



PLAYABLE ADS FOR BRANDS

An IAB Playbook

Playable Ads for Brands, An IAB Playbook is the first guide of its kind designed to help brand marketers and their agencies learn everything they need to know to get started and expand their usage of playable ads. It includes definitions, benefits, creative options, how to buy, measurement, industry recommendations and more. With the right information and tools, playables can be effective for all brands. They are not just for mobile games anymore!



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MISSION AND CONTRIBUTORS

The mission of the IAB Playables Working Group is to help brand marketers and their agencies get started with and/or expand their usage of playable ads by providing information that includes the following: definitions, benefits, creative options, how to buy, measurement, industry recommendations and more. Consumers spend the majority of their digital consumption on mobile devices, posing some challenges for brands. The goal of this working group is to help brands embrace the potential playable ads have to drive quantifiable business results, especially on mobile, and eliminate misconceptions in the industry about playables.

The working group was led by Amanda Baldwin, Manager, Mobile Marketing Center of Excellence, IAB with co-chairs from Facebook and TreSensa, Inc.



ROB GROSSBERG
CEO
Trensensa, Inc.



WILLIAM LEE
Product Marketing Manager
Facebook

IAB acknowledges and thanks the working group members for their contribution:

ANNA SU	ADCOLONY	BRITTANY HARDIN	MIQ
ANDRIUS MISIUNAS	ADFORM	STEPHEN EBREY	OPENX
DAVID MCQUILLAN	ALLIANT	DHAWAL MUJUMDAR	POLYMORPH
SAMEER SHAH	BONZAI	JARKKO RAJAMAKI	ROVIO
LLOYD LIM	CHOCOLATE	NINA HARVEY	RUBICON PROJECT
DANIEL PRUDHOMME	COX MEDIA GROUP	TODD SMITH	RUBICON PROJECT
ALON GOLAN	FYBER	MICHAEL SHANG	STACKADAPT
NATALIE BINNS	FYBER	CHRISTOPHER KLOPP	SUNDAYSKY
NOAM DVIR	FYBER	LAUREN BACA	TAPJOY
ROBY BAR-DAVID	FYBER	MICHAEL HUNG	TENMAX
CASEY CAMPBELL	GAMELOFT	CAT HEPLER	TRESENSA
JEFF BIRNBAUM	GOOGLE	AGATHA HOOD	UNITY TECHNOLOGIES
JEN LIU	GOOGLE	BEN BIEBER	VERIZON MEDIA GROUP
PRAJWAL BARTHUR	INMOBI	KWUN CHOY	VERTEBRAE
CHARLES WHATLEY	INSTREAMATIC, INC.	DAVID ROSENBERG	VUNGLE
STANISLAV TUSHINSKIY	INSTREAMATIC, INC.	JASON SANTILLANO	VUNGLE
DAN FELDSTEIN	IRONSOURCE USA, INC.	MICHAEL DEIGNAN	VUNGLE
BRIAN SYKORA	JUN GROUP	ROSS BLANCHARD	VUNGLE
GARRETT MACDONALD	KOCHAVA	RYAN ANTHONY	VUNGLE
ANDREA DIBBEN	MEDIAMATH	DALE DARLING	ZYNGA

OVERVIEW

Mobile ad spend increased to \$70 billion in 2018, according to the [IAB Internet Advertising Revenue Report, 2018 full year results](#), and [71% of time spent](#) on the Internet in 2018 was on **mobile**. Brand marketers need to reach consumers where they spend most of their time, but it has been challenging to get consumers to pause their mobile consumption to engage with a brand. Brands are looking for new ways to engage with consumers on their devices.

Playables have been gaining in popularity in the mobile gaming industry and captivating consumers over the past few years. Consumers are given the opportunity to try a game before having to download an app, and according to [Smartyads](#), this ad type can boost ROI, drive conversion and higher retention.

Playables are not just for mobile games anymore! With the introduction of new tools and the adoption of playables by many ad exchanges and social platforms, brands can now easily create and deliver playables to hundreds of millions of consumers, especially on mobile. Brands of all kinds are starting to take advantage of this highly interactive, engaging and consumer-first format from direct-to-consumer or legacy, entertainment or insurance company, consumer packaged good or charity.

WHAT ARE PLAYABLE ADS?

Definition

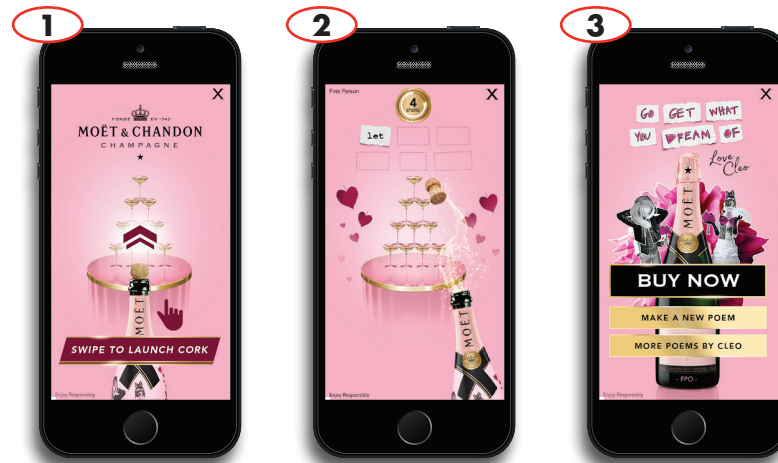
A single ad unit that combines interactivity - all the core mobile gestures like touch, swipe, flip and tap - with gamification to enable full-funnel marketing brand communication (attention, education and action).

Playable ads, "playables" for short, are premium ad units and are typically opt-in. They are predominantly built in HTML5 which allows the unit to load quickly, for the consumer to engage immediately and for the consumer to take an action (e.g., make a purchase, download a coupon, sign up for a loyalty program, enter a sweepstakes, etc.) and/or easily share the playable via social media, email, etc.

