



LEADERS *Report*

Sport and gamification



April 2020



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LFP and gamification



Didier Quillot,
CEO, LFP

For many years, data has become the most valuable asset for any company operating in the sports industry. Knowing your fans, engaging with your fans, interacting with your fans and collecting fans data must be at the core of your digital strategy. Turning data into business insights and intelligence will certainly be a key driver for rightsholders' future growth and B2C strategies will shift. To fulfill this objective, gamification, the process of adding games or game-like elements to something (such as a task) to encourage participation, has become a key element of digital strategies. Gaming, linked with incentives (such as tickets or merchandise) boosts loyalty and introduces competitiveness between fans.

Building fan engagement through gamification

Esport is definitely a key part and has been growing rapidly in the past few years in terms of interest, audience and revenue. In 2016, LFP was the first football league to organize with a formal esports league with the makers of the FIFA video game, EA: the eLigue 1. This move enabled us to understand better the egaming community, to help our clubs in engaging and developing into esports and more importantly to enhance fan engagement with Ligue 1 Conforama and the clubs we represent. We are currently in the fourth eLigue 1 season and we have over 100,000 players, meaning the eLigue 1 here in France is arguably the best FIFA competition, and certainly the one to win

for all the best EA FIFA players. The next step is to bring this event outside of France to enhance the brand awareness of Ligue 1 Conforama abroad.

From a broader perspective, LFP has incorporated gamification at the core of its digital strategy. In 2017, LFP entered into a partnership with the number one fantasy league in France, Mon Petit Gazon (MPG). With close to a million active users of the game, LFP collects through this partnership a huge amount of data on Ligue 1 Conforama fans. Following this, LFP has built in-house gaming applications such as 'pick your best XI', 'score predictor', 'fan quiz' and casual arcade games to recruit new fans and generate engagement on brand new LFP owned platforms.

Creating brand preference among younger audiences

Last but not least, sports rightsholders operate in a highly competitive environment. Beauty of the game is not enough, and you will need creative content, smart digital activations and viral gamification processes to stand out in an already saturated fan content feed. The first objective is to create brand preference, then to attract younger audiences as we know for a fact that gamification is very popular among generation Z. Thinking digital first, focusing on data collection, incorporating gamification at the core will help the sports rightsholders building their next generation of fans. May the following report be your guide.

Game theory



MICHAEL ESSÉN

Game theory

The concept of gamification sits at the core of many of the most successful fan engagement initiatives in sport. As digital delivery and consumption become more sophisticated – and, in the current climate, more necessary – it’s a concept that will be turned to by sports organisations the world over.

The more disparate sports fanbases become, the more important it is to find things that bind them to the centre.

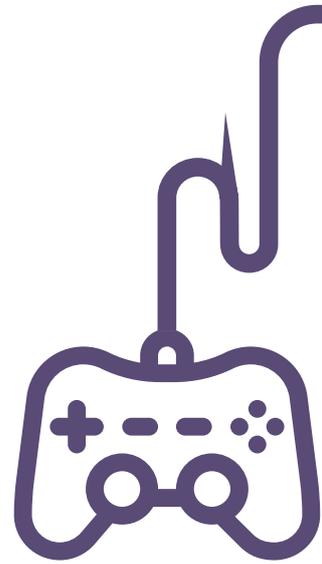
Deployed in many aspects of teaching and positive behavioural training, gamification has become a mainstay of customer interaction in the digital age. It provides impetus to many operating in the app economy, with daily streaks and accomplishments enticing users back to everything from language learning and fitness products to audiobooks.

When done effectively, offering the kind of incentives that keep users engaged also supports insights that can be used to refine future activities. Well-designed projects with a strong sense of desired outcomes can take what is already known and fixed about an audience – such as ages, genders, locations and other demographic information – and maps that on to new data about how they respond to gamified activities.

The concept of gamified marketing is hardly a new one. Readers have bought print publications offering coupon-based discounts for decades. McDonald’s, to take one example, has encouraged seasonal loyalty through its Happy Meal collectibles and Monopoly promotions. Sport’s own high-end collectibles sector and the low-end market for official stickers and trading cards have inspired other forms of attachment.

Digital media and marketing have heightened the potential of these initiatives, offering a reciprocal exchange with fans that give brands and rights holders an opportunity to forge a deeper, albeit more playful connection.

FOR BETTER OR WORSE, THROUGH ITS WHIRL OF NOTIFICATIONS, LIKES AND SHARES, SOCIAL MEDIA HAS MADE A GAME OF EVERYDAY COMMUNICATION.



Digital communities

For better or worse, through its whirl of notifications, likes and shares, social media has made a game of everyday communication. This is true even of long-established platforms like Facebook and Twitter, but relatively newer services also encourage play with official IP – whether that is brand marks as AR filters on Snapchat or TikTok’s eclectic music library.

Adding more layers of interactivity can improve community activity further. Polls can be an especially powerful way of driving interest across Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, while crowdsourced social media exercises can also be particularly effective. In the early days of sport’s shutdown to combat the coronavirus pandemic, several social media teams turned to gamification as a short-term means of filling the content gap.

