

THINK GAMING CONTENT IS NICHE? THINK AGAIN

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THE **RUNDOWN**

Gaming has woven its way into all areas of pop culture—sports, music, television, and more. Its appeal goes far beyond teenage boys (women are now the largest video game–playing demographic!). So it’s no surprise that gaming content has taken off on YouTube. Why? As one gaming creator put it, “You don’t have to play soccer to enjoy it on TV.” From an advertiser’s perspective, gaming content is a rare breed—one that delivers engagement *and* reach. Even if your brand isn’t part of the gaming industry, you can get in on the action. Gautam Ramdurai, Insights Lead, Pop Culture & Gaming at Google, explains how.

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Take a broad look at pop culture, and you'll see that "gaming" is tightly woven into its fabric. It's everywhere—in music, [television](#), [movies](#), sports, and even your favorite [cooking shows](#). And as gaming content takes off on YouTube, gaming is becoming not only something people *do* but also something they *watch*.

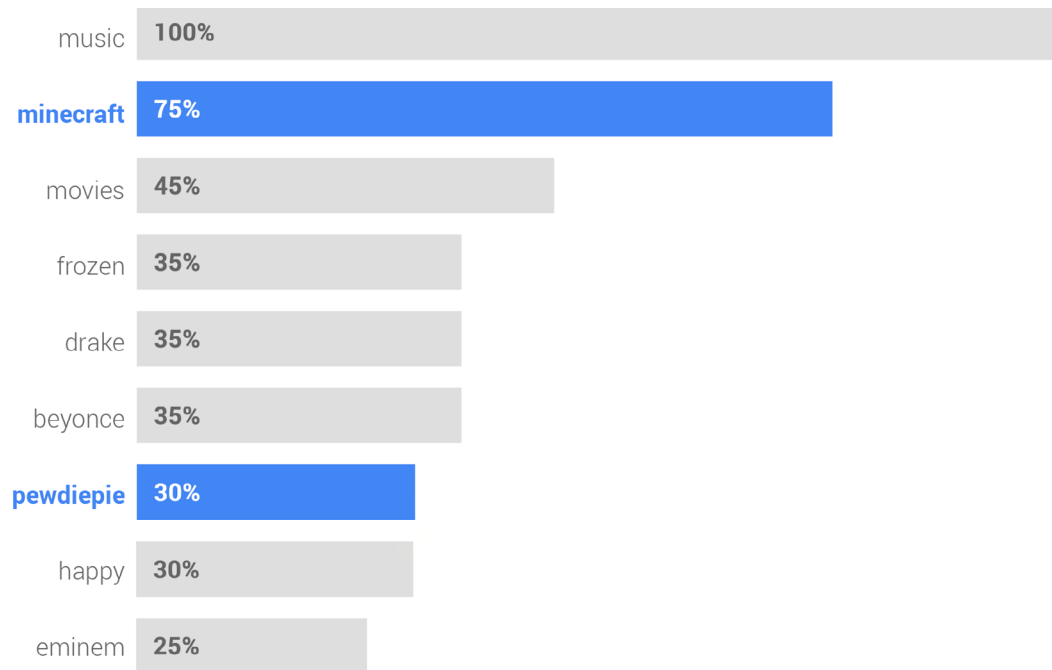
A generation (18–34-year-old millennials) has grown up on gaming. For them, having a gaming console was as ordinary as having a TV. They can probably still recall blowing into game cartridges and wondering if it made a difference. And if they grew up on gaming, they came of age in the YouTube era. Many now consider it the [best platform to explore their passions](#). (Platforms surveyed include AOL, ComedyCentral.com, ESPN.com, Facebook, Hulu, Instagram, MTV.com, Tumblr, Vimeo, and YouTube.) This convergence has resulted in an abundance of gaming content, and brands interested in connecting with this interested and engaged audience should take note.