When presented in-app, almost all playables leverage the [IAB Mobile Rich Media Ad Interface Definitions API \(MRAID 3.0\)](#), which helps ensure timely ad load for a seamless ad viewing experience for the consumer and flag errors, if any, for the advertiser.

Playables are typically comprised of **three creative elements** (discussed further on [p. 13](#)):

1. Tutorial Prompt (Instructional cue or demo showing interactivity)
2. The Game/Interactive Experience
3. End Card



©LVMH Moët Hennessy/TreSensa, Inc.

Play the full experience [HERE](#).

WHAT'S DRIVING GROWTH?

Consumers are spending upwards of **3.5 hours per day** on mobile devices, and yet, mobile has been a challenging space to-date for brand advertisers because of data and measurement issues, challenges capturing consumer attention and brand safety concerns. Playables are a truly endemic form of mobile advertising that solve many of these challenges.

Playables are designed to capture the time and attention of the mobile consumer in a positive and brand safe way. In recent years, there have been a number of changes in the industry that are instrumental to the continued growth of playables as described to the right.

WHAT'S DRIVING THE GROWTH OF PLAYABLES?

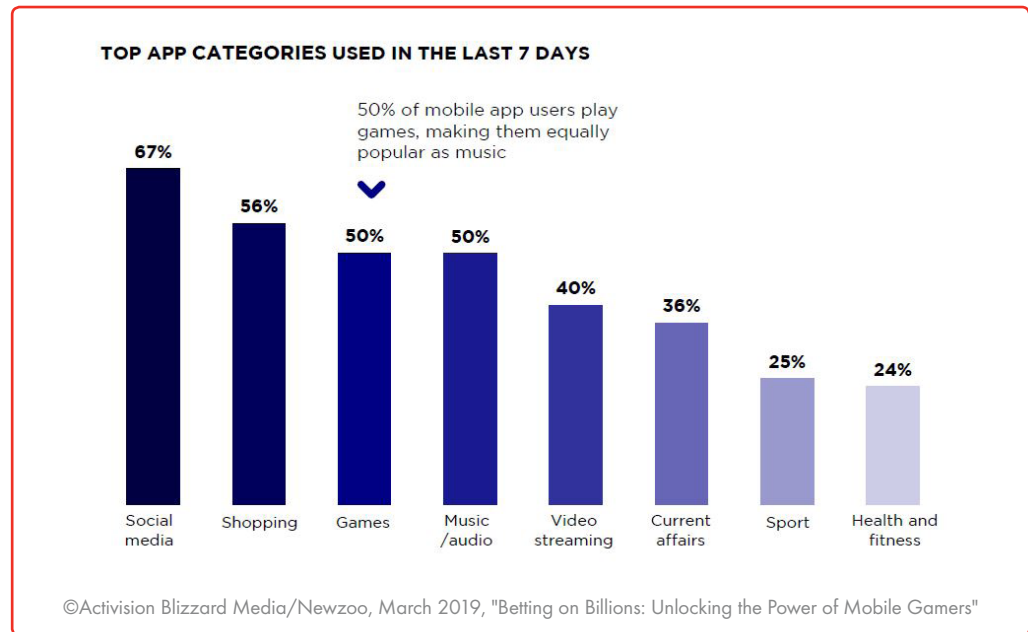
- 1 PLAYABLE TECHNOLOGY THAT ENABLES SCALE
- 2 CONSUMER EXPECTATION FOR AUTHENTIC, CREATIVE AND ENGAGING MOBILE AD EXPERIENCES
- 3 BRAND DESIRE TO CONNECT WITH CONSUMERS IN MORE NATIVE AND ORGANIC WAYS
- 4 BRAND DESIRE FOR BETTER PERFORMING ADS THAT ARE ENGAGING, VIEWABLE AND BRAND SAFE, ESPECIALLY ON MOBILE
- 5 PUBLISHER DESIRE FOR ADS THAT ENGAGE AND KEEP VIEWERS ON-SITE OR IN-APP
- 6 PUBLISHER DESIRE FOR NEW, PREMIUM AD REVENUE STREAMS THAT PROVIDE HIGHER IMPACT FOR ADVERTISERS AND BETTER EXPERIENCES FOR CONSUMERS
- 7 THE ABILITY TO LEVERAGE THE SUCCESS PERFORMANCE ADVERTISERS ARE SEEING WITH PLAYABLES

BENEFITS

Playables are a form of content and immersive marketing built for optimal mobile engagement. This interactive, consumer-first ad format is growing in popularity among consumers, brands and publishers alike. With increasing distribution and scale, playables offer value to all parties.

BENEFITS FOR CONSUMERS

According to Statista, there are over **200 million mobile gamers in the US** alone. A recent report by Activision Blizzard and Newzoo states that in 2019 there will be **2.4 billion mobile gamers globally**, and **50% of mobile app users played mobile games in the past seven days**. It is clear that people like to play mobile games!



Playables combine both gamification and interactivity - all the core mobile gestures like touch, swipe, flip and tap - making them an ideal ad unit for mobile and one that resonates with consumers.

TreSensa, Inc. compiled data from over 100 playable ad campaigns between 2016 and 2019 and found that the average engagement rates for playables served as in-app interstitials range between 15% and 30%, meaning that when presented with a playable, roughly 1 in 5 consumers will choose to engage with it and spend time with a brand. Why such receptivity to playables by consumers on mobile? Playables are:

Interactive & Fun: Consumers like and respond to experiences that create momentary enjoyment and fun!

Frictionless & Ephemeral: Downloading is not required to play and interact with a playable. After interacting with a playable, consumers will continue on with their media.

An Opt-In Experience: Consumers have the choice to engage or not.

Performant: Playables load immediately (MRAID 3.0 pre-caching) minimizing disruption to the consumer experience.

Content Rich: In addition to the interactive experience, playables built in HTML5 can include additional content elements such as video trailers, couponing, sweepstakes, ticketing and more.