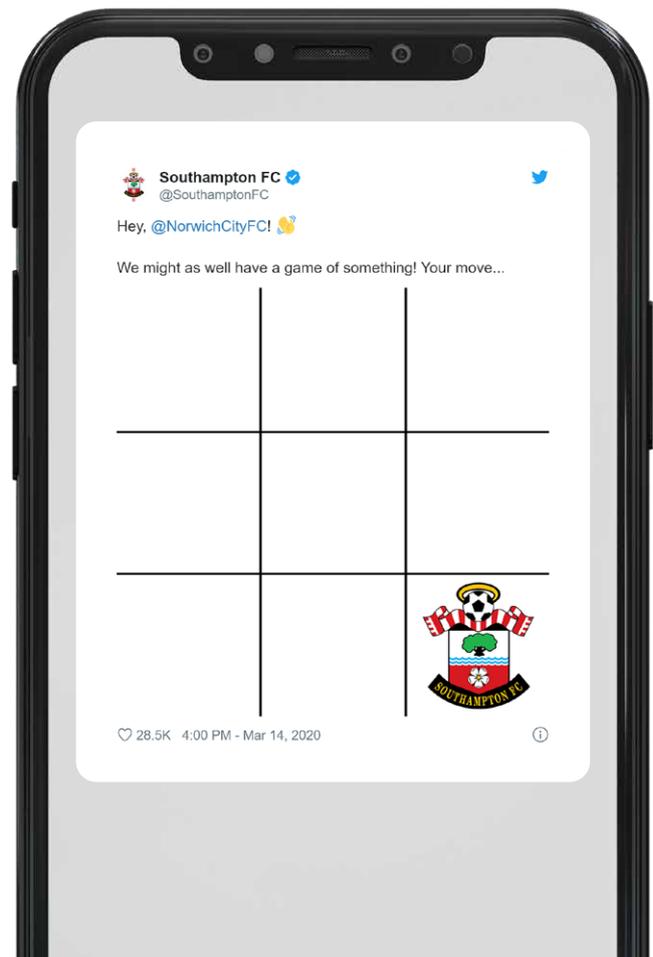
Norwich City and Southampton’s administrators played an online game of noughts and crosses, with clubs like Hull City, Bayer Leverkusen, Bristol City and Willem II resorting to Connect Four. It was an improvisational way to stimulate responses from fans and strike a lighter tone.

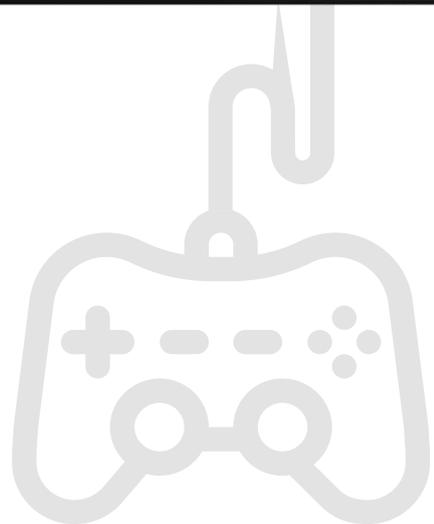
Incentives can also be introduced to bring useful data into marketing campaigns. Prize draws and other offers can make fans readier to supply personal information and details about their preferences.

Membership schemes are a familiar method for engendering attachment, not least when they reward loyalty. In the online era, video games have shown how these concepts can be evolved. Dozens of brands, scores of competitions and hundreds of football clubs are represented in the EA Sports’ best-selling Fifa series, which has used its in-game Fifa Ultimate Team mode to ever greater effect. FUT incentivises players to stay involved with the online game throughout the year and personalise their experience by building their own side through purchases and rewards.

The game environment also offers two-way representation for partners – Adidas, for one, has introduced digital versions of its jerseys that have subsequently found a real-world release. In the first half of the current financial year, revenues from FUT rose 40% to \$716 million.

MEMBERSHIP SCHEMES ARE A FAMILIAR METHOD FOR ENGENDERING ATTACHMENT, NOT LEAST WHEN THEY REWARD LOYALTY.





Experiential games

Introducing games or game-like set-ups to public spaces as a means of soliciting consumer feedback is common – with supermarkets asking shoppers to drop tokens in a box to weight charitable donations, for example, or buttons being placed in common areas of airports to gather quick survey information about staff performance.

For venue operators hoping to learn more about their matchday crowds, gamified physical experiences can give fans a good reason to stop and interact. At elite venues, 5G capabilities are also giving rise to new opportunities.



Sport and gamification

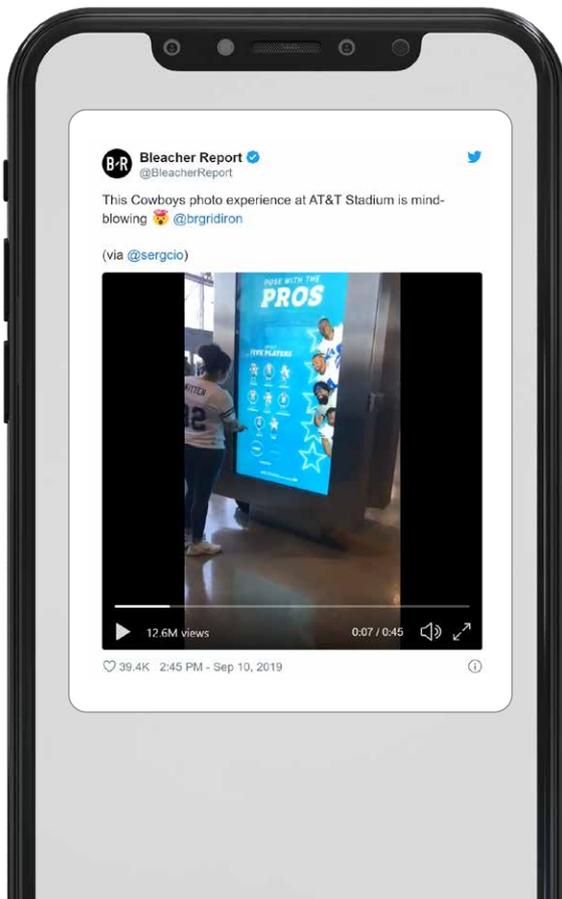


In the NFL, the Dallas Cowboys ran 5G experiences for fans at their AT&T Stadium home throughout the 2019 season. These included the chance to 'pose with the pros' on columns around the ground, recording a startlingly seamless virtual video with visualisations of Cowboys starters that could be shared with friends. Other augmented reality innovations included a feature where fans could record videos of themselves dancing virtually in the end zone, and another where they could generate 36-foot 3D models of Dak Prescott and Ezekial Elliott on specially provided Samsung mobile handsets. As well as adding to the gameday experience, the activations had the benefit for AT&T of showing off the potential of 5G networks.

