Five video game escape routes for the bored petrolhead

RAHBAR AL HAQ

Gran Turismo Sport
Platform: PlayStation 4
Price: $11.99

The original racing sim that started it all, the Gran Turismo series is as old as PlayStation itself. Its latest iteration, the Gran Turismo Sport lets you race in realistic environments rendered in 4K resolution at 60 frames per second. The base games come with over 150 vehicles, which can be driven on 18 locations with 54 different race layouts. The game takes its racing sim heritage very seriously, hosting the in-game FIA-Certified Gran Turismo Championships every year. The winners of the championship are given a TAG Heuer watch, an actual trophy, and are honored at the FIA Prize Giving Ceremony. The only downside to the game is the fact it's a PlayStation exclusive, meaning you need to buy a console to enjoy this.

Forza Horizon 4
Platform: Windows, Xbox one
Price: $60-100 (Windows store)

Moving from realistic racing sim to something a bit more arcadey, we have the latest iteration of the Horizon series, the Forza Horizon 4. The game is set in an open world environment based in a fictionalized Great Britain, and features a dynamic weather system that changes season every seven days. The base games come with a mind-numbing 450 cars for players to enjoy, with the number rising to a truly crazy 670 cars in you include all the DLC's. There are a wide variety of races to choose from, from your basic time attacks, to crazy stunt race to whatever custom stuff you and 74 other players want to try on a single server. Sadly, being a Microsoft title, the game is only available on Xbox and Windows OS, meaning PlayStation and Mac are left out.

Dirt Rally 2.0
Platform: Winnows, Xbox one, PlayStation 4
Price: $13 (PC)

In the world of racing games, the rallycross fans are a neglected bunch. Most games that dose includes rally racing does so an afterthought, leaving the mode half-baked and unsatisfying. The Dirt 2.0 is an exception to this norm, being built from the ground up to be a hardcore rally and rallycross racing simulator for the die-hard fans. The game has over eighty cars, including the insanity that are the Group B machines. Being an official game of the FIA World Rallycross Championship, the game features tracks from the World RX calendar as well as other iconic Rally and Rallycross locations. So, if you are a rallycross fan who always wanted to experience how it feels to drive one of these off-road monsters, better pick this one up.

Project CARS 2
Platform: Windows, Xbox one, PlayStation 4
Price: $60-90 (PC)

Want an actual racing sim but don't want to invest in a PlayStation? Well, there is Project Cars 2. The second iteration of the series doesn't come with any training gloves, and its steep learning curve will harshly punish casual racing fans. If you can master it however, the game will give you one of the most realistic portrayal sim racing currently available on the market. It's collection 189 cars is small compared to that of Horizon 4, but the characteristic of those cars has been faithfully recreated, something that you can put to the test on one of the games 140 track layouts placed at 60 different locations. Unlike the previous two games, Project CARS 2 is available on all platforms, meaning all you need to buy is the game itself. Oh, and did we mention the game has VR support?

Wreckfest
Platform: Winnows, Xbox one, PlayStation 4
Price: $20-30 (PC)

Form racing sim that rewards careful driving to a game that actively encourages you to crash into things, we have Wreckfest. Developed by the same guys who made Flatout, this is a demolition derby teamed racing game were ramming the engine out of your opponent's car is as important as crossing the finish line. The game has over 50 different vehicles, including crazy stuff like a version of Edd China's Sofa car. All the cars have an extremely detailed damage model, which when released onto the game's crazy obstacle tracks, turns into a mangled collection of metal by the end of the race. The games support up to 26 people in an online race, each becoming a giant ball of chaos, destruction, and pure unadulterated fun. Bottom line if you just want to have a great time with your friends or just need to vent some frustration, this game is for you.

SUBSCRIPTION SERVICES
The future of Big Tech?