BENEFITS FOR BRAND ADVERTISERS

Media consumption on mobile is all about tapping, swiping and interacting with content on the device. Unlike typical static banner and video ads, playables deliver a complete sensory connection; sight, sound, motion and active touch. The resulting lean-in effect enables advertisers to capture undivided attention, earn time and create a 1:1 consumer relationship with lasting impact. Playables can change the equation for brand advertisers on mobile, and here are some of the reasons why:

Consumer-First: Playables mimic the activity consumers naturally do/enjoy on their mobile devices which lends itself to the high engagement rates they garner.

High-Performing: As an opt-in ad unit, those who choose to engage with playables spend more time and are more likely to move beyond awareness and consideration, driving down-funnel performance such as sales, sign-ups, subscriptions, etc.

Measurable/Data Rich: Playables are made up of three core elements - tutorial prompt, game/interactive experience, end card - each of which collect a unique set of metrics. Because playables are predominantly built in HTML5, interactions and data can be easily captured and leveraged for insights into consumer preferences, sentiments and behaviors.
(Further information on Measurement can be found on [p. 24](#))

Brand Safe: Playables are full screen ad units and they are placed within curated environments on mobile which can alleviate brand safety concerns.
(Further information on Brand Safety/Fraud/Viewability can be found on [p. 26](#))

Effective on Mobile: In a [2018 AdColony report](#), 7 out of 10 advertisers found playable ads to be effective and 46% of those surveyed deemed them the most exciting ad unit of 2018. Additionally, in a recent survey by [Fyber conducted by Sapio Research](#), US agency professionals cited playables as the most effective format for in-app advertising.

Most Effective In-App Ad Format According to US Agency Professionals, Aug 2018

% of respondents



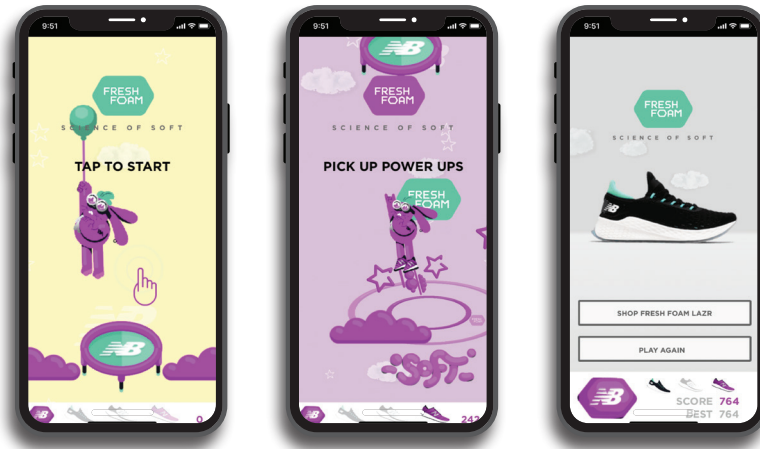
Source: Fyber, "In-App Advertising" conducted by Sapio Research, Oct 11, 2018

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www.eMarketer.com

The following case study highlights the benefits playables can provide to brand advertisers:

In a recent global campaign, **New Balance** leveraged a playable ad to raise awareness among its target audience, 13- to 24-year-olds, about New Balance's new line of Fresh Foam sneakers. New Balance partnered with TreSensa, Inc. to create a playable called "Fresh Foam Cloud Jumper," where consumers bounced "Newbie the Bunny" from cloud to cloud. The playable's end card had the call-to-action to shop the sneaker or play again. The playable was distributed programmatically in-app and on leading social platforms.



©New Balance, Inc./TreSensa, Inc.

Play the full experience **HERE**.

New Balance saw an average engagement time of over 20 seconds and a 5% click-through rate from the playable ad to their mcommerce site. This was well above the industry average click-through rate across all ad formats and placements display ads, which **Smart Insights** has noted is just 0.05%.

We are THRILLED with this campaign. The number of countries that participated coupled with the lifts across key purchase intent metrics are clear indicators of the strength of this program."

• Michaela Nee, Global Brand Marketing, New Balance



BENEFITS FOR PUBLISHERS

According to [LifeWire](#), as of February 2019, there are 2.2 million apps in the Apple App Store alone with around 100,000 added every month. Publishers are not only fighting for consumers, but for time spent once there. Poor ad experiences can derail the consumer/brand/app relationship.