For a period at the start of the NBA season, the Golden State Warriors teamed up with immersive facility operator Candytopia to build Hooptopia, an extensive temporary venue at Thrive City by the 2018 champions' new Chase Center home. Fans could buy \$36 tickets to pose in specially designed installations that recreated aspects of the life of a Warriors player, from an unveiling at the draft to a championship champagne celebration. The expectation was that many would upload the resulting, well-framed images to Instagram.

Sometimes these activities can also serve a brand education purpose. Chinese mobile payment giant Alipay is a long-term sponsor of European football's Uefa and its major national team competitions, including next year's delayed pan-continental European Championship. Signed in 2018, the partnership began in earnest with the inaugural Uefa Nations League Finals in Portugal.

Ubiquitous throughout China, Alipay is comparatively little known in Europe and is using its deal to build awareness of its services and reinforce networks of retailers who use them for mostly Chinese users. Still, it took the opportunity in the fan zones last summer to create games that gave European consumers a chance to try out its QR code-based system and familiarise themselves with the concept. That activation, in turn, has been rolled into a strategy of building interactive 'mini-programmes' into Alipay's mobile 'super-app'.



Fantasy sports and betting

In the past couple of decades, fantasy sports has allowed rights holders and brands to retain the attention of fans in matches beyond those involving their teams, and in leagues they would not otherwise follow at all.

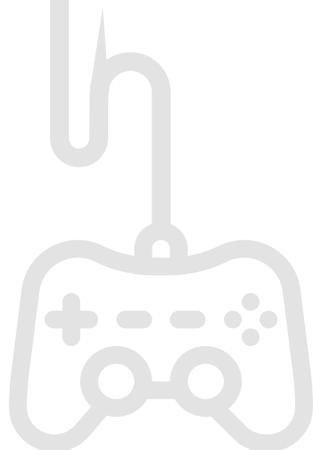
Official and unofficial fantasy leagues are a part of almost every major competition and at the top end, they remain a vibrant growth sector. The global user base of the Fantasy Premier League doubled to 6.3 million going into the 2019/20 season, generating additional exposure for sponsors of English football's top flight and inspiring a subculture of dedicated followers in the process. In the US, the Fantasy Sports Gaming Association (FSGA) reports that there were 45.9 million players in 2019.

Several rights holders have been enterprising in driving bettors towards legal sportsbooks since the Supreme Court overturned the federal PASPA law that made sports betting illegal nationally in 2018. The NBA, for example, introduced money-free bets on some platforms in early 2019 to test and channel interest. The role of fantasy sports operators like FanDuel – now owned by European bookmaker Paddy Power Betfair – and DraftKings in laying the ground for a legitimate sports betting culture should nevertheless not be overlooked.

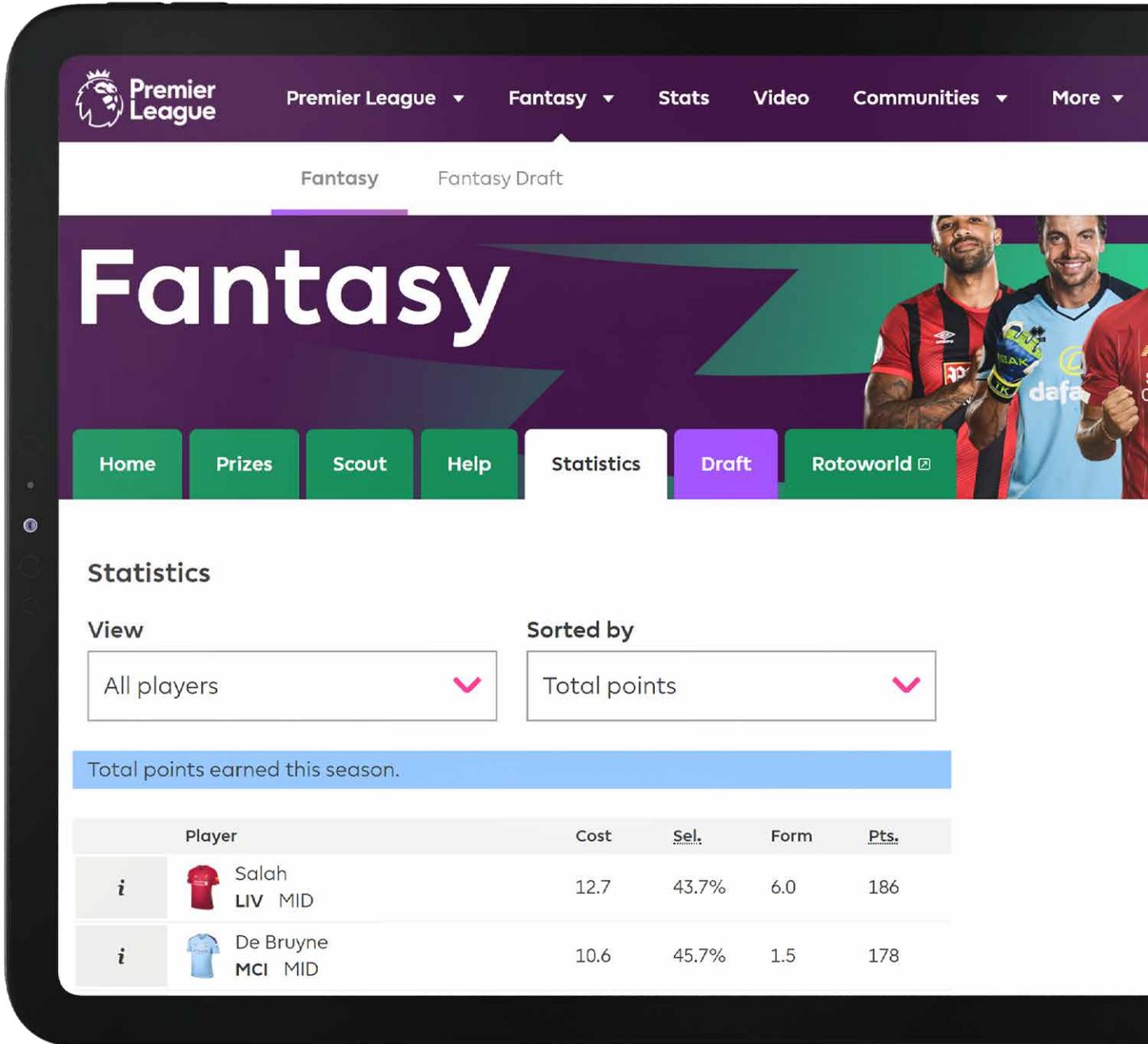
Meanwhile, the appetite for fantasy sports remains: according to a survey by the FSGA, 87% of fantasy players in states with legal sports betting played the same or more fantasy sports in 2019 than the previous year.

