



Social simulation games having a huge moment on Twitter



Introduction

Twitter is what's happening and as the world changes, people take to Twitter to voice their concerns, ideas, and beliefs – but most recently, their pastimes. As daily routines were turned upside down and outdoor activities limited, people adapted and found new ways to connect and spend time.

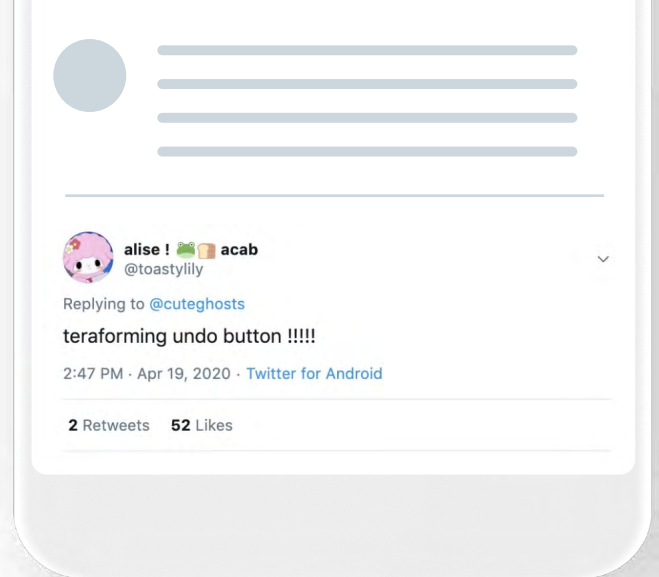
People on Twitter are 15% more likely to inform friends and family about new products and services than non-Twitter users¹. So we asked Twitter Official Partner, Brandwatch, to weigh in on 2020 trends and share what people are up to, how brands are staying top of mind, and best practices for thoughtful engagement in gaming.

Gaming is an important pastime for many, and it increasingly serves new purposes beyond entertainment. However, the games wouldn't be the same without the communities they create outside of the gaming arena.

Twitter is a place for players to convene to share their experiences, designs, and stories, as well as for businesses in gaming to carry out vital customer service, gather feedback for product development, and engage with the groups of fans that form around particular games.

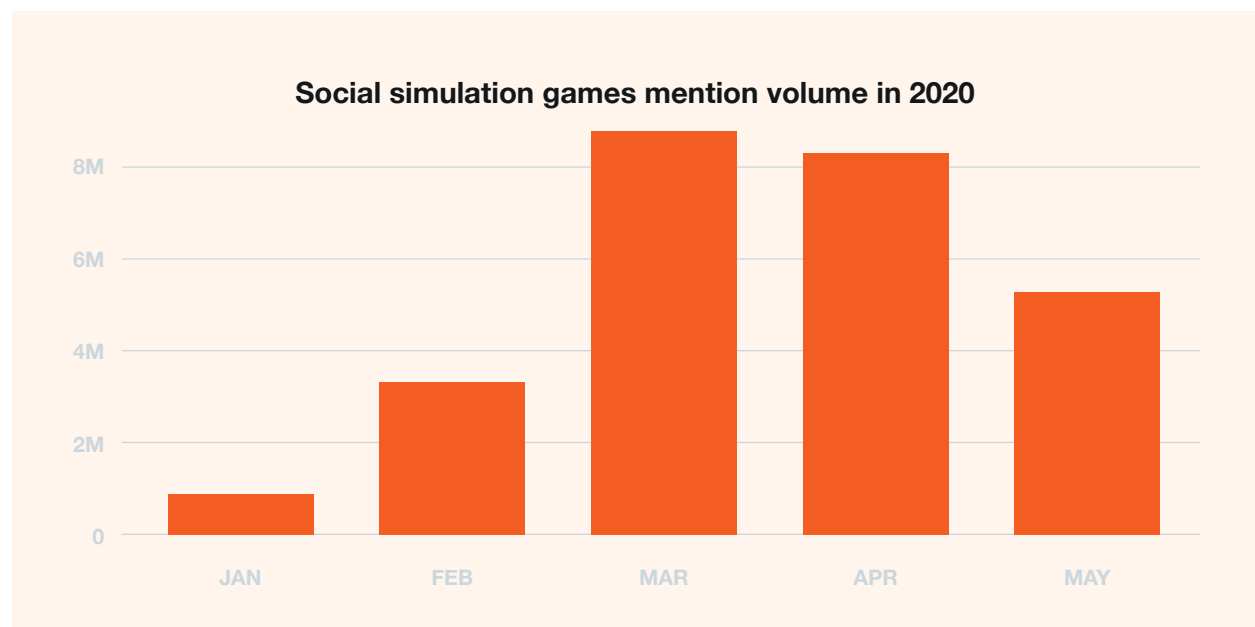


In 2019, there were 1.9 billion Tweets about gaming, an increase of 20%³ year over year. And 61% of gamers on Twitter are hardcore to moderate gamers, so you can expect the conversation to be rich and deep with insight⁴.



Social simulation games are those that explore interactions between virtual personalities, and so far they've had a huge year on Twitter – 2020 has already been packed with big launches and significant milestones, and the fact that many people are spending more time at home has given the games a big boost.

Here's a chart showing mentions around popular social simulation games on Twitter so far in 2020 – the conversation is high, especially during March, April and May.



Why are social simulation games having such a big impact right now? To find out, Brandwatch dived into conversations about them on Twitter⁵.

