

Esports in SA: 5 myths dispelled (for brands)

 By [Barry Louzada](#)

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Back when I first competed in esports 20 years ago, players were competing to win simple prizes like a new keyboard. These days, it's normal for international gamers to play for a prize pot of millions of dollars. This indicates how quickly esports has grown, and the massive potential there is in South Africa for brands to get involved NOW. However, if you aren't that familiar with the industry, you may mistakenly believe a few myths about esports that could make you doubt the benefits it has for your brand.

Here are five esports myths I believe need to be addressed:

It's run by amateurs

When you think of gaming, you may imagine someone sitting in a basement in their pyjamas with mouse in hand. So why should your brand get on board with an industry that's run by amateurs? Nothing could be further from the truth.

These days there are fully equipped esport studios, where millions of rands have been spent on cameras and production equipment. There are experienced producers and sound engineers, and proper talent. So when brands get involved, they're getting involved in a completely professional production.

You need to spend huge amounts

As a marketer, you may look offshore for examples of brands working within the esports industry, and see examples like the DOTA international which has a prize pool of over \$20 million. "I don't have that kind of budget to invest!" I hear you say, and then you write off the idea entirely. But the truth is that the South African gaming industry is certainly behind the international scene in terms of development (up to 10 years behind, according to international peers of mine), so as a brand you don't need to spend that kind of money to get involved. I'd suggest spending a certain percentage of your budget – say 5% – to see if it works, as you would with any new marketing strategy.



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It's a short game

As a brand, you wouldn't sponsor a Super 14 rugby team for just one season as an example. As with any other marketing effort, esports campaigns require consistency and longevity in order to deliver real results, and you need to be in it for a few seasons in order to start seeing the benefits.

I'm nervous because I don't understand the industry

According to a recent talk I attended by Nielsen, a big fear for SA brands is that they don't know who to speak to about getting involved the esports industry. I don't think they need to be scared, as the right company will be able to guide you and educate you on how to get involved in the best possible way. Just beware of those who purport to know a lot about the industry, but are relatively new to gaming and lack experience.

It doesn't align with my target market

I don't think there are many brands out there that don't align with gamers. The youth market is a very tough one to get into, and the advent of tech has made this even harder. Today's young people aren't watching TV adverts or listening to the radio. They're streaming off YouTube or Twitch instead, and as a result, lots of brands are struggling to get eyes on their campaigns.

Esports specifically targets this 16-29 year-old age group and builds brand loyalty for life. There's a reason brands like Samsung, Vodacom and Monster energy drinks are getting involved in the gaming industry in South Africa – they can see the value, and you should too.

Today's young people are struggling to form an identity, and gaming creates a space of uniqueness. You can be a ninja, a Formula One racing driver or a football star.

For brands, this means being able to access people engaging in a recreational activity where they can be whoever they want to be. With the right strategy, angle and persistence – and by dispelling the myths you may have about the industry in the first place – you can integrate your brand into the esports industry and see a huge return in the process.

ABOUT BARRY LOUZADA

Living and breathing e-sports for the last 20 years Barry "Anthrax" Louzada has one goal and that is to see e-sports get the true recognition it deserves. Whether it is leading teams to international dominance or shout casting games to panel host. Now heading up the Mettlestate brand there is nothing regarding e-sports that he doesn't know.

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