Wagering is an obvious if sometimes fraught route for rights holders towards more attentive interest in their events. In recent years, not least as the American sports betting laws have been liberalised in one state after another, a succession of bodies have been investigating how they can open up more touch points with prospective bettors.

The expansion of the sports betting market is also coming at a time of extensive personalisation and diversity in the digital space. The huge increase in live data measurement and manipulation – marshalled by companies like Sportradar and Genius Sports with a presence across the data, integrity and digital broadcast sectors – has led to a greater variety of betting options in a whole host of sports. Formula One will be working with its first betting partner, 188Bet, once its season finally begins, with more to follow as part of a five-year arrangement with media and marketing agency Interregional Sports Group.



THE APPETITE FOR FANTASY SPORTS REMAINS: ACCORDING TO A SURVEY BY THE FSGA, 87% OF FANTASY PLAYERS IN STATES WITH LEGAL SPORTS BETTING PLAYED THE SAME OR MORE FANTASY SPORTS IN 2019 THAN THE PREVIOUS YEAR.



F1TV will not be offering live race odds but in the US, OTT platforms are being cited as a way of serving betting audiences without imposing on those disinterested in it. Last May, FanDuel Group signed a deal with OTT internet television service fuboTV to make its odds and data available to viewers, not long after Caesar’s Palace had reached an agreement with Turner Sports to produce gaming-related content for the B/R Live network.

Just as there is heightened sensitivity around betting promotions in Europe and other markets, there are some reputational risks for organisations to be aware of as legal betting emerges in the US. In August 2019 European video games watchdog PEGI released a statement saying it was ‘very aware’ of complaints about casino minigames in NBA 2K20 and that it accepted the imagery ‘may be too close for comfort for some people’ in a title cleared to play for all ages.

