

Busting the gaming stereotype: South Africa's gamers are educated, healthy, well-off and live life to the full

By [Rachel Thompson](#), issued by [GfK](#) – An NIQ Company

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Perceptions that gamers are predominantly young, geeky, and male persist, despite the reality that playing videogames has become mainstream.



Our consumer research at GfK shows that playing games today spans generations and genders. Today, most people in the mid and upper LSMs play games at least sometimes, with around 72% of Internet-connected South Africans playing games across their devices at least once a month.

Our [GfK Consumer Life](#)* study – surveying 1,000 South African consumers who are representative of the online population – indicates that the proliferation of smartphones and mobile devices is the catalyst for the mainstream gaming explosion. Some 54% of the respondent base are playing from mobile phones. Around a fifth (20%) own a dedicated gaming console.

The data reveals that 12% of these connected consumers own a gaming console and play games every week, while 6% play every day. Daily gamers are more likely to be members of Generation Z, but there are significant numbers of older daily gamers, too.

Regular gamers are more likely to live in high-income households and to have a good education – 30% of daily gamers are LSM 10 and 23% have a university degree. While half of regular gamers work full time, the more frequent daily gamers are more likely to be students (30%) or unemployed (20%).

The profile of the gamer is that of a person living life to the full – regular gamers are more likely than the average online South African to socialise, exercise, play sport, go to gym, and shop online. They are also more likely to stream online movies and drink alcohol. Consider that 49% of daily gamers use vitamin and mineral supplements compared to 39% of online South Africans, for example, and that 82% of daily gamers exercise to look their best (all online consumers - 71%).

What's more, 69% prefer to buy fewer higher quality items (all online consumers - 49%), 56% pamper themselves regularly (all online consumers - 44%), and 72% reflect their individuality through what they buy and wear (all online consumers - 48%). This no doubt reflects the fact that gamers are often from higher income households than the average and that many are students who have time on their hands. However, it does dispel the myth that they focus on their gaming hobby to the exclusion of real life.

Compared to the typical South African, gamers also have a progressive outlook on technology adoption. Some 60% of daily gamers describe themselves as 'passionate about technology' and 80% planned to purchase home electronics in the next twelve months at the time they were surveyed. Compared to just 43% of all online consumers in South Africa, 65% said they had knowledge and experience of technology. They are also more likely to purchase online (85% vs 68%).

All of these stats paint a picture of the avid gamer as an adventurous person who treasures their freedom and individuality. They understand the power of tech to elevate their individualism and they are looking for products that are tailored to their personal needs.

So, what does this mean for brands seeking to tap into the spending power of this leading-edge consumer segment?

1. Bring reality into a game

For increased engagement, take advantage of the blurring between games and reality. Interactivity and gamification offer ways to break through to this audience. Microsoft, for instance, is planning to launch Minecraft Earth, a mobile augmented version of its popular game. It will allow players to build and place their creations in the physical environment around them via augmented reality.

2. Let them embark on their own quest

Rather than funneling them down a customer journey, enable them to discover and curate their perfect personal experience. Some 57% of daily gamers spend a lot of time researching brands; what's more they understand the power of tech to elevate their individualism. They are looking for products that are tailored to their personal needs. But it must be on their terms, not the brand's.

Xbox, as an example, enabled gamers to design customised controllers on its website, then came up with the idea of letting them earn a commission for each of their creations that was sold to other fans. This 'franchise' model boosted sales of custom-design controllers because creators started to think strategically and creatively about ideas that would appeal to other people as well as to promote them via their own social media accounts.

3. Be edgy

Keep consumer engagements unique, customised and edgy and then allow gamers to reveal their story and lead mass adoption of new offerings. Stuffy corporate press releases and press conferences are not the way to get to this audience. As gaming console companies like Nintendo and Sony show, this segment appreciates fun, creative experiences like live video streams that connect them directly to the source of the info.

**[GfK Consumer Life](#) is a global data and insight service that provides a view on how consumers' everyday lives are evolving. It provides access to what people think, and what people do on a global, regional, local or micro level.*

ABOUT RACHEL THOMPSON

Rachel Thompson is the Insights Director at GfK South Africa. She has 16 years of experience in market research, working first for Research International and then moving to GfK South Africa in 2009. She has experience across a wide range of research disciplines and a strong interest in innovation. Rachel has an Honours degree in Economics from the University of Natal.

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