Twitch monthly with massive opportunity for growth, so the fact that Mettlestate garnered over 150,000 viewers throughout the tournament goes to show just how much interest there is for really good quality gaming and e-sports content in South Africa.

As mentioned briefly, there are many options available to brands wishing to explore the gaming and e-sports space, including:

- Content creation to specifically speak to and engage with the gaming and e-sports community;
- Partnering up with a credible gaming and e-sports company to host tournaments – big or small – be it online or an actual Lan event;
- Sponsoring professional gamers and e-sports teams, where a brand would have access to the individual or team and have them join in on promoting new products or supporting launches or activations by the brand; while also having access to the various social media channels run by these teams, with an existing, and loyal, following; and
- in-game branding, and so much more.

There's no template or set structure to how brands can or should engage with the gaming and e-sports community, it's all up to the imagination and budget of the brand.

One important thing to bear in mind if your brand *is* keen to explore this space: **One-off advertising won't bode well with gamers.** These guys and girls are looking for long-term commitment and engagement from brands. If you do this well, the value for your brand will be great.



Another scene fromrAge 2017.

As much as the gaming and e-sports space is somewhat still in its infancy in SA, this means that brands have a blank canvas and a world of opportunities available to them, to engage with a totally new consumer and industry – which is pretty damn exciting!

*I say it's an untapped audience because we haven't typically seen many lifestyle/FMCG brands engaging within this space; but we do have a lot of your traditional gaming/tech brands already engaging with this audience.



A scene fromrAge 2017.

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