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The Future Of Twitch And Streaming Video Games



Team Lightstream



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The video game streaming industry is really interesting. Thousands and thousands of gamers, who are avid players themselves, spend hours watching others play games on Twitch and YouTube, hoping to learn some tips, tricks, and strategies to improve their gameplay.

No wonder the industry is worth well more than **\$2 billion** in 2022! With millions of monthly streamers to choose from and footage on just about every game under the sun, we're never left without something entertaining to watch.

But it wasn't always the case. When game streaming first began – in 2001, during the days of Windows Media Encoders and DivX – viewers were sparse and incredibly limited in their selection.

How Game Streaming Began

Streamers are often baffled to learn that OG Twitch wasn't made for gaming! Isn't that how Twitch rose to fame? Yes, but there's more to the story.

The site began as a spin-off of Justin.tv, which started in 2005 as a live streaming platform allowing anyone to broadcast anything they wanted. Select broadcasters

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could stream everything from their day-to-day lives to gaming sessions to even e-commerce products to what not!



A screenshot by Rafe Needleman/CNET

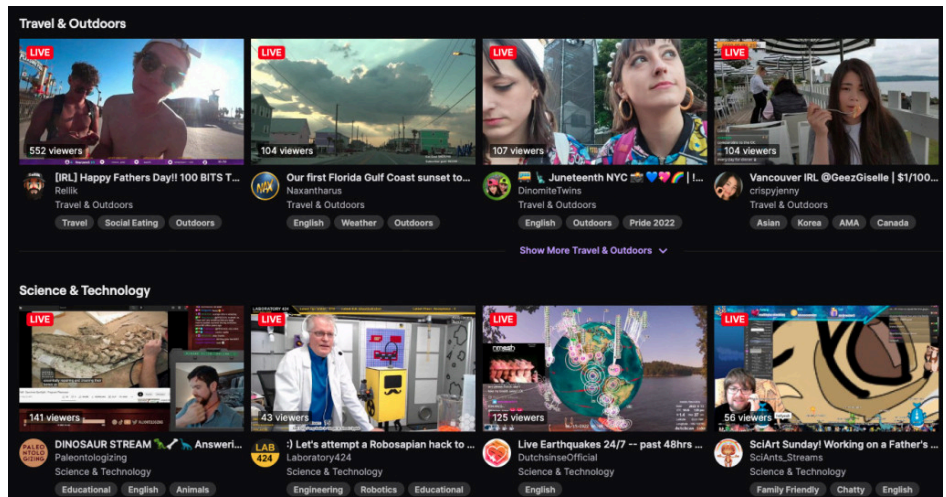
Of course, gamers were quick to jump on the train. Gaming no longer needed to be a solitary sport. It was refreshing and exciting, and soon enough, it was clear that gamers were the bread and butter of Justin.tv. The company pivoted in 2011, dedicating an entire section of its website to gaming content.

The rest is history. Twitch was acquired by Amazon for nearly \$1 billion in 2014, and it's been growing at an astounding rate ever since.

The State of Streaming Now

It's 2022, and we can see that Twitch.tv has come full circle. You'll have noticed that gamers aren't the only ones streaming content anymore. Twitch is now the 'home' for all things streaming.

Twitch IRL has taken off significantly, thanks to the growing popularity of lifestyle and vlogging content. Name your niche, and someone's streaming it, for sure! There's a whole community of streamers who build mechanical keyboards on camera, for example, and another bunch who play Mario Party for hours on end.

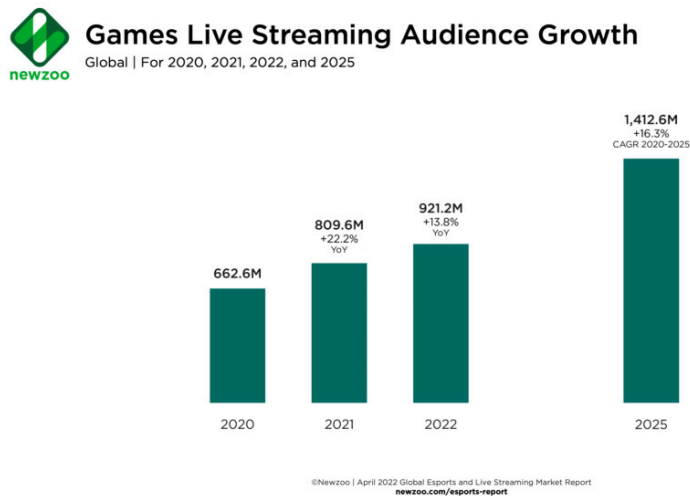


Well, Twitch isn't showing any signs of slowing down. It's only getting bigger and better. It's a nostalgic reinvention of Twitch.tv's original roots, and it's something we can all be excited about.