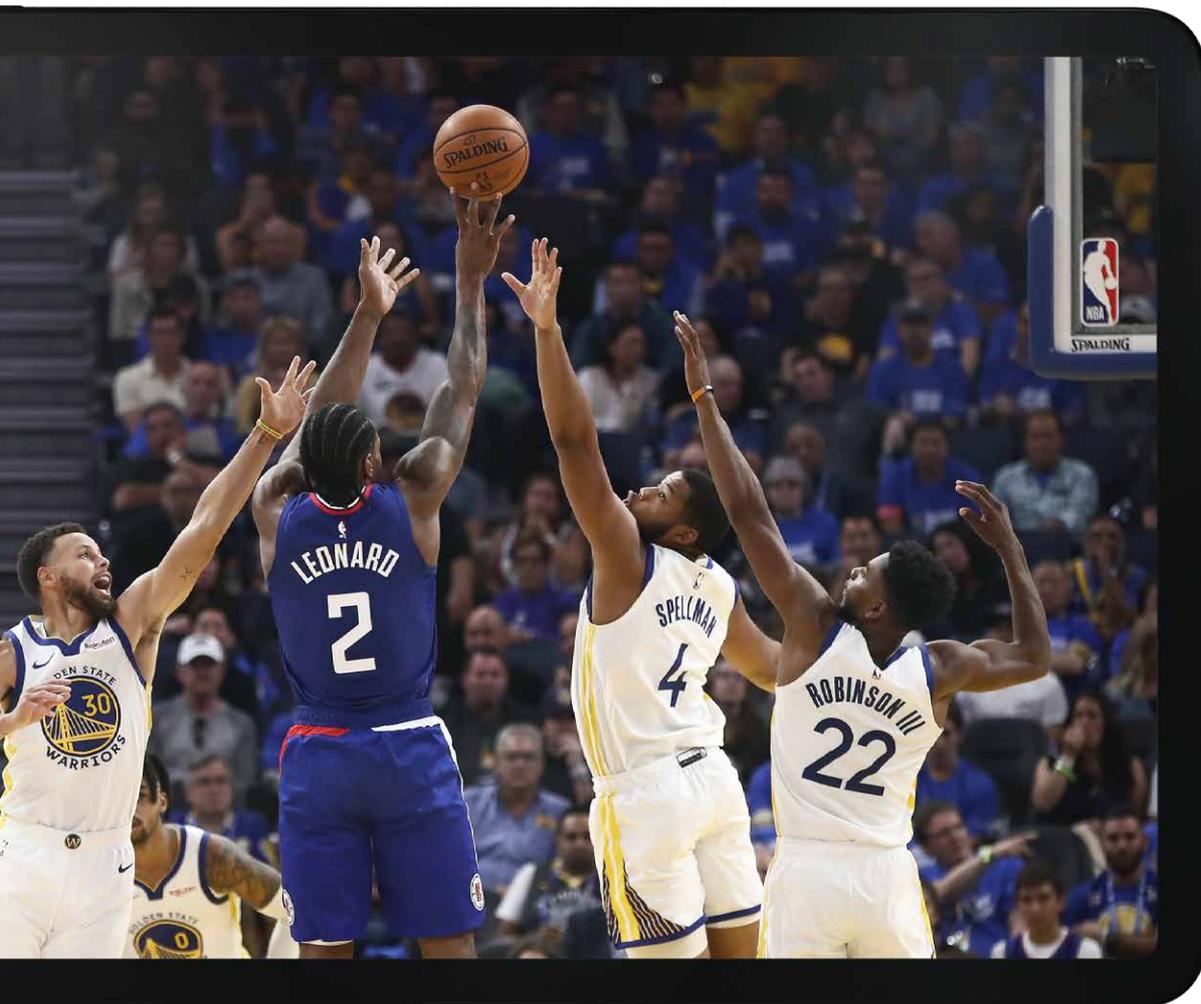
Interactive content and esports

Digital interfaces are making it possible to turn what were passive experiences into interactive ones. In broadcasting, this has primarily meant giving people choices about how they want to watch live sport and relive highlights – through a range of camera angles, for example, or better integrations of data and other visualisations.

In the past couple of years, the LA Clippers and Second Spectrum have been working together on CourtVision. Available to Fox Sports' PrimeTicket viewers, it provides a string of options including a static 'coach view' mode and graphical overlays that display either stats or stylised animations. Last year, AWS machine learning and artificial intelligence elements were added to the package.

Gamifying on-demand video content theoretically provides a context in which distributors can learn more about audience tastes and behaviour, as well as adding replay value. That is one reason why Netflix began experimenting in 2018 with interactive storytelling through releases like *Bandersnatch*, an entry in Charlie Brooker's *Black Mirror* horror series, and *Bear Grylls: You Vs Wild*, in which the viewer moves the adventure broadcaster through an extreme environment through a series of binary commands.

These kind of nested-choice productions are complex and expensive to produce but Netflix has said it will continue to explore the possibilities of interactive programming. Video, meanwhile, is not the only potential outlet for this kind of engagement, with producers considering similar concepts on voice interfaces like Amazon Alexa.





Esports is creating a new paradigm for interaction with content, giving new opportunities for brands to present themselves. Sponsors, even non-endemic sponsors, can develop an association with in-game moments and elements, sometimes in ways that direct fans back to their physical products. In 2019, Pringles agreed a deal with Riot Games' League of Legends European Championships that gave fans access to classic, out-of-use character 'skins' by buying promotional packs.

Shared online viewing, prevalent in esports and on the rise elsewhere, also creates settings in which gamified experiences can be generated. Last August, German carmaker Porsche used Twitch to launch its 99X Electric vehicle for the 2019/20 season of Formula E. In the real time Formula E Unlocked campaign, Twitch users pointed drivers Neel Jani and Andre Lotterer around the headquarters of Porsche's motorsports operation to find the car in a fully interactive reveal. Twitch reported close to a million live views across the four hours in which the video was running.

Motorsport, and specifically Formula E, is also the environment in which the playing and watching of sport are beginning to converge. The all-electric series' own video game and esports project has been augmented with Formula E Ghost Racing, which allows players to race an authentic representation of real-world drivers in real time.

Taking it a step further, the AI-powered Roborace championship is working up a system in which esports racers can take on the autonomous vehicles on the track. Theoretically the real-world cars, driven by software, would react in the physical space to digital information about the track position of their virtual opponents.

GAMIFYING ON-DEMAND VIDEO CONTENT THEORETICALLY PROVIDES A CONTEXT IN WHICH DISTRIBUTORS CAN LEARN MORE ABOUT AUDIENCE TASTES AND BEHAVIOUR, AS WELL AS ADDING REPLAY VALUE.



It's in the game



It's in the game

The Esports Observer's Graham Ashton charts how esports organisations use gamification techniques not just in the fabric of the games themselves, but for purposes as varied as talent scouting, community building, and fan monetisation.

Esports and competitive video gaming are, at their core, digital products designed to reward. With countless ways to spend one's free time online, game publishers have made gratification and achievement a central part of their user experience. This also extends to esports. Fans aren't just passively watching others compete; viewing itself has been gamified, and in turn competitions reward fans proportionally for their devotion to a specific team or league.

The following are some of the long-established and experimental methods by which esports use gamification as a means to build loyalty and retention in their playerbases and audiences.

A MARATHON RUNNER DOESN'T WANT TO SPEND THEIR RACE WEAVING AROUND THOSE WITH A SLOWER PACE, AND GAMERS DON'T WANT TO SPEND 3-4 HOURS BATTLING THOSE WHO ARE STILL LEARNING THE GAME.