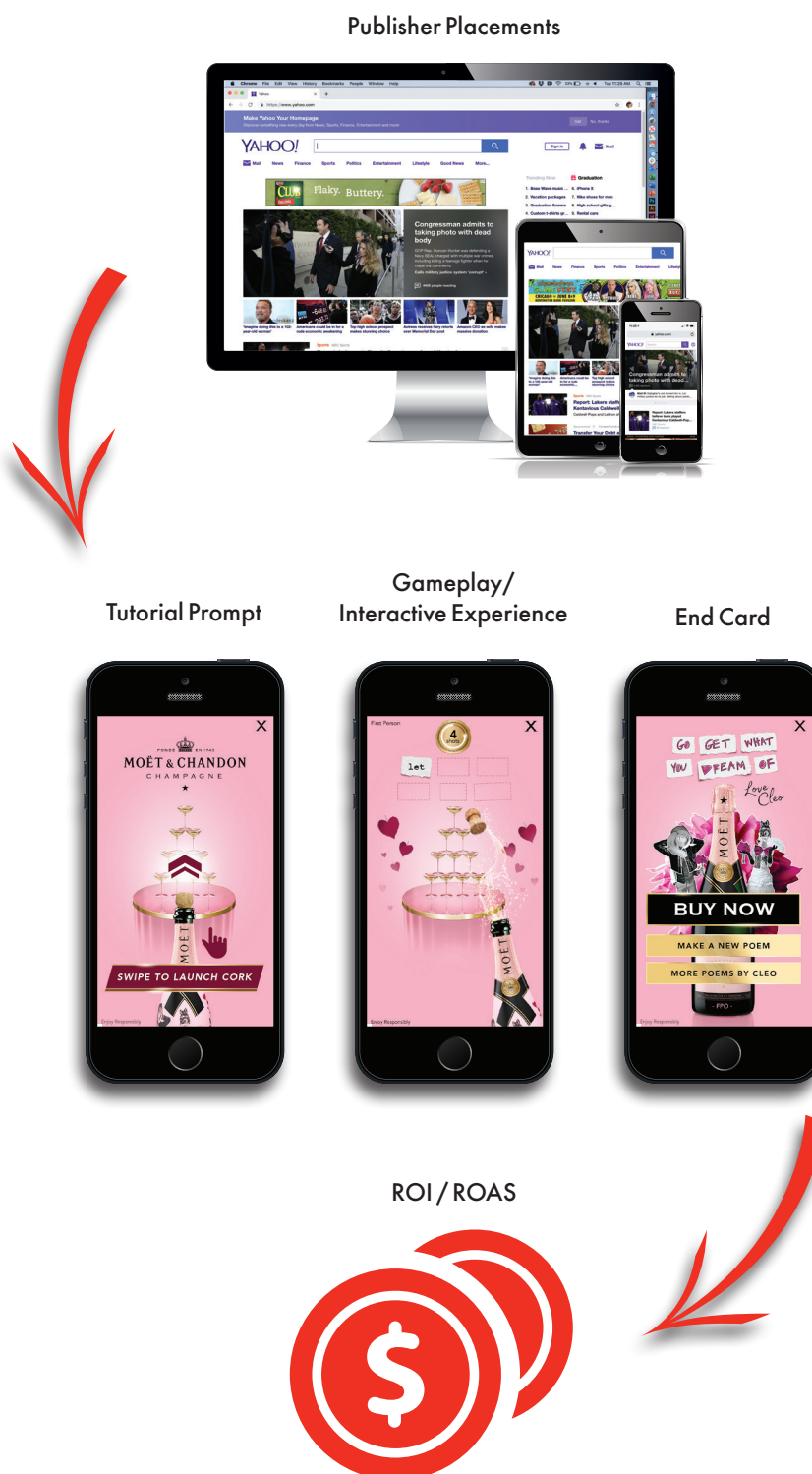
The consumer experience and revenue are critical for publishers, and they must find ways to strike the right balance between the two. As described earlier, playables offer enjoyable consumer-first experiences as well as quality engagement time that drives performance for brands, which, in turn, generates revenue for publishers.

Playables fill publishers' needs for premium, high-quality ad revenue streams that better monetize inventory as well as boost favorability and keep consumers in-app or on site. As Facebook, Google and many ad exchanges have adopted playables as an ad unit, an increasing number of publishers are supporting playables within their apps and sites.

THE CONSUMER JOURNEY

This section will follow the entire consumer journey from consumer exposure to the playable in publisher placements to all of the creative elements of the playable that encourage and stimulate interaction with the brand. This section will also provide techniques on how to optimize this consumer-first, opt-in experience.

The Consumer Journey of a Playable



WHERE CONSUMERS FIND PLAYABLES

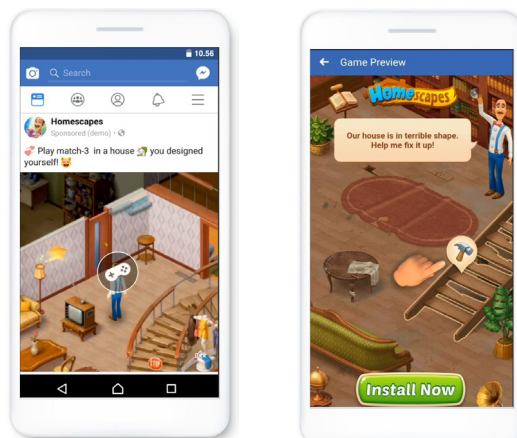
Playables are designed to be accessed both in-app and via the mobile web, and consumers will find playables primarily within **leading social platforms, mobile gaming apps and entertainment/media apps or sites**. Since playables are predominantly built in HTML5, they are light, flexible and can be supported in many different mobile placements or environments.

Playables within Leading Social Platforms

Leading social platforms are a primary placement for playables. Playables are most commonly found In-Feed on social media apps or sites. They are placed in the content feeds, such as the Facebook News Feed, or within carousel feeds, such as Snapchat Stories.

When consumers are exposed to the playable In-Feed, they have the choice to opt-in to the experience. Once opted-in, the playable is typically presented as full screen (on mobile), and the consumer can engage with the playable directly in the feed just as they would other content native to the specific social media platform.

The following example illustrates how a playable can be experienced within Facebook. Playrix developed a playable ad campaign for their app Homescapes. It was created to highlight elements of the game which would appeal to potential players. It is placed within the Facebook News Feed, and becomes a full screen experience once opted-in.



©Playrix/Homescapes

Playables within Mobile Games

When run programmatically through mobile exchanges and/or ad networks, mobile games are a prime placement channel for playable distribution. Mobile games are commonly overlooked as a placement channel for advertising by brands, but research shows that people of all ages, genders and income levels are playing mobile games, as seen in the [GlobalWebIndex](#) chart below, and brands should be taking advantage of this opportunity.

What Devices Do Internet Users Worldwide Use to Play Video Games?

% of respondents, by demographic, Q3 2018

	Smartphone	Desktop/laptop	Game console	Total
Gender				
Male	66%	54%	27%	88%
Female	66%	41%	18%	83%
Age				
16-24	74%	53%	24%	92%
25-34	73%	51%	27%	91%
35-44	67%	45%	25%	86%
45-54	53%	42%	18%	76%
55-64	37%	37%	9%	71%
Income level				
Bottom 25%	66%	50%	19%	88%
Mid 50%	67%	49%	22%	86%
Top 25%	66%	47%	31%	87%

Note: n=113,932

Source: GlobalWebIndex, "Gaming: The trends to know in 2019," March 7, 2019

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www.eMarketer.com

The highly curated nature of mobile games makes them one of the safest environments for brand advertising. To be eligible to display a playable ad, the mobile game app must be approved by both:

1. Apple App Store and/or Google Play Store and;
2. the ad exchange (Google AdX, MoPub, etc.) or network from which it is served.

