

Gaming is Communication

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Every year we find ourselves signing up to one or two new, trendy social media platforms. Most of these platforms come and go. We jokingly remark to our friends how we used to play with this or post on that. Whether the platform boasts statuses, 6-second videos, 60-second videos, pics, flicks, or stories, it inevitably will get copied and reproduced in some way by next year's platform.

But video games are different; we have seen an explosive increase in popularity and engagement that breaks through the echo chamber, which is traditional social media. Social media 2.0 is not 'new features on old sites', rather it is gaming itself and its interpersonal connectivity.

Gaming as content and engagement is not a new idea in any sense. Most people who have any experience with video games can recall how gaming has provided much needed human connection, whether on the couch, at the arcade, or online. Like playing schoolyard games or sports, gaming triggers people's camaraderie through fun and competition. Unlike traditional social media where content is 'posted' to be displayed for one's followers, gaming allows active participation with the audience in the only true sense of 'sharing'.

When we talk about 'sharing' on traditional social platforms, it feels more like passing content along rather than really sharing. Gaming continues to flourish because it has become a strong medium for communication with the highest level of activity sharing. Especially with COVID pushing people out of physical establishments and pulling them closer to their screens, there is a demand for social activities and communication that a photo on Instagram just can't fill. Instead of going to the movies, people are using Hulu and Disney+ watch parties. Instead of going to bars and playing sports, people are playing VRChat and Call of Duty. The platforms and mediums that cater to this will be the ones that survive and thrive through the pandemic.

Even after the pandemic is over, the demand for "real" engagement will continue to intensify. Traditional social media will try to respond with new features but will inevitably miss the point. Gaming is the social media that will fill the audience's appetite for authentic engagement.

Imagine your favorite movie star on their socials. The same selfie from their kitchen or living room can only keep you interested for so long, regardless of how delicious their sourdough bread or homemade bagels look. They try to livestream, but, honestly, sitting

on the couch isn't the most engaging setting. When we introduce gaming to the mix, we gain the entertainment value that video games naturally produce, while allowing the audience to either 'play' by watching or directly join the game.

Whether you are helping solve who the impostor is in Among Us alongside a U.S. Representative or scoring against an NFL player in Madden, gaming brings unimaginable levels of engagement between fan and celebrity all from the comfort of one's bedroom without even changing out of your pajamas.