An engaged community and culture

Just how popular is gaming? A [Nielsen report](#) shows that about two-thirds of the U.S. population (64%) plays video games on some device. And game launches can draw crowds that match even the biggest blockbuster movie audiences. Take, for instance, the highest-grossing movie of 2014 to date, [Transformers: Age of Extinction](#). In its 15 weeks at the box office, the film took in over \$1B worldwide. By comparison, the Grand Theft Auto V game launch hit that figure in the first week of release last year. It became the fastest-selling entertainment product in history and broke another five sales records along the way, according to [Guinness World Records](#).

Interest in gaming is also [soaring on YouTube](#). In 2014, the second-most searched topic on YouTube is actually a game: Minecraft. What's more, it's not just the volume of views that is impressive. It's the level of engagement and time spent with gaming content that should make marketers do a double-take.

Top YouTube Queries of 2014



Source: YouTube Search Trends, 2014.

Gaming content takes many forms

Gaming content on YouTube spans a wide range: game news and reviews, instructional videos, people goofing off while playing games, and, of course, competitive gaming championships. One exciting and fast-growing category on YouTube is competitive gaming, also referred to as eSports. As with pro sports (baseball and football, for example), it has iconic players, fans, team uniforms, playoffs, and more. Although the eSports phenomenon is garnering significant media attention *and* revenue, it's only part of a much larger gaming content ecosystem.

Also popular on YouTube are walkthrough videos, which help gamers conquer their foes, find hidden gems, and improve their pace. This genre of video is called "Let's Play." It's like watching your favorite basketball star dunk while listening to rich commentary on how he does it, but for gaming. And [Let's Play](#) creators take viewers on a hilarious journey through games, allowing them to witness their failures, detours, and successful strategies.

Sometimes watching someone else play a game can be as much fun as playing yourself. This isn't surprising because we engage in similar behavior when watching the Food Network. Even though we can't taste the food being prepared on shows such as *Chopped*, the process, tension, and competitive nature make for great entertainment.

In a recent [Google Consumer Survey](#), viewers often cited the "reactions" and "commentary" of the YouTube creator as a big draw for this kind of content. One respondent said, "It's a shared experience with a favorite creator." Conan O'Brien's [Clueless Gamer](#) series is a great example of this. He may not play games well, but his commentary, observations, and reactions add value—and a lot of laughs.

Engaged viewers keep coming back for more

Gaming content on YouTube is some of the stickiest. More than 20 of the top 100 YouTube channels with the most subscribers worldwide are gaming related. Who's the most subscribed? That would be Let's Play creator [PewDiePie](#) with over 32M subscribers. His loyal following now outnumbers the population of Canada. To give you some perspective, Google Trends shows that searches for PewDiePie on YouTube are on par with stars such as Eminem and Katy Perry. He's even made a cameo on "[South Park](#)."