This double layer of approval combined with the fact that most mobile games do not allow for user-generated content adds to the safety of this environment.

Playables can appear within mobile games in one of two placements: **Interstitials** or **Opt-In Value Exchange** (rewarded) placements.

Interstitials: A common ad format on mobile, especially in-app. The [IAB New Ad Portfolio](#) defines interstitials as full screen ads that "are before, in between, or after the primary content experience. For serving interstitial ads there should be a break in content experience – User navigating to and/or away from content."

When consumers are exposed to a playable as an interstitial, they have the option to opt-in or opt-out of the experience. To opt-in, the consumer must make the first move or interaction with the ad. Alternatively, the consumer can tap the close button, which is typically an "X" in the upper right or left corner of the ad, to opt-out.

Opt-In Value Exchange Ads: IAB released the "[Opt-in Value Exchange Advertising Playbook for Brands](#)" in December 2018. In it, Opt-In Value Exchange Ads are defined as "premium ads that offer consumers something of value in exchange for providing their time and attention. In all instances, the value exchange is opt-in and it is the publisher, not the brand, that owns the reward transaction."

Playables are a common creative element used in value exchange due to the fact that they provide unique opportunities to engage consumers.

In the following example by Hollister and TreSensa, Inc., the playable is placed as an opt-in value exchange placement in a mobile game. In the game if the player chooses to click the icon to get free coins, s/he will be taken to the playable ad from Hollister. The user can choose to play the ad, which ends with a call-to-action to either shop now, keep playing or share on social. If the user opts-in to engage with the playable, s/he will get the free coins no matter what.



©Hollister/TreSensa, Inc.

Play the experience [HERE](#).

The Creative Elements of Playables

Playables are content rich, premium ad units, and they are typically comprised of three core creative elements to educate, engage and drive performance from the consumer.

The three core creative elements are:

1. Tutorial Prompt (Instructional cue or demo showing interactivity)
2. The Game/Interactive Experience
3. End Card

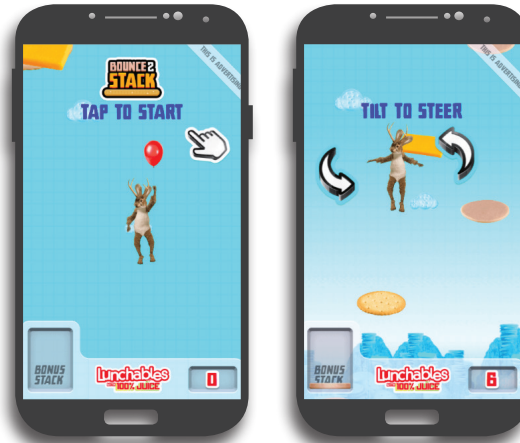
1. Tutorial Prompt

The tutorial prompt instructs the consumer on how to interact with the playable using visual cues. There are different creative options available to show the tutorial prompt. Examples of these cues include a looped animation (such as an animated hand), lead-in video or copy.

The placement of and level of instruction provided in the tutorial prompt is dependent on the intuitive nature of the game. If a playable is recognizable, such as a match game or PAC-MAN® style game, it is recommended that the tutorial prompt be brief and baked into the gameplay itself so the consumer can start playing immediately. As there is immense competition for consumer attention on mobile, a lengthy tutorial prompt before an intuitive game can deter a consumer from engaging with the experience. On the other hand, if the game is custom and requires instruction, it may be best for the tutorial prompt to be an additional creative element, such as a lead-in video, to provide clear instructions.

Looped Animation

In the following example by Kraft Lunchables and TreSensa, Inc., the tutorial prompt consists of looped animations that quickly instruct consumers so they can start the gameplay immediately. The animated hand shows the consumer how to start playing, and once opted-in, a second looped animation is displayed to instruct the consumer on how to further engage with the experience.



©Kraft Heinz Company/TreSensa, Inc.

Play the full experience [HERE](#).

Lead-in Video

Lead-in videos are typically between 5 and 15 seconds in length, highlight the playable to come and include a challenge to propel the consumer into engaging with it.

The following example by Paramount Pictures and AdColony is a touch-video playable promoting the release of the movie, "Wonder Park," and it uses a lead-in video as its tutorial prompt. The playable opens with a 5 second lead-in video that instructs the user to collect ride passes to unlock bonus content from the movie (shown below). The movie trailer follows the prompt and users can tap on the screen to collect the items that are overlaid on top of the video. Collecting all items will reveal the bonus content in the end card, which also has the option to replay the game.

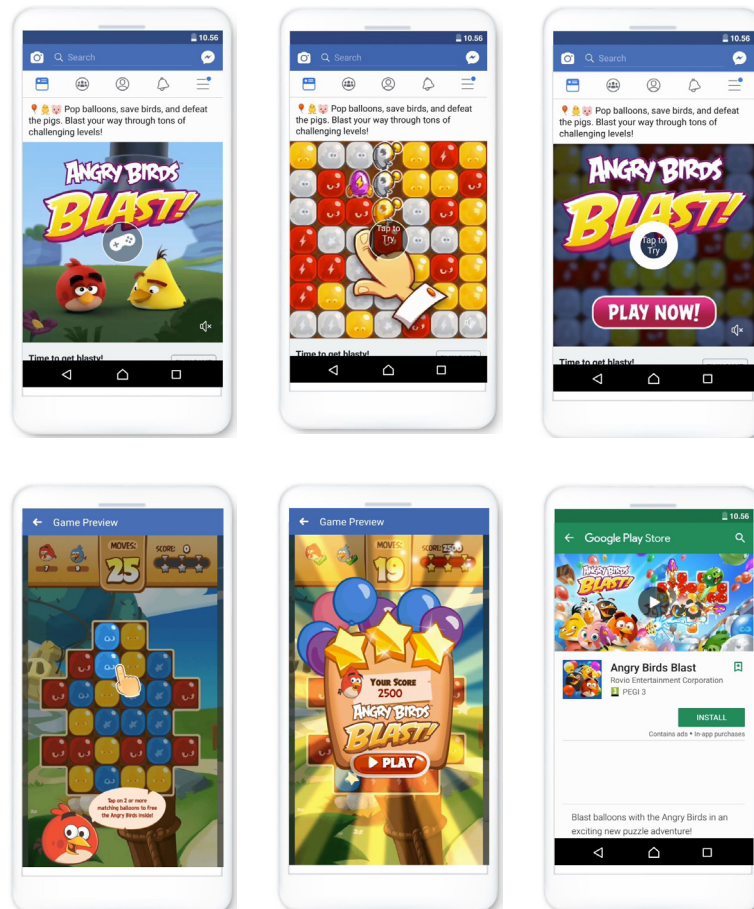


©Paramount Pictures/Adcolony

View the full experience [HERE](#).