³ Twitter Semantic Core, January - December, 2019 vs. 2018

⁴ Source —Source —Twitter Insiders, Gaming Research Dec 2019, n=786, Gamer definitions used from output of Twitter Internal cluster analysis. Audience sizing performed in Global Web Index

⁵Brandwatch analysis, period studied: 1 Jan 2020 - 31 May 2020

Escaping reality

For many, social simulation games are an excellent form of escape and consumers are spending a huge amount of time within them. Looking at conversations around popular social simulation games so far in 2020, 450k Tweets were found referring to how many hours people spent playing the game.

Self-expression

Self-expression is another big reason why people spend time in these games. Players and brands create custom artwork or clothing within the game and share with fellow fans online. For example, @TwitterGaming created custom Tees for players to download and dress their avatars in.

The crossover between fashion and gaming is nothing new, with designers joining in to create **pop up** stores within games or real life collaborations with fashion **designers** inspired by The Sims.

Brands are also testing new ways to connect with fans of the game by moving their physical **collections** to virtual worlds. @GettyMuseum made their collection of artwork **available** for users to download and bring fine works of art to their virtual homes. Social simulation games democratize the art world – anyone can own (or even create) famous works so money and access are no longer restrictions.



ROSALIA ISLE THREAD 🌸

After 465 hours of game play my island is finally COMPLETE!! I'm making a little thread to showcase my lovely island and to keep the memory of it after I start over ✨

I hope you all enjoy looking at my island as much as I enjoyed making it! ❤️

4:18 PM · May 30, 2020 · Twitter for iPhone

112 Retweets 679 Likes



★ Pinned Tweet



Dear Islander,

Here, these are for you.

❤️ Twitter Gaming

PS - Tag us in your screenshots!



1:00 PM · Apr 15, 2020 · Twitter Web App

2.1K Retweets 10.5K Likes



Virtual connection

Social simulation games offer the opportunity for escapism, taking place on desert islands and in fictional lives. People talk on Twitter about skills and techniques in games by showing off creations, lamenting failures, or sharing strategies for building new experiences.

Many people are using these games as a means of playing out more serious, 'IRL' events. For example, people are hosting personal gatherings that have had to be canceled because of stay at home measures within the games. Some have thrown **virtual weddings**, graduation celebrations, support groups, online dating and **birthday parties**, to share special moments with their friends. It's a resourceful solution, allowing players to live vicariously through their avatars.

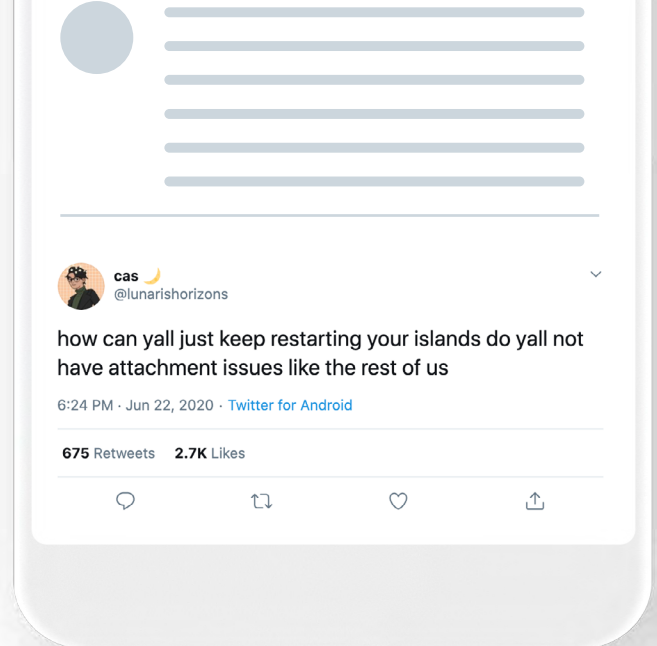
Finding new ways to connect is a challenge for both people and brands alike, but immersive games that are highly customizable allow everyone to get creative. A tech **conference** was held inside a social simulation game, and participants could follow along via Zoom conferencing.

It's great when brands can authentically connect with trends and be playful, however the timing, context, and content has to make sense. What's important is sensitivity, particularly during hard times.

Creativity, sharing, and serving the gaming community

Social simulation or sandbox games are fundamentally based on giving players space to create. From building out virtual communities to creating homes and lives for Sim people, there's a lot to do – and they really lend themselves to what players want in 2020.

Brands can become a part of this creative process and should do so authentically and in the spirit of the game. Building relationships with fans now can help build retention in the long term and attract new business when increased spending habits return. By understanding what players love, want, and need, brands can deliver amazing customer experiences and retain their valued player communities.



Summary

In changing times, it's critical for brands to keep a pulse on what's happening. Analysis from Twitter partners is key for helping brands adjust media and creative plans, find appropriate ways to engage or provide customer support, and continue to communicate their brand purpose.

Top takeaway:

Gaming continues to be a sweeping trend that was further amplified by the pandemic. Sensitivity, particularly in hard times is important for brands who want to join the conversation. While it's great for brands to be playful, the timing, context, and content have to be authentic and genuine connections.

To learn more about Brandwatch, head to
partners.twitter.com



About the Twitter Official Partner Program

Twitter Official Partners are an elite group of vetted companies that help brands get more from Twitter. Twitter partners help brands make well-informed decisions, study past behaviors to predict future trends, and engage with their most valuable audiences on Twitter.

@OfficialPartner

Follow us for partner news, announcements, and latest trends in Twitter data.

Looking for help?

Email datahelp@twitter.com to get in touch with our dedicated Brand Development team for a consultation to learn more on how to get the most insight and value from Twitter data based on your specific needs and use cases.