

Could Fortnite become the next battleground for brands?

EDINBURGH PEOPLE SPORT AND ENTERTAINMENT

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Gaming culture has always been part of my life. As a 30 something married man with 2 kids I have seen the constant advances in technology with every new console and game that has been created. From Sonic and Mario to Halo and Call Of Duty, every game creator is looking to make its mark.

Becoming part of popular culture is hard and ensuring gamers come back again and again requires time and attention. So how has a free to download and play game amassed over 125 million players and generated billions globally? Fortnite is a true phenomenon but if you don't know what it is read this article <http://adage.com/article/media/fortnite-explained-in-79-seconds/314359/>.

In short Epic games have created a cultural behemoth beyond the confines of the game itself where the in-game emotes and dances have taken over school playgrounds and even featured in goal celebrations during the 2018 World Cup. Having read a recent article for New York Magazine titled [“The Most Important Video game on the Planet”](#) I started thinking about how this virtual world has become a second home for its players. In this world there is no advertising but there are towns, golf courses, parks and forests. Players roam around searching for items, building forts and waiting for a final show down with a game lasting up to 15 minutes. Dwell time is anything from 3-8 hours per day and each player can create their own unique look. The creators of the game Epic Software have generated billions of revenue from players exchanging real world cash for in game currency called v-bucks. It is a simple model where the upgrades are cosmetic but make no difference to your performance. I have no idea if this is in development but virtual worlds have been touted as a battleground for brands for a while. In a 2006 article in AdAge Second Life was touted as a place where brands could engage with nearly 200,000 residents. In the article it talks about online tournaments and how brands were starting to sponsor gamers. 12 years on advertising and brand spend is estimated to reach \$622m this year and exceed \$800m in 2019.

Brand Spending On Esports

Global, Millions (\$)



*Excludes media broodcasting rights.
Source: PwC, BI Intelligence 2018

BI INTELLIGENCE

However, only a handful of people other than Epic are making money from the game. Headset sales have increased, in game consultants offer their services and subscriptions to Twitch (gamer streaming) and Facebook’s own streaming hub have gone up (source: [BBC](#)).

So herein lies my prediction (or big idea for the games developers) whilst in-game advertising has been around for a while is the next development branded in game partnerships where advertising becomes part of the fabric of the game? With the game now available across the latest Android and iOS devices game time and player numbers will increase further in a notoriously difficult to reach audience segment. Ultimately will we see a time where games developers themselves become “media owners”? Time will tell but it’s definitely an arena to keep a watch on.

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