

# Being playful pays

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There's nothing new about gaming, but in this age of expanding connectivity, what's next on the fun frontier? Sikota Bones, Media Director at [DAN Zambia](#), explores.



One evening a few weeks ago, I was sitting in my living room with some time to kill before heading out the door. I decided to turn on my PlayStation and play [Fortnite](#) for the very first time. Now, with my advancing age, I'm rapidly creeping into the "late adopter" bracket; yet what was meant to be a few minutes of messing around became a self-imposed mission of vengeance, as round after round I was eliminated and re-spawned.

## Natural-born gamers

What drove my motivation? Being engaged with others (in this case, strangers, most likely younger than me, although thankfully in the virtual world age is not a factor). And a desire to show my dominance – a bit like a lion cub who play-fights with other cubs. After all, our natural inclination as mammals from a young age is to engage with others. Brands – especially those with a strong personality – have cottoned on to this and, thanks to technology, can now engage with their audiences like never before. A game is defined as "an activity that one engages in for amusement or fun." What better way for brands to interact with consumers?

It's also in our natural coding to want to be included. Think back to when you were a kid: when did you feel most included? Probably when you were part of a game. This motive of inclusion never leaves us, no matter how old we get. And clever brands know this.

## Experiential messaging

In the words of game designer [Chris Swain](#), "Games, because of their interactive nature, have the potential to allow users to receive ethical messages experientially."

One of the best ways to drive a message is to have an audience experience it. Think about food samples in grocery store aisles. Or test-driving a car. There is no substitute for experience. Games take this to a whole new level (pun intended) by allowing the audience to explore the full experience of a brand's products or services. Games also have the potential to unleash those instinctive motivating forces and feelings – and feeling emotion while experiencing a brand is likely to lead to purchase.

## Trend alert: games in messaging

[The Year of Expanding Connectivity Carat 10 Trends 2019 report](#) suggests that the boundaries between gaming and messaging are blurring, with apps like Facebook Messenger and Snapchat having recently added games to their messaging products. Dan Calladine, author of the report, suggests that the experiential factor is at play here too: “This is part of a bigger push for messaging apps to become more central to people’s lives. Just as the Chinese super app WeChat blurs boundaries between messaging, social networking, commerce and entertainment, there is potential for others to do the same. The more users can do within one app, the longer they are likely to spend with the application... This trend is happening now for two reasons: the rise of experience in retail, and the growing richness of the online experience.”

So, who will come out victorious? The answer lies in the inclusion factor. In Dan’s words, “Brands that have earned a right to be part of a game played between friends will be the most natural participants in this trend.”

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