Online matchmaking: how an amateur is made to feel like a pro

If a competitive video game has no way to rank its player base by skill, it will fail in the marketplace. A marathon runner doesn't want to spend their race weaving around those with a slower pace, and gamers don't want to spend 3-4 hours battling those who are still learning the game.

As a case example, let's look at League of Legends; a five-versus-five strategy game from Riot Games. It boasts a peak player count of eight million per day, and is one of the biggest esports in the world by viewership (its 2019 World Championship finals peaked at 44 million concurrent viewers). The game revolves around competitive seasons, and systematically rewards and gratifies users to keep them coming back year-on-year.

The first time a player enters ranked mode, they must complete ten 'placement' matches to decide their initial rank. There are nine ranks in total, and all but the highest three are further divided into four divisions. A player can work their way up the ladder alone, or with teammates.

The top rank, Challenger, only has 50-300 seats (depending on region), and comprises just 0.018% of players. If one reaches Challenger in the solo/duo queue, they are likely to be spotted and possibly recruited by a professional team.

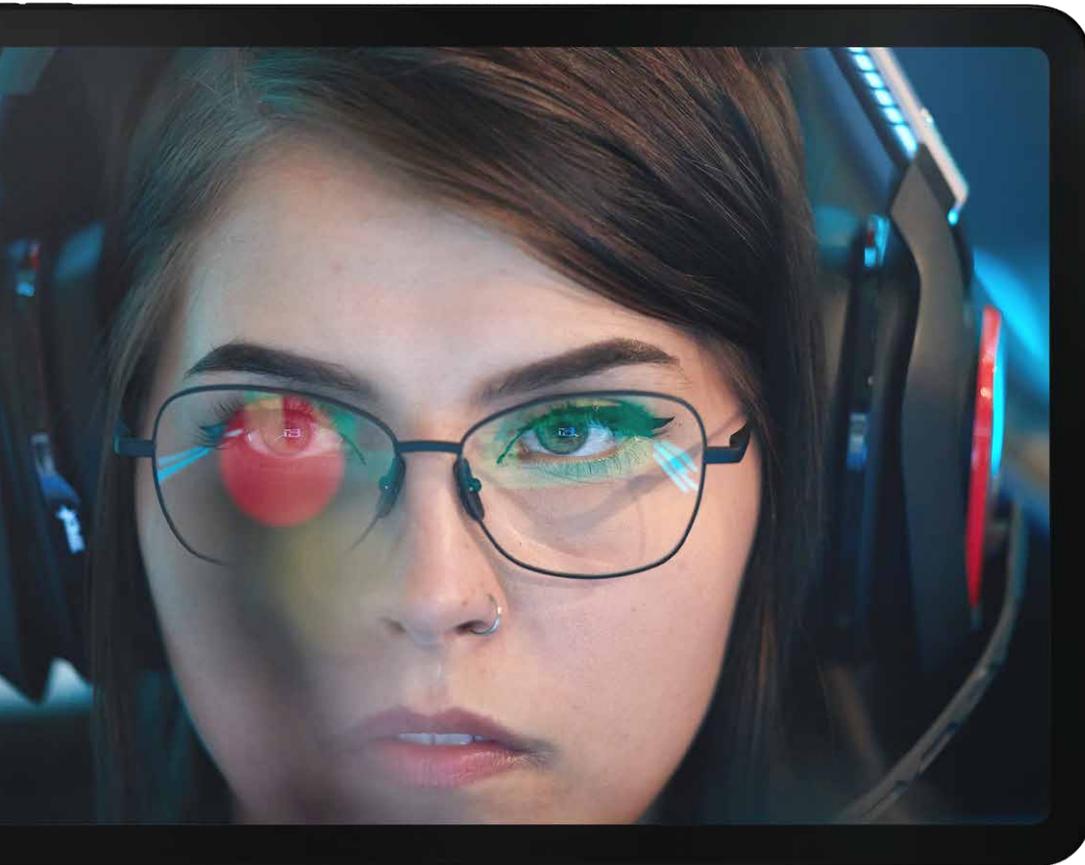
Reaching higher ranks requires League Points (LP), which are awarded or lost every time you win or lose a game, respectively. The higher ranked players lose LP if they remain inactive, and players signed to professional leagues are required to maintain a peak rank of Diamond III to remain eligible.

Beyond the privilege of playing against more skilled opponents, League of Legends rewards players for continuously playing and progressing. A player's ranked icon becomes more ornate not only by reaching a new rank, but also if they keep that rank for multiple splits (three month periods). This means even a player at a lower rank can stand out among others who may slip and rise between other ranks.

But the most lucrative retention method is seasonal rewards, updated every year. All players, ranked or not, earn experience points by playing games and completing missions (e.g. get a 50-win match streak, or win five games using a specific character). Both reward items to players, such as icons, character costumes, or emotes.

Even just by winning their first game of the day, players are granted in-game currency, and every achievement or reward within the game is given a sense of importance through unique animation and sound design.





Curbing ‘toxic’ behaviour by rewarding other players

As traditional sports try to curb racist or abusive behaviour through publicity campaigns, video game publishers are grappling with abuse of other players, commonly referred to as ‘toxic’ behaviour. One method employed in League of Legends (with variants to be found in other games) is the Honor system. After a match, players can commend the behaviour of one of their allies: staying calm, demonstrating leadership, or being a good teammate.

Honor points contribute to a separate ranking system, with its own perks and in-game rewards. Any bad behaviour from a player (such as abuse in chat) can be reported, and can lead to a temporary ban and a loss of all accumulated Honor points.