SADMAN SAKIB PANTHO

The subscription economy has been on the rise for quite a while now, with companies looking to build stronger and more lasting relationships with customers while generating guaranteed income. This has led to the fall of ownership as we know it and has given rise to users – meaning, you now have to abide by a monthly or yearly pay-plan to use a service. And right now, in the realm of technology, it seems to be the hottest goal for companies.

The allure
From the businessman's perspective, the idea behind a subscription model is that instead of having to convince you, the customer, to buy a new product every time one is released, they need to convince you only once. And then, if they can keep you happy and satisfied, they will be able to generate steady, predictable income. When it comes to products like paid apps or smartphones, sales are the only way of generating money. And then, after a while, sales will fall as consumers will start to demand something new.

Cloud technologies
The development of cloud technologies is one of the biggest reasons why the scales are tipping towards subscription services for tech-enabled companies. This technology has made digital services more accessible, giving rise to content and data services. Subscription-based content services are perhaps the most popular subscriptions in the world right now with Netflix, Spotify, Amazon Prime and others having millions of subscribers. With giants like Alibaba, Google, Microsoft and many more competing in the cloud-based big data processing market, many have adopted the subscription model.

Products vs services
What is the most important factor for a tech company looking to enter the subscription market? Mahtab Uddin Ahmed, the CEO of Robi Axiata Limited says, "The first thing is to recognize digital platform as a service." Take content services, for example. We could buy songs or movies for a price, but that's expensive when there are platforms like Netflix or Apple Music with endless content for us. In the case of products, if you are suddenly asked to pay continuously for something you could own after a one-time payment, it's annoying. That's exactly why customers were infuriated when Adobe declared their move to the Creative Cloud in 2013. But Adobe didn't suffer because now, they were pitching their previous products as a service. Yes, the subscription-based model did lead to the loss of customers, but professional users were now actually treating the Creative Cloud as a one-stop platform for all of Adobe's products. This and a steady inflow of money each month made Adobe's move a financial success.

Having the right strategy
So, what should be the approach for companies? Mahtab Uddin Ahmed says, "As long as you have the right business model that drives traffic to your platform, you have a business case to pursue. So long as the focus is on the platform, one can structure it around the subscription-based model or otherwise, depending on the market realities and the business strategy." This seems to be exactly what Apple is doing right now. Apple has 6 main subscriptions to offer but holds only 20% of the smartphone market. For a while now, the main entry point into these services has been the iPhone. But now, the tech giant has not only started introducing an iPhone at an affordable price point, but has also made the iPad, Apple Watch, and the Mac more distinct in their respective product categories. All these can now feed a much wider user-base into the core Apple subscriptions.

What's in it for the consumers?
Why should we, as consumers, pay a monthly or yearly fee instead of purchasing a product? To put it simply, technology moves way too fast and if an app isn't updated, it dies. We cannot expect developers of an app we're really invested in to continuously provide maintenance, introduce new content and new technologies for free.

Where does Bangladesh stand in all of this?
Some companies have given a shot at the subscription-based content service scenario in Bangladesh. Iflix recently exited the market. Robi CEO Mahtab says, "Unfortunately, we don't have much in the way of platform-based business in Bangladesh. Unless part of a bundle offer, people don't tend to have much liking for subscription-based services." He also said that the rate of digital adoption and copyrights are a concern here. But Mahtab believes that there is definitely a market here, companies just need to be in it for the long haul. Red Dot Digital, an associate of Robi, has recently rolled out the set-top-box and subscription-based service Binge, which is a full-fledged digital entertainment platform open to all and can be used on both small and big screens. Mahtab further said, "We believe a Bangladeshi OTT platform can compete at the international level and we want Binge to be that platform. We are very encouraged by the response received within a short period. What we need right now is to invest in the right kind of content to create demand in the market. But that can only happen if we can bring together the bright minds who can create those contents."

Subscriptions are indeed poised to be the future for tech giants and tech-enabled companies. Even Uber has rolled out their Ride Pass subscription in select US cities. Everyone wants a piece of the pie.