For certain distribution channels, such as Facebook and Snapchat, a lead-in video is required and acts as a prompt to get the consumer to click or swipe into the actual experience.

In the following example, Rovio Entertainment launched a playable campaign for their signature game Angry Birds on Facebook. The lead-in video for the game plays directly in the Facebook News Feed and uses icons to prompt consumers to engage by motioning their device or "tap to try." After opting-in to play Angry Birds Blast, the experience becomes full screen, and consumers can play a level of the game. Once the game is complete, an end card displays with the call to action to play more. If the consumer wants to play more, they will be directed to download Angry Birds Blast from the Google Play Store or Apple App Store.



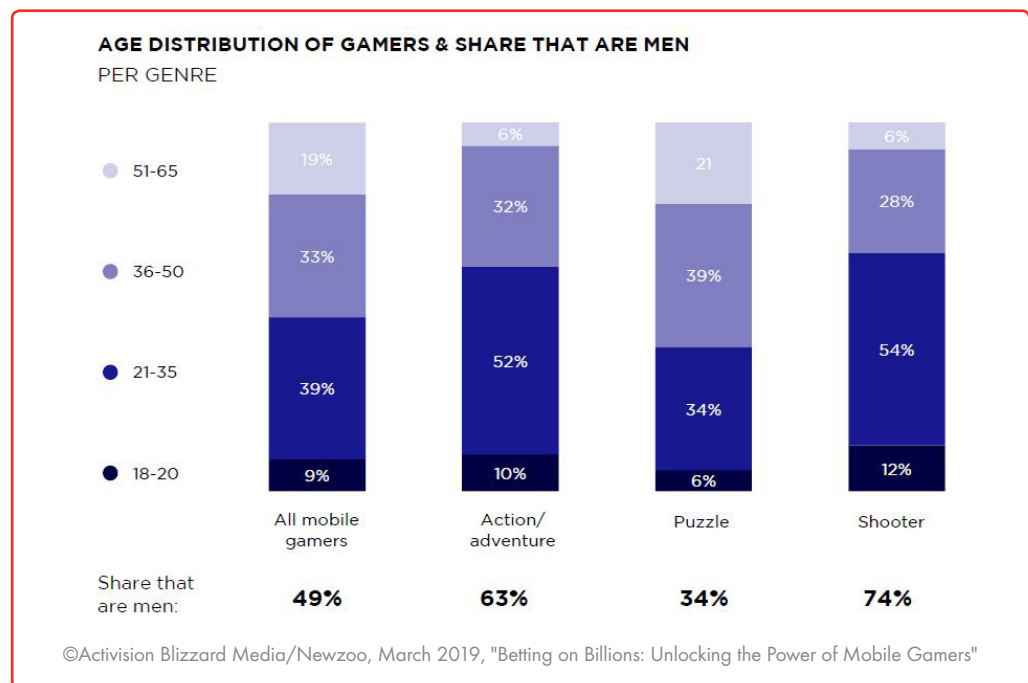
©Rovio Entertainment/Facebook

2. Game/Interactive Experience

There are numerous options when developing the game/interactive experience itself. The goal is to create a memorable and engaging experience that will drive action... have fun with it!

Following are three considerations when selecting and creating the optimal game experience for a playable campaign: the target audience, the goal of the experience and the spirit of the brand.

The Target Audience: Brands should select specific game types for playable ads that are designed to appeal to, attract and engage the target audience. Research has been conducted showing which game genres are preferred by specific audiences, and playable provider also have first party data to decipher the most effective game experience for different target audiences. The following chart from a recent [Activision Blizzard/Newzoo study](#) showcases age distribution and share that are men for some of the popular mobile game genres.



Goal of the Experience: The goal/s of a playable vary for each brand, but they can be broken down into three basic components: grabbing consumer attention, marketing messages and calls-to-action.

- **Grab Consumer Attention**

With all of the ad clutter in the ecosystem, consumers should be immediately thrown into the action and provided with an experience that is instantly known (i.e., mimic the most popular casual game types) or intuitive to understand (i.e., popular sport mechanics like shooting a basketball) so they can/want to engage with the mechanic as quickly as possible.

Audio can also be an effective tool to grab consumer attention, depending on the publisher placement.

- **Marketing Messages**

Brands can add marketing messages to educate the consumer, deliver the value proposition and build toward a clear and concise call-to-action.

- **Call-to-Action**

Playables can be built for full-funnel marketing within a single ad unit. Besides just stimulating engagement, the game/interactive experience has the opportunity to drive action by allowing for calls-to-action to be embedded within the gameplay itself. The call-to-action can be reinforced in the end card, as well.

(Further information on end cards and calls-to-action can be found on [p. 21](#))

Spirit of the Brand: Playables can provide rich, on-brand visual experiences. If working with a playable provider, creative shop or agency, be sure to provide them with the brand style guide with creative assets to ensure the brand is represented accurately to drive brand messaging within the playable ad experience.

