



Mercedes-Benz

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Let's talk Mercedes – Episode 9: Fascination Esports – Riot and Mercedes-Benz on the future of sports-marketing

Abstract: Sarah Elsser meets Natanael Sijanta, Director Global Marketing Communications Mercedes-Benz AG and Naz Aletaha, Head of Global Esports Partnerships Riot Games

With 150 million monthly players, multi-million dollar prize money and hundreds of millions of viewers worldwide, League of Legends (LoL) is one of the market-leaders in the fast-growing world of Esports. Mercedes-Benz is connecting with a whole new community among LoL's global, tech-savvy and young fans through its ground-breaking partnership with Riot Games. In the latest episode of Let's talk Mercedes, the Mercedes-Benz podcast, show host Sarah Elsser meets Natanael Sijanta, Director Global Marketing Communications Mercedes-Benz AG and Naz Aletaha, Head of Global Esports Partnerships Riot Games, to discuss the vision behind their partnership, the future of Esports, and how close we are to an immersive in-car gaming experience.

The following text contains some of the discussion's key takeaways, which have been edited for readability:

- Natanael Sijanta on the value of Esports compared to traditional motorsport: "It's a totally different audience. It's a totally different group of let's say potential customers for the future. So if I would rate it where it is compared to motor sports, for example - so motorsports is already quite, let's say close to the peak of it. They are very, very professional. Everything has been worked on since years, decades. In Esports we are right at the beginning. We do see every year, year over year, double digit growth. And that is something that you can only imagine what can happen in the near future. And again, it's much more about adding something in terms of target group or adding something to the brand. And I think in both cases we have some kind of a win-win situation."
- Natanael Sijanta on the future relationship between mobility and Esports: "I do truly believe that mobility will stay something very important for people. So it's going to be all about how we can provide a very sustainable way of mobility, how we can provide a very joyful way of mobility and also some kind of luxury experience in the car. And thinking again about different disciplines or different tasks, when we start to collaborate and to work together, there are huge opportunities for the future when it comes to mobility. And I'm really excited about that I have to say. Because again, what we have seen, how, for example, Esports developed over the past 10 years and how steep that curve became - just imagine what will happen over the next 10 years. And if you combine that with mobility, that's going to be awesome. Maybe people will start living in the car all day long, all night long."
- Natanael Sijanta on the potential of in-car gaming: "We do think already today about that and because the moment that we are at the point that a lot of cars can drive autonomously, at that moment, we also want to be ready with any kind of entertainment, for example, in the car. And imagine, just have an idea of that in the future, you can, for example, use the steering wheel, you can use the pedals at the steering wheel, you can use all the switches at a steering wheel, you can even use your seat, our seats, you can either use the heated seat or the heating function or the cooling function on the seat. You can use the ambient lighting in

the car to have a really full immersive experience in the car when you play, for example, a game that we might maybe potentially develop with Riot Games.”

- Naz Aletaha on the marketing opportunities of League of Legends: “I think first it starts with the game. You know, I think League of Legends has a massive player base, where it's the most played PC game in the world. And so that becomes a pretty large pool of people who will probably be very attracted to the sport. And so I think as the popularity of the game has continued to rise, even though it's a decade in, the game is so engaging. So I think that definitely helps with viewership. And then the last thing I would have to say is hats off to the pro-teams. I mean the pro-teams, the pro-players, they're the ones who really make this, you know? It's their skill, they're so, so incredibly talented. You know, you want to tune in to watch the best of the best in anything, right? That's always very entertaining and educational and interesting.”
- Naz Aletaha on why Mercedes-Benz is a perfect partner for Riot Games: “We aspire to bring joy to billions of fans around the world. We've hit the hundreds of millions mark. So our goal is to get to a billion. So we look for partners who are just as inspired, I think by that vision. And we look for partners who are the best in their respective fields. When we thought about “who's the best partner to bring in in the mobility and automotive field?” Mercedes-Benz arguably is the right partner and fits that mould. They're just at the top of your game - pun intended - you know, I think within your own industry, they have an incredible history of supporting some of the biggest sports in the world and in really meaningful ways. And they, again also share our appetite for innovation, our fan-first approach. And so for us, it's a very, very ideal partnership and collaboration.”
- Naz Aletaha on Esports as the future of sport: “We really believe that. I think as technology continues to advance, everybody becomes a gamer. Most people today are gamers. When you think about it, because we all carry a computer in our pockets, our phones now, and that technology enables us to play games. And, you know, to be a “gamer” doesn't mean you have to be playing a hundred hours a month of games. Maybe you're just playing a mobile game once in a while to pass time. But I think that is going to continue to push Esports into the mainstream. So I think the future is incredibly bright.”

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Mercedes-Benz AG at a glance

Mercedes-Benz AG is responsible for the global business of Mercedes-Benz Cars and Mercedes-Benz Vans with over 173,000 employees worldwide. Ola Källenius is Chairman of the Board of Management of Mercedes-Benz AG. The company focuses on the development, production and sales of passenger cars, vans and services. Furthermore, the company aspires to be leading in the fields of connectivity, automated driving and alternative drives with its forward-looking innovations. The product portfolio comprises the Mercedes-Benz brand with the sub-brands Mercedes-AMG, Mercedes-Maybach and Mercedes me - as well as the smart brand, and the EQ product and technology brand for electric mobility. Mercedes-Benz AG is one of the largest manufacturers of premium passenger cars. In 2019 it sold nearly 2.4 million cars and more than 438,000 vans. In its two business divisions, Mercedes-Benz AG is continually expanding its worldwide production network with over 40 production sites on four continents, while aligning itself to meet the requirements of electric mobility. At the same time, the company is developing its global battery production network on three continents. Sustainable actions play a decisive role in both business divisions. To the company, sustainability means creating value for all stakeholders on a lasting basis: customers, employees, investors, business partners and the society as a whole. The basis for this is the sustainable business strategy of Daimler in which the company takes responsibility for the economic, ecological and social effects of its business activities and looks at the entire value chain.