

## 'GAME ON' FOR MARKETERS 🎮

With over nearly 3 billion gamers in the world right now, it's fast becoming *the way to spend time alone or connect with friends*. Odds are a **large portion of most brands' target audiences are gamers** in some form or another. As gaming continues to grow in prominence and the playing field becomes increasingly crowded, **how do brands play an authentic role in these platforms to engage audiences and build real cultural relevance?**

To discuss this and more, the **Marketing Society of Ireland and THINKHOUSE** hosted an event for marketers this week featuring 26 year old Twitch Star Gee Nelly and a panel of leading marketers with experience in gaming strategies.

Following are the highlights and insights from brands, gamers and thought-leaders that were shared at the event that set out to identify where the industry is going and how brands can navigate their way in to build connections in the gaming community and leverage dynamic gaming platforms.

### GAMING 101 FOR MARKETERS

From the outside looking in, gaming can be very overwhelming. **Claire Hyland from The Youth Lab at Thinkhouse helped break down 'Gaming 101'** need-to-knows for marketers today:

Right now, **a third of the global population** can be considered gamers. The Asia Pacific region is at the heart of the global video gaming industry, followed by North American and Europe. The US is the second most advanced market, followed by Japan, South Korea and Germany.

**There is no single gamer profile:** Contrary to what can show up in pop culture with regards to gamers, there are so many different niche groups and communities in the gaming world - think of it like the world of sports, super diverse. The average age of a 'gamer' today is 31. In fact, there are a lot of 'gamers' who don't see themselves as gamers. The 'hardcore gamer' actually only makes up 4% of the gaming community in 2020. Sixty percent claim to not see themselves as gamers.

**The reach of gaming is growing:** More and more audiences are turning their attention to the medium, so there are increasingly opportunities for all of us in the world of marketing to reach new segments of consumers. **Where are they playing?** Everywhere. But Twitch has millions of gamers and gaming fans. It has 140 million active users and 9.2 million active streamers. On YouTube there are now over 350 gamers that have followers of over 10 million and more than 200 more than 100 billion hours of gaming video content watched on YouTube in 2020. Discord also has 150 million monthly active users and it's very useful for active multi-player games to strategise their gaming moves.

**Game-specific breakdowns matter:** Fifty five percent of the gaming audience is male, and 45% female. This audience makeup can change depending largely on the game, for example Animal Crossing leans more female and the esports audience is largely male.

**It's big money:** The esports (gaming competitions between individuals and teams) industry is taking gaming to a whole new level. The Prize pool for the inaugural competitive season of Fortnite was \$100 million with \$30 million paid out during the first ever Fortnite World Cup.

**Think community-first:** Gamers always talk about their communities. Increasingly casual gamers also play in group games as a way to socialise and connect with friends in a variety of ways too.

**Where next for gaming?** It's likely that the gaming experience will become even more immersive, and with high-fi graphics and haptics and the advent of the metaverse, gaming will really feel like you're escaping to a new world. It will also be a world built around you - as AI advances storylines and experiences that mold around you as the center character.

## TALK TO US: THE YOUTH GAMER PERSPECTIVE

International Twitch Star and Social Media influencer, 26-year-old **Georgina "Gee Nelly" Rose Nelly** works with world leading brands such as Lacoste, Netflix, Xbox, Facebook and Uber. She's one of the biggest variety Twitch streamers in the UK with over [180,000 followers](#), and has a loyal following who label themselves [#NellyNation](#).

Speaking on her own experience of working with brands and pushing the boundaries in innovative content, Nelly highlighted the **importance of community connection** and streamers having a following on **multiple different platforms**. She has a following on [Instagram](#), [TikTok](#) and Twitch. Building up these audiences she says is a lot about luck, and a lot about relationships and collaboration with others in the industry: *"It's hard to keep up because it's so competitive. You could take a week off and your numbers will drop in the thousands. It's really scary. During lockdown I was streaming 12-15 hours a day. When people watch you stream they watch you live - so they feel really connected."*