Game Streaming in Recent Years

It's interesting to look at the growth of game streaming over the past few years because – let's be frank – we spent most of our time online. No doubt that being locked inside for months due to Covid-19 drew a larger crowd to Twitch and other streaming platforms.

Between 2020 and 2021, we saw **Twitch's audience grow** from 660 million to 800 million. That's a growth of over 20%. This year, we've pushed the bar even higher by reaching 900 million – and projections say we'll hit a billion in 2023.



But what about the streamers themselves? Well, they saw a 20% boost last year. As many as 15 million channels streamed about 720 million live gaming hours.



So was it all a result of the pandemic? Or are there other factors at play?

The Rise and Rise of Streaming

To gamers of the early 2000s, the mechanisms and technology we use for streaming today would have sounded insane and outlandish. Even a Sci-Fi author would have found real-time interaction with an online audience too far-fetched.

This is where we stand in 2022. Live streaming is as simple as pressing a button on our controllers, and with cloud-based tools such as **Lightstream**, we can make our broadcasts look professional without breaking the bank.

Let's look at some key tech innovations that have allowed game streaming to grow so rapidly in such a short time:

Console Streaming

In the past, streaming a game from your console was a bit of a pain. You used to set up your capture card and ensure your internet connection was good.

But now, with the advent of console streaming, all you need is a PS4/5, Xbox One, or Switch, and you're good to go. Console streaming allows you to broadcast your gameplay directly from your console – no extra hardware or software is required.



It's a massive development for game streaming, because it means that anyone with a modern gaming console can start streaming right away. The PS5 even has a physical button on its controller specifically for streaming.

Cloud-Based Tech

While you don't need a capture card to stream from a console, let's admit that your quality won't be as good. Customization options are limited, and you'll likely experience a lot of lag.

But what if you could get the same quality as a professional streamer without all the extra hardware?

Enter cloud-based tech. Services such as **Lightstream** allow you to broadcast high-quality streams directly from your devices without using a capture card. They have everything you need to make your live stream look pretty, from custom overlays to real-time chat moderation.

Plus, their platform is cloud-based, so you don't need any extra software or hardware. Just connect to the internet and start streaming!



Mobile Streaming

Mobile games went underrated for a good while. We all forgot about the appeal of a good, old-fashioned handheld game, but the rest of the world is catching up!

In 2021, mobile gaming accounted for over **\$90 billion in revenue** – the year after Twitch made mobile game streaming easy. The Twitch app now supports direct streaming from Android and iOS devices, so you can easily share your gameplay with the world.

This shift was massive for game streaming because it opened up the possibility of streaming to a whole new audience.

Not everyone has a powerful gaming PC or console, but almost everyone has a smartphone!

What's Next? Virtual Reality?



There are several projections we could make about the years to come in video game streaming. For example, it's safe to say that virtual reality will be a focus very soon. The tech is there, but it's yet to become mainstream. We'll probably see increasingly simpler tech solutions for HD streaming, too.

We're already seeing more and more streamers shift to **solutions such as Lightstream** to simplify their streaming tech stack. It's a hassle having to use a capture card every time you want to stream, not to mention that it's expensive. Lightstream's cloud-based solution can help out with this issue.

A more immediate shift is already taking place before our eyes: rapid content diversification.

IRL Streaming

Just a few years ago, Twitch was pretty much synonymous with streaming games. But as I mentioned earlier, Twitch IRL changed everything in 2016. We began to see mukbangers, ASMR artists, musicians, and other creative streamers using the platform to share their talent with the world.

If you're a Twitch user, you'll know that the 'Just Chatting' category consistently sits in the top spot for most popular content. It clearly indicates that people are no longer just interested in gaming streams – they want to see more of the human side of their favorite broadcasters, and the broadcasters are keen to show it.



This aligns with the CEO's statement about why Twitch IRL was introduced in the first place:

"What we've heard repeatedly from [Twitch's creators] is that they are interested in sharing their everyday lives, thoughts, and opinions with their communities. IRL is designed to help our creators foster that kind of community interaction," Emmett Shear said a few years back.

Since IRL was rolled out, we've seen the following trends:

- Artists streaming their creative processes
- Streamers opening up about their personal lives and mental health
- Travel vloggers streaming their adventures
- Gamers playing a wider variety of games, not just the latest AAA releases
- Commentary on current events, celebrity news, and social issues
- YouTubers bringing their audiences to Twitch

The Road Ahead

The trends will continue in the years to come. We can expect to see more broadcasters experimenting with new content genres and more viewers tuning in to watch them.



If you're a Lightstream user, you'll know that the platform's main feature is **Lightstream Gamer**. Users can easily broadcast their gameplay and add overlays, graphics, and webcam footage to their stream.

Today, streaming is one of the most popular ways to watch video content. Who would have known that the rise of Twitch and live streaming, in general, would lead us here? And on that note, where are we headed next?

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