The Most Subscribed Gaming Channels on YouTube



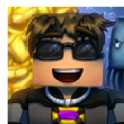
PewDiePie

32 Million+
Subscribers



Machinima

12 Million+
Subscribers



**Sky Does
Minecraft**

10 Million+
Subscribers



VanossGaming

10 Million+
Subscribers



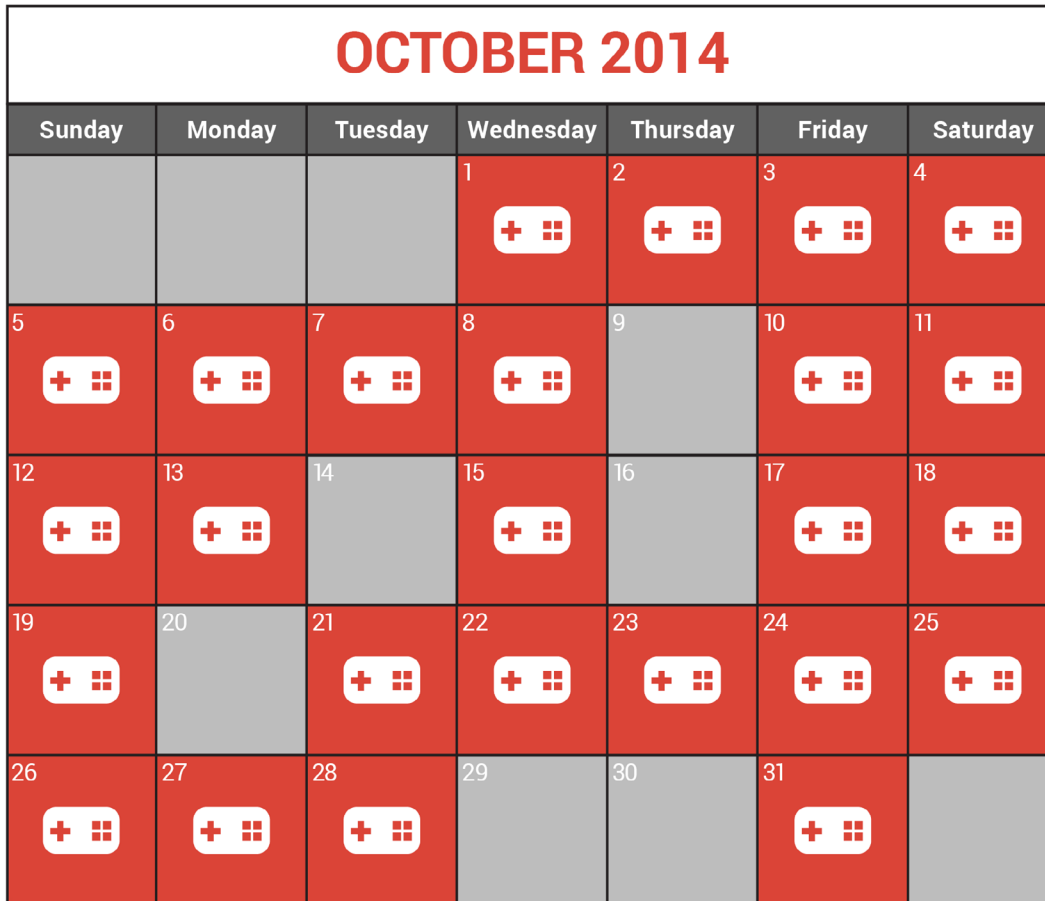
TheSyndicateProject

8 Million+
Subscribers

Source: YouTube Global Subscriber Data, January–November 2014.

These huge subscriber numbers make for a sustained and loyal audience, and viewers keep coming back for more. YouTube data shows that six of the top ten most-viewed channels in the U.S. are about gaming. And on most days in October, there was at least one gaming video on the daily top ten "[trending on YouTube](#)" list.

Days When Gaming Videos Hit YouTube's Top 10



Source: Google Trends: Trending On YouTube, October 2014, United States.

Gaming content isn't just for gamers

A Google Consumer Survey fielded in October 2014 of people who said they watch gaming videos on YouTube revealed that only a portion of this group (37%) considers themselves "gamers." When asked about their motivations for watching gaming videos, viewers mentioned "entertainment" and "humor" as often as they mentioned "learning new strategies" or "game tips." We heard similar sentiments when conducting one-on-one

interviews with fans and creators at [VidCon 2014](#), a convention for video creator and fan communities, and at [New York Comic Con 2014](#). We also wanted to find out *why* they watch videos by creators such as [PewDiePie](#) and [SkyDoesMinecraft](#). Quite a few fans answered, “Because they’re hilarious!” Some even compared these videos to stand-up comedy. An up-and-coming gaming creator summed up interest with the following analogy: “You don’t have to play soccer to enjoy it on TV.”

From an advertiser’s perspective, gaming content is a rare breed—one that delivers engagement *and* reach. Take Maker, a YouTube multichannel network owned by Disney, for example. Channels on its gaming sub-network, Polaris, reach more 18–34-year-old men than MLB’s video network does, according to November 2014 data from comScore Video Metrix.