For brands, she hammers home how **streamers are unique** to other influencers or celebrity partners - as well as being a brand in her own right, she has a unique relationship with her 'live' audience: *"I find that companies struggle with the reality of selling a script on live stream. Sometimes they'll give me a script and the people in my chat find it weird and inauthentic. The thing that really helps is working with us. They have to work with how our audience interacts with us."*

**Her advice to brands?** *"Talk to us. Ask us for suggestions. Often companies come to me and they have everything laid out. We have ideas of what will work on our channels."*

## TEST & LEARN: THE PARTNERSHIP MANAGER PERSPECTIVE

**Ben Finnegan, ESport and Gaming Partnership Manager, Epic Global**, works with esports teams and brands to engage fan bases and help talent profit from their fame. He stressed the importance of routine and care for esports players who could be gaming for 15 hours a day. Part of his job is to consult with teams and help them perform at optimal levels - from getting dietitians to psychologists on board, it's an elite job" *"There are insane levels of professionalism being put into Esports teams. These individuals, like any athlete, need to perform at elite levels. For brands right now it's the time to get in and test and learn. It might feel like a leap of faith, but there are teams for any sized brand now in esports. Timing is everything."*

## BRAND BUILDING & INSIGHT LED ROI: KEY ADVICE FROM MARKETERS

**Aoife McGuigan, Head of Marketing, Suntory Beverage and Food Ireland** is a big advocate for how gaming can deliver on business and brand objectives. Speaking about Lucozade energy's legacy in gaming with [Lara Croft](#) (and more), she noted how it **helped to recruit new users** into the brand: *"Lara Croft is a busy lady. She needs some energy. So you can see how there was a fit for Lucozade. Creating big partnerships with the game and Playstation and supporting it with marketing campaigns like 'Larazade' helped us to recruit new users into the brand... For our objectives it goes back to new users and relevancy. The partnership is all about making connections."* It's not about quick wins and short-term tactical efforts either - Lucozade's been in the gaming 'game' since the late 90's: *"It's great for strategic, long-term brand building... Working with communities long term is a commercial challenge too."*

The importance of **quality connection** echoes in McGuigan's advice to others who want to get in on the benefits of the world of gaming for brands - *"Respect the gaming community - don't just see it as a quick win for the brand. This is a world of professionalism and gamers you want to have a partnership with. Our passion is to work directly with the gaming community. To do this credibly my advice is to lean into your own teams and those who are younger than you and living it. Lean on your agencies. You pay for that relationship. Reach out and have conversations with gamers."*

Check out this esports collab example from [Lucozade Sport in the UK and #United](#).

**Conor Barron, Digital Marketing & CRM Manager An Post**, saw gaming as a way in to launch the [An Post Money Mate](#) (a pocket money app for 7-15 year olds). Their strategy was to dip a toe in the water to **build awareness of the brand** and to initially establish the category. Only after that comes the task of shifting product - it's brand building first. Similar to sports, Barron looks at gaming through a sponsorship, **longer term lens** rather than a short term tactical piece - something that should be considered over years, not months with partners who are willing to work with you.

He was also open about the challenges the team had to overcome as a non-endemic brand in this world: *"The great and terrible thing is that it can be so broad and big. A big part of it is trying to sell the concept to non-gamers internally, because they didn't necessarily see the value straight away. We also had to think about it from a safety perspective - that was another hurdle. But we worked with our agency and did the research and we were able to turn our potential detractors into our biggest advocates."*

## BRAND TAKEOUTS

*Given the longer engagement times with your target audiences on gaming platforms (viewers average 106 minutes on Twitch a day), there are huge opportunities with gaming to realize a great return on investment in gaming. Communities are super engaged.*

*Working with gamers in a collaborative way via a creator-led approach is the best bet for reaching their communities in the right way.*

*The key to future success now is just about getting in and getting active...Look to your team, your agencies, and the passionate people active in the world of gaming to guide you and help*

find your niche. There are two obvious routes to initially explore 1) via the influencer community and gamers creating content or 2) in game advertisement.

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**ENDS**

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IMAGERY: Individually captioned images from this event are downloadable from here:  
<https://we.tl/t-Zu1uIVH6E1>