While these systems can feel gimmicky, they are developed by dedicated teams of psychologists, human factors specialists, and statisticians. Even if a player is just mindlessly spamming a reward button after their match, this is still a part of ‘operant conditioning’ through positive reinforcement of desirable behaviour.

Whether positive reinforcement or punishment is better at curbing bad sportsmanship is still debated in psychology, but the idea of athletes rating and rewarding each other anonymously for good behaviour could provide a healthy boost to the culture of sports.



Stayed Cool



Great Shotcalling



GG <3

Paying to cheer and convincing fans to virtually support a team

The gamification methods above focus on players, but what about fans? As esports grows, publishers are trying to integrate the reward systems from their titles into the viewing experience. The goal is not only to increase audience levels, but to build a holistic product; whereby a casual viewer may be incentivized to download and start playing the game.

League of Legends itself has ‘watch missions’ where players earn items by watching a certain number of regular season games, but other titles, such as Activision Blizzard’s Overwatch, have created a gamified spectatorship system in partnership with its broadcasters.

The Overwatch League is modelled closely on North American franchised sports, particularly the NFL, with teams representing individual cities (e.g. the Washington Justice, or the London Spitfire). Unlike other esports, these teams are unique to the league, and to create quick fan attachment and rivalry, a series of integrations was trialled on the Amazon livestreaming platform Twitch, which was the exclusive broadcaster of the league until 2020, when the rights were acquired by YouTube.

During matches, players could digitally support teams using ‘Bits’, a microtransaction currency on the platform, ordinarily used to provide additional revenue to streamers and content creators. Bits can be bought in quantities of 100 for \$1.40, 500 for \$7.00, and so on. Individually, a player is rewarded for cheering with Twitch items (such as chat emotes or icons), or Overwatch items (such as team-based character costumes).

Leaderboards show which fan has contributed the most to their team. Global cheering thresholds also exist for teams; if the collective fanbase contributes enough to one team, they are all rewarded, and teams themselves are ranked against each other on a leaderboard. There are also weekly challenges to further incentivize fanship, such as getting a certain number of people to view a game, or predicting outcomes (such as which characters will be used). Some of these challenges can only be accessed with the league’s All-Access Pass, a premium option.

Team Leaderboards

All Teams		Atlantic	Pacific
1	 PACIFIC DIVISION Dallas Fuel		2,559,657
2	 ATLANTIC DIVISION Houston Outlaws		2,294,424
3	 PACIFIC DIVISION Seoul Dynasty		1,850,258
4	 ATLANTIC DIVISION New York Excelsior		1,726,888
5	 ATLANTIC DIVISION London Spitfire		1,349,722
6	 PACIFIC DIVISION Los Angeles Gladiators		972,597

UNLIKE THE FORTNITE WORLD CUP’S \$30 MILLION POT, WHICH IS PUT UP FRONT BY THE GAME’S DEVELOPER, THE TI WINNINGS ARE FUNDED ALMOST ENTIRELY BY THE DOTA 2 PLAYER BASE.





The TI Battle Pass: how to earn \$100 Million with a digital programme

The International (TI) is an annual tournament for the strategy game Dota 2. When covered by mainstream media, the emphasis is usually placed on its large prize pool: \$34.3 million in 2019, with a 45.5% lion's share awarded to the champion team. What's usually missed is how this money is amassed. Unlike the Fortnite World Cup's \$30 million pot, which is put up front by the game's developer, the TI winnings are funded almost entirely by the Dota 2 player base.

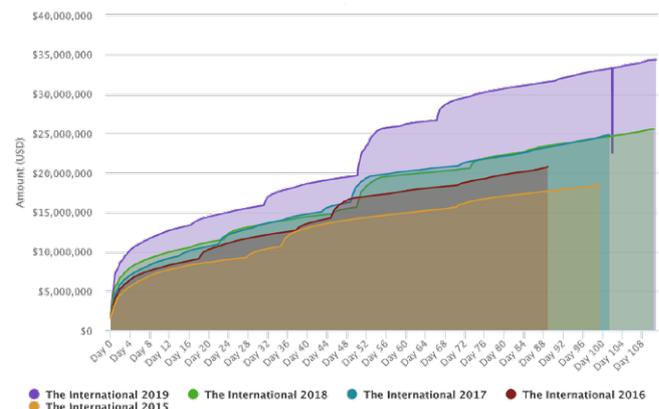
Every year, Dota 2's developer Valve releases the 'Battle Pass' to coincide with TI. This in-game content pack features numerous quests, achievements, and earnable rewards, which could not be earned normally. All of these are locked behind a levelling system, with players climbing from level one to a maximum of 1,000. Players could purchase the base Pass for \$9.99, or a level 100 pass for \$44.99.

Valve provides an initial \$1.6 million for the TI prize pool, and 25% of all revenue for the Battle Pass fills the remainder. The costs to create the Pass are not public knowledge, but what is known is that the Pass generated over \$130 million in 2019 alone, with TI's prize pool having exceeded \$10 million every year since 2013.

While technically a form of crowdfunding, not everyone who buys the Battle Pass is necessarily doing so as an esports fan. The rewards are open for a limited-time, and even a casual player will be able to reap sufficient value. Other esports titles have tried introducing similar initiatives, but the rewards aren't nearly as extensive so as to attract the broader playerbase. If Valve simply asked players to donate directly to the TI prize pool, it's doubtful that it would reach even half the amount as with the Battle Pass.

