

Why business can no longer ignore gaming in Africa

By [Barry Louzada](#)

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One can say that everybody has become a gamer. If you ask anyone what games they started playing during lockdown, I would bet they have an answer. From committed gamers who have tried out new releases to their parents who have discovered mobile gaming. During this pandemic, gaming has increased globally in every sense - and Africa is no exception.



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In South Africa, the total video games revenue, which was worth just R2bn in 2014, rose to R3.5bn in 2018 and is predicted to increase from 9.2% CAGR to R5.4bn 2023.* This figure is probably even higher now.

Compared to global figures, Africa may have some catching up to do. However, in many ways, it's an audience that is untapped. The scope for growth in Africa is immense, with countries like South Africa, Nigeria, Ghana, Tanzania, and Kenya all showing significant growth figures in the past few years.



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Esports is also growing on the continent, and mobile esports is gaining critical mass in Africa. The introduction of 5G has - and will - further hasten the uptake of mobile gaming and mobile esports, with major companies already investing in tournaments.

In addition to more players coming on board, one of the biggest things that Covid-19 has done in the gaming community: open the door for non-endemic brands – or brands traditionally or organically not associated with gaming – to capitalise on gaming platforms for exposure.

With mobile gaming becoming a major catalyst for inclusion – of more players, broader audiences, and undeniable opportunities – the stakes are getting higher; prize money is increasing, and popularity is on a rapid rise. In tournaments like the League of Legends Mid-Season Invitational overseas, big sponsors like Verizon are stepping up. In Africa, there is space for similar partnerships to come – and there is no better time to get started than now.



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As technology and mobile devices improve, opportunities to connect with gamers are increasing. The stats don't lie, and we see this from our own first-hand experience. On Mettlestate, for example, over 90% of the traffic we see is from mobile phones, and we are already seeing some big brands taking notice – like mobile providers, sports brands, food brands, and more. And as we move forward, it is only a matter of time before Africa becomes another gaming epicentre.

Because gaming is so flexible, there is nothing stopping brands from leveraging the captive audiences they attract across the board. The numbers are huge, and viewership is wholly engaged. There is also space for brands to own their own tournaments, creating an exclusive home for themselves online. Content creation is the gift that keeps on giving, particularly if the content is relevant.

The common misconception in Africa seems to be the cost factor. Exorbitant amounts of money are not on the table in African gaming just yet. We are not yet in a space where prize pools are in the millions. Businesses can come on board for comparatively economical investments at this stage. Connecting with gaming audiences can be more affordable – and more impactful – than buying a billboard or using more traditional advertising platforms.



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Ultimately, business is missing out on opportunities on a massive scale. As a statistical benchmark, the simple reality is that 80% of gamers on the Mettlestate platform alone are not consuming traditional media – like newspapers, TV, billboards, or radio. This is an audience that exclusively engages online, and even Facebook has lost popularity with this ever-growing demographic.

There is a world of opportunity that brands are, by and large, overlooking in a sports arena that is growing by the minute, globally and definitely in Africa. It is only a matter of time before the scales tip, and someone dominates the space.

ABOUT BARRY LOUZADA

Living and breathing e-sports for the last 20 years Barry "Anthrax" Louzada has one goal and that is to see e-sports get the true recognition it deserves. Whether it is leading teams to international dominance or shout casting games to panel host. Now heading up the Mettlestate brand there is nothing regarding e-sports that he doesn't know .
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