From hospitality, finance, entertainment, CPG and beyond, all types of brands can - and are - creating custom gamified ad experiences to reach their audiences. The following show the myriad of playable creative options for brands of all varieties:

Carnival Cruise Line



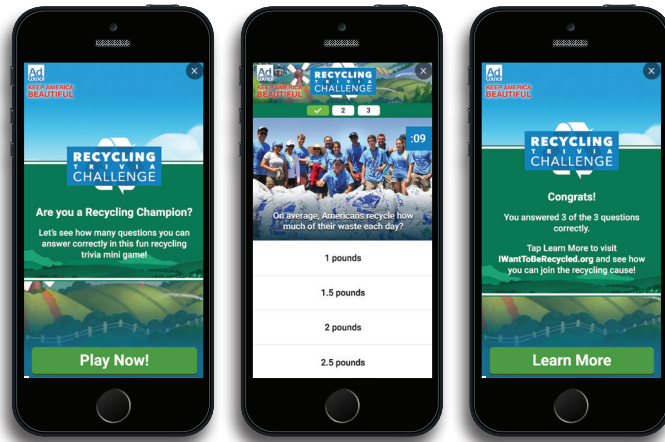
©Carnival Cruise Line/Unity Technologies

To promote Carnival Cruise Line's "Choose Fun" initiative, Carnival partnered with Unity Technologies to produce a branded playable unit to run in its mobile in-app inventory. Users were instructed to pull back the slingshot - designed using the Carnival branded funnel - to launch a beach ball at targets on the deck of a Carnival Cruise Line ship. The targets highlighted fun activities available on a Carnival ship. As users successfully hit the targets, their points increased. After the allotted time, the user was served an end card with the call-to-action to learn more about the fun you'll find on a Carnival Cruise Line along with an option to play again.

The playable was served 100% in-app. Users received a full screen, opt-in prompt encouraging them to play the branded mini-game during a natural break in their game.

This unit succeeded in driving consumer engagement, further drawing the connection between Carnival and a fun vacation, which ultimately led users to increase consideration for the brand. The results were: 0.61% click-through rate, 35% engagement rate, 34% of engaged players opted to "Play Again" and 57% completion rate.

Ad Council



©Ad Council/Zynga

Ad Council collaborated with Zynga to create a playable ad as a part of the Ad Council Game for Good initiative, an unprecedented effort aimed to harness the power of games and the gaming community to drive awareness, engagement and impact on the critical social issues addressed by Ad Council Campaigns. The trivia playable challenged Zynga game players to answer three questions related to remarkable recycling facts in America and ended with an invitation to users to learn more about how they can participate.

W Hotels Worldwide



©Marriott International, W Hotels Worldwide/Pen&Public

In 2017, W Hotels partnered with experiential marketing agency Pen&Public to launch a Frogger-inspired playable campaign called "**Belle the Bear**" to promote the opening of its then-new W Bellevue in Seattle. Consumers were instructed to move Belle from the bottom to the top of the screen avoiding obstacles along the way. High scores awarded players prizes to W Hotels, and consumers were able to share their scores via built-in social sharing options. The playable was accessed via a microsite, shared via W Hotels social media efforts and was available for consumers to play on mobile, desktop and tablet.

As reported in "[Business Insider](#)," Anthony Ingham, Global Brand Leader at W Hotels Worldwide told the publication, "We wanted to celebrate the opening of W Bellevue in a way that would reflect the tech-centric city it's located in and the atmosphere of the new hotel itself... We wanted to build excitement, engagement and do something truly innovative."

Western Union



©Western Union/TreSensa, Inc.

View the full experience [HERE](#).

Western Union partnered with TreSensa, Inc. to create the "Where Do You Usually Send Money" playable campaign to reach an older-skewing audience. In this playable, users self-identified their region and received a corresponding interactive puzzle experience. When the puzzle was completed correctly, users were served a marketing message detailing the banking names and locations within their selected region where they could send money. This ad unit drove an 18% click-through rate, 32 seconds of time spent and more than 20,000 installs of Western Union's WU app.

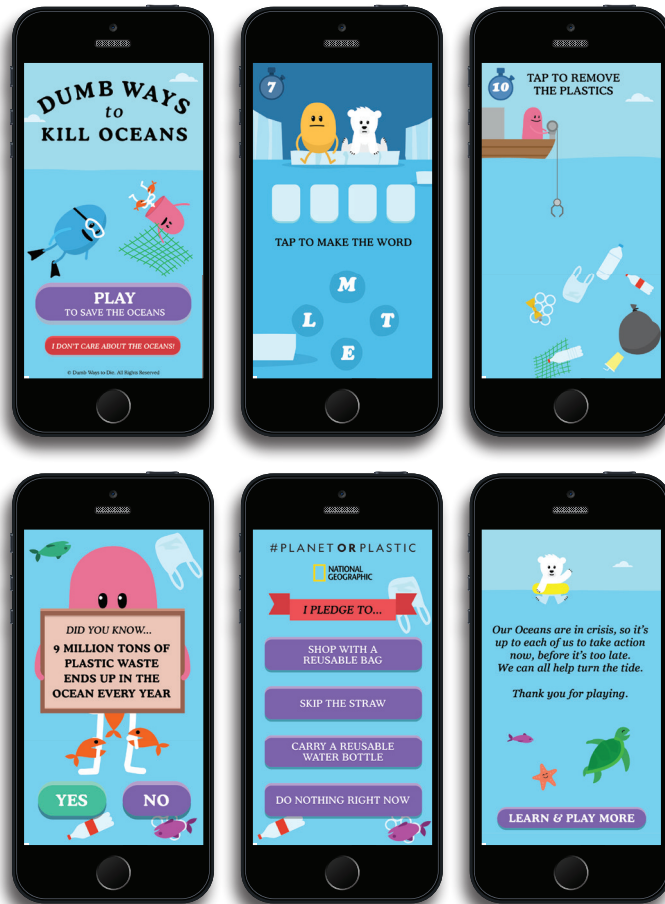
Sony Pictures Animation/Hotel Transylvania 3



©Sony Pictures Animation/Adcolony

Sony Pictures Animation partnered with AdColony to create a playable campaign to promote the digital release of the movie "Hotel Transylvania 3." The experience opened with a lead-in video about the release, followed by a playable where users were prompted to help the popular character, Bloppy, eat all of the candy while avoiding falling pumpkins by tilting their device. The experience concludes with an end card where the consumer could click to play more games.