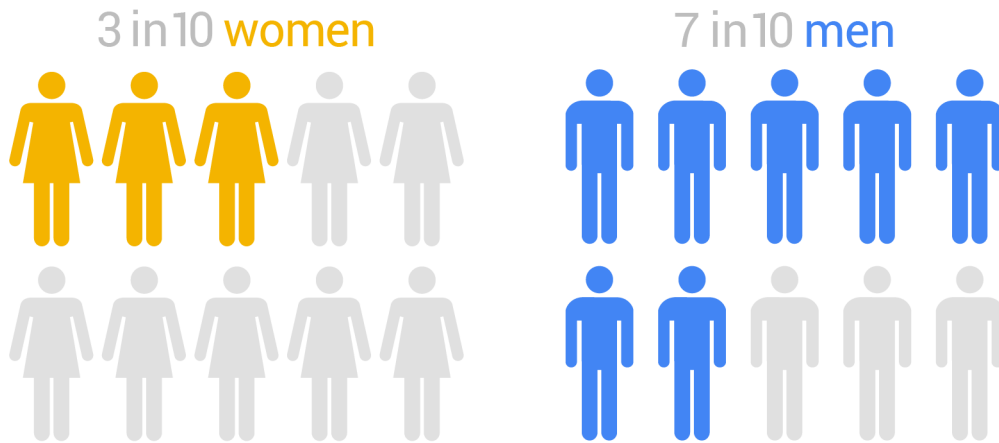
Breaking down stereotypes

Gaming content remains one of best ways to reach young men. Tubular Labs reports that among millennial males, gaming—specifically, gameplay—ranks in the top three categories for both 18–24-year-olds (#1) and 25–34-year-olds (#2). But what about women? As it turns out, adult women have recently unseated teenage boys as the largest video game-playing demographic, according to the [Entertainment Software Association](#). YouTube trends reflect this: Viewership among women has doubled year over year, and women over the age of 25 are the fastest-growing demographic for gaming content.

People who watch gaming content have varied interests. This is especially true of women: November 2014 data from comScore Video Metrix reports that two in five 18–34-year-old viewers of [StyleHaul](#), a network of female-focused beauty & fashion channels, also watch channels on Machinima, one of the biggest gaming networks. A great—and fitting—example is iJustine. She is an influencer not only in the [fashion and beauty space](#) but in [gaming](#) as well.

Interest in Gaming Content on YouTube

18–34-year-olds who engage with gaming content on YouTube



Note: Engagement is defined as commenting on, liking, favoriting, or playlisting a video on YouTube within a certain topic or channel.

Source: Tubular Labs, U.S. statistics, December 2013.

YouTube data tells us that both men and women are spending more time per video with gaming than in any other content area. Women, however, are spending slightly more time watching each gaming video than men are. And to further shatter social stereotypes, millennial females actively comment on, like, and share more gaming content than they do cooking/recipe content, according to Tubular Labs data from December 2013.

How brands can harness this opportunity

Gaming content on YouTube is seeing unprecedented momentum, and fans can't seem to get enough. Brands would be wise to take advantage of this new force in pop culture. It's rare that content with such a broad reach also commands such deep engagement. And this kind of content is not something brands can find in traditional media channels.

Here's how to make the most of this content:

- Consider media placement alongside [established and growing channels](#) that blend popularity and a passionate fanbase.
- Partner with gaming creators to [build authentic experiences](#) for your brand.
- Be present during flagship [championships](#), game releases, and big moments such as the annual celebration of [all things gaming](#) at [E3](#).

Even though gaming has been prevalent in our culture for decades, the rise of gaming video content is fairly recent. Brands have a unique opportunity to jump on a rising trend that millions of millennials engage with every single day and connect with them in a genuine way.



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