The International 2019 - Hourly Prize Pool Coparison Tracker

This chart displays a comparison of the hourly sales of the international 2019 Battle Pass versus The International 2015–2018





How traditional sports are going virtual in COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has put traditional sports into its biggest crisis since WWII. All professional leagues, major annual tournaments, and of course, the Olympics have either been delayed or postponed indefinitely. With programming gaps to fill, sponsors to appease, and audiences to satisfy, several teams and competitions have turned to the sports simulator genre in video games to give their fans a virtual substitute.

Leading the pack is motor racing. While racing simulators are enjoyed by thousands of enthusiasts, they are also a legitimate training method in NASCAR and Formula One. In fact, there are some professional drivers today who got their start as pro gamers in a racing sim game. Unlike most sports sims, which just use a basic game controller, a racing sim setup is costly and complex: requiring a specific seat, steering wheel, and pedal setup that cost anywhere from £300 to several thousand pounds.

NASCAR aggressively invested in esports even before its events blackout, but the current situation convinced Fox Sports to start televising these video game competitions. The NASCAR Pro Invitational Series, which mixes current and hall of fame drivers, earned a 0.81 Nielsen rating and 1.33 million viewers for its races on March 22.

The series is played on iRacing, a subscription-based game first released in 2008, which uses three-dimensional laser scanning technology to model its tracks. When the late British driver Justin Wilson first tried the game's version of the Indianapolis Speedway, he immediately recognized a bump at the end of the pit road.

"There are NASCAR teams, driving at the cup level, that have iRacing simulators in the race shops, and will have their drivers during the week," said Tim Clark, senior VP and chief digital officer for NASCAR. "The benefit to a lot of [NASCAR] sponsors is that any sort of activation they have on track can be replicated on the virtual world."

Formula One has been running an esports circuit since 2018, which now features teams from all ten constructors, including Ferrari. After the Australian Grand Prix was suddenly cancelled, 19 racers, including professional racing drivers, as well as professional simulation drivers, footballers, and content creators, all took part in the "Not the AUS GP," organized by Veloce Esports. The personal stream of McLaren's F1 driver Lando Norris topped Twitch during the event, hitting a maximum of 70K concurrent viewers, generating 131K average views on an average of 25K viewers.

Virtual cycling, previously a niche in the gaming world, has also pedalled into the spotlight. Professional teams have fielded riders in a variety of virtual competitions. Unlike motorsports, there is no single game binding these competitions together, with just some of the platforms on the market including Zwift, Bkool, and Rouvy.

Football and basketball may not have any physicality in their virtual versions, but that hasn't stopped professional teams using them for interim content. The Phoenix Suns NBA team has gone all out with its NBA 2K matches; regularly hosted on Twitch with actual NBA players behind the controller. The team has also invited guest players from its sister MLS franchise, and gone so far as to hire real NBA colour commentators. These play-by-plays were even broadcasted on Arizona radio; a largely unheard of concept in esports.

The FIFA series remains one of the most popular sports simulators worldwide, and publisher Electronic Arts is not letting this opportunity escape them. Esports tournaments for La Liga, the Bundesliga, and MLS are ongoing, while the 'Friday Night FIFA' event sees Liverpool right-back Trent Alexander-Arnold challenging other players across British sport. Another football sim, eFootball PES 2020, has been used for the 'eUEFA Euro' tournament, which will award tickets to the real-world final next year.

The French LFP was the first major domestic football league organiser to create and run its own in-house virtual league when, four years ago, it partnered with EA and its FIFA title to launch e-Ligue 1. LFP Media Director Mathieu Ficot explains the objectives behind the series, and where he sees it developing.

What is LFP’s esports strategy?

Our strategy is quite simple. It’s to give to our clubs additional activation tools to engage their own fans and their own wider communities. So for us it’s a way to push our fans to understand all the players better, and to have stronger engagement with them. It’s not a way to have another revenue pillar. We are quite proud because four years ago, we were the first professional league in Europe to create our own eleague. It was an innovative concept where we decided to embrace all our clubs to create tournaments where egamers would represent their own club; we formatted it with some preliminary qualification phases, followed by a final, climactic tournament – a winter and a spring tournament both on PS4 and xbox where each club sends one winner to Paris. So the final tournament has 20 clubs; 20 gamers, each of them representing their own team. And it worked quite well. We’ve now had almost four seasons; 100,000 players. It was our first shot. And it has also been a way to enhance our relationship with EA.



eLigue 1 - by the numbers

129,931
games played

32,000
followers on social networks



Four years in, are you achieving those objectives?

We have created some bridges between the players themselves and the gamers; it’s a new community of fans. You have real players like Valentin Rongier, he’s a midfielder who plays for Marseille, but when he played for Nantes he won the qualification tournament for the club of Nantes three times in a row. We want to reinforce and multiply the bridges between the game and the real world. We have media coverage of the tournament which is very large and we are happy that our classic broadcasters also broadcast this competition via magazine shows.



64 magazine shows
broadcast on beIN Sport

26
Participant average age

And what are the next steps for the project?

For us the aim would be to develop additional services for our international broadcasters. So of course we're aiming to generate indirect revenues to give more value to our live rights, but by creating additional opportunities to engage local fans, and not only the French diaspora, through physical activations, eLigue 1 tournaments around the world. And I don't want to leave the younger generations to the likes of League of Legends or Fortnite or other video games. If I can still – for this specific population – maintain a bind between the sport itself

and the video game, this is my main objective and what I would love to do with this initiative. I'd rather have younger generations focusing on digital consumption which could be near-live, excerpts, VOD products, rather than having nothing. And when they grow older because of life and TV consumption habits, then the idea is that they would migrate to live matches. Really what I want is to create a circle of influencers and a really positive and innovative image around Ligue 1 amongst the younger generations.

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