Playmob/Dumb Ways to Die



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Dumb Ways to Die is a trademark of Metro Trains Melbourne.
All other trademarks are the property of their registered owners

View the full experience [HERE](#).

For World Oceans Day, gaming-engagement platform Playmob leveraged the Dumb Ways to Die brand and produced a purpose-driven playable. Playmob partnered with Zynga to reach millions of game players through Zynga's popular titles. The playable challenged users with a number of mini-games and questions about the oceans to raise awareness of the risks facing the oceans while also educating players on ways they could reduce their impact on the environment. Mini-games included item-tapping, coloring, word scramble and more.

"At Playmob, we believe in the power of playable ads to engage, drive action and deliver impact around critical social and environmental issues, at scale. With partners like Zynga, we can reach millions of people with purpose-driven content and galvanise new audiences around the world."

• PlayMob

3. End Card

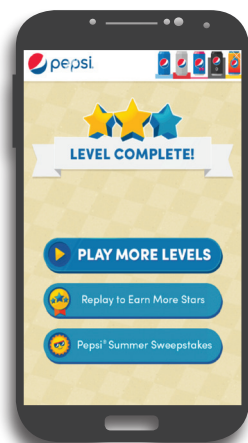
After the game/interactive experience is complete, an end card, the final element of the playable, is displayed. This is the last opportunity in the experience to drive action/s, and it can be customized for any campaign. It is important to ensure the messaging in the end card does not deviate from the elements that precede it in order to drive clear and consistent action from the consumer.

Calls-to-action vary depending on campaign goals, but they can drive any action including shop, download coupons, learn more, sign up for email lists, watch videos, and more. The following examples showcase three different playable campaigns where clear and consistent messaging in the end card led to performance for brands.

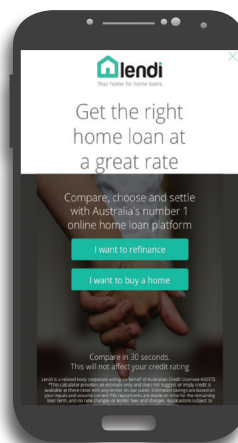
Pepsi's "Summer Quest" playable featured five levels in a jumper-style game. It had a persistent call-to-action to enter Pepsi's Summer Sweepstakes. The campaign had a 35% completion rate and 94% click-through rate from the end card to enter the sweepstakes.

In Lendi's "Discover the Difference" playable campaign, consumers toggled various loan components to learn how much they could save with Lendi. The end card displayed links to mortgage applications. There was a 24% completion rate and 68% click-through rate from the end card.

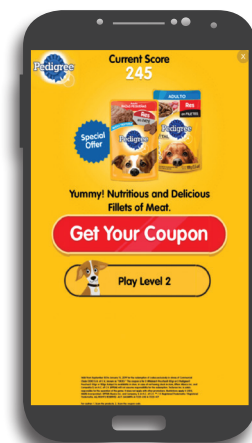
The goal of the Mars "Petcare" playable campaign was to drive sales by providing a coupon in the end card. Consumers were given different experiences and messages based on their pet preferences to engage the audience and educate them about pet nutrition. There was a 45% completion rate, 36% click-through rate from the end card, and a 5.4% redemption rate of the coupons.



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©Lendi/Tresensa, Inc.



©Mars, Incorporated/Tresensa, Inc.

OTHER CONSUMER-FACING USES OF PLAYABLES

Because of the inherent flexibility of HTML5, playables, although typically designed for mobile, also work on desktop and can be used as **content**. Dependent on the arrangement with the playable ad provider, brands who run playable ad campaigns can usually elect to place their playable "content" within their owned and operated websites, apps, social channels and/or email communications. Some brands have even activated in-store uses for their playable assets, including supplying tablets preloaded with their playable ads to consumers waiting in check-out lines.

HOW TO BUY AND PRICING

As it has been shown throughout this document, playables provide unique benefits to brands, consumers and publishers alike, with ample creative options to engage consumers. Following are ways for brands to buy playables:

Publisher Direct Buying and Selling

Purchasing via a publisher directly follows the same processes and procedures media buyers currently use to place site or in-app media buys for other units. Adding playables to the media mix can be as simple as adding a line item to an overall media plan.

An advantage to choosing this buying option is the brand/advertiser knows the exact publisher placements where the playable will be located.

Programmatic Buying and Selling

Like other digital media, programmatic access to playable inventory is available for buyers and sellers. The access, purchase and opportunity to bid on playable inventory utilizes the [IAB OpenRTB framework](#).

Advantages of trading playables programmatically:

- **Yield & ROI:** Buyers and sellers can use audience and performance data to increase inventory value across playables alongside other channels such as mobile, audio, video, native, high-impact and display.
- **Data Intelligence:** A seamless way to collect and use first party data to improve the effectiveness and performance of mobile marketing initiatives.
- **Connections:** Access to global, transparently traded, high-quality campaigns and audiences including brands, agencies, trading desks, DSPs and premium brand audio platforms, for both private marketplace and guaranteed deals.
- **Efficiency:** Assure maximum reach through specific targeting, effective discovery, negotiation and execution to reduce operational costs and increase time spent.
- **Real-time Campaign Optimization:** Enables buyers to deliver real-time dynamic creative and/or bidding strategies to optimize towards the pre-established brand KPIs; e.g., time spent, click throughs, purchases, etc.

Inventory sold through programmatic solutions can be split between two types of buying: Open Market (OMP) and Private Marketplace (PMP). Both solutions require a buyer to use a DSP and a seller to use an SSP/Exchange.

You can find more information on Programmatic Trading and IAB technical standards for Mobile and Programmatic in the Appendix ([p.31](#)).

TIPS FOR BUYING PLAYABLES

- **Pricing Models:** Playables can be bought using a number of different pricing models: CPE, CPM, CPI, CPA, CