

# Video Game 'Watchers' Aren't Limited to Esports

Article

**G**iven all the hype around esports, marketers might think audiences that watch other people play video games are primarily spending time with professional, organized tournaments. But these video game “watchers” aren't just looking at the big leagues.

US video gamers spend more time watching video game content on streaming sites like Twitch and YouTube than watching esports tournaments—about 40 minutes longer per week, according to content delivery service Limelight Networks. That content consists of mostly amateurs live streaming their gaming activity, which can be watched live or after the live stream has ended, not just the organized “esports” tournaments.

## How Much Time per Week Do US Video Gamers Spend Watching Sports vs. Gaming Video?

in hours, by type, Feb 2019

### Watch traditional sports on broadcast TV

4.14

### Watch traditional sports online

2.34

### Watch gaming video content via Twitch, YouTube, etc.

2.33

### Watch esports tournaments (e.g., The International or LoL World Championship)

1.67

Note: ages 18+ who play video games at least once a week

Source: Limelight Networks, "State of Online Gaming - 2019," March 18, 2019

246104

www.eMarketer.com

We forecast that US ad revenues from video gaming content—which includes video advertisements placed on recorded and live streamed content on digital platforms—will reach \$1.79 billion this year. Esports ad revenues—which includes advertising and sponsorship revenues from organized competitions—will only reach \$178.1 million.

The difference shouldn't be too surprising. The esports landscape is vast, with tournaments taking place worldwide throughout the year. But the often amateur, user-generated content on streaming platforms is practically endless.

Gaming videos also have utility (of a sort), with the typical web search for tips or help defeating a tough boss returning dozens of video results—so it can also be a way to reach gamers with video even if they don't consider gaming video content to be entertainment.

But the real grab is coming from gaming personalities, some of whom have amassed large followings on streaming sites, **achieving influencer status** with a segment of the notoriously hard-to-reach digital native audience.

“If you're watching a League of Legends competition, people are really engaged in it, and it's a certain type of format. It's competition,” said Brad Sive, chief revenue officer of the professional esports organization Team SoloMid (TSM). “If you were watching our Fortnite streamers, they're playing and having fun. But they're also entertainers, and you enjoy watching because they're doing fun things, talking to their chat and engaging.”

According to a Q3 2018 Nielsen survey, 63% of the US audience who identify as both Twitch users and esports fans said they spent more time in an average week interacting with gaming personalities than viewing esports content. The survey also found that 30% of esports fans engaged with gaming personalities on a daily basis.

Some marketers have already tapped into this ecosystem to create custom ad placements with a native feel, and Sive believes that if executed correctly, this strategy can drive strong engagement.

For example, in May 2018, Chipotle **created a partnership** with TSM's **newly assembled team** of players of the video game Fortnite for an 8-minute YouTube video that showed gaming personalities eating components of Chipotle's burritos while blindfolded.

“With traditional media, it's still about the 15- or 30-second spot, or now it's 6 seconds,” Sive said. “But we did a [nearly] 10-minute video with Chipotle. In 24 hours, it had 1 million views on YouTube.”

“It's a whole different way to program,” Sive said. “But you have to understand and engage with this audience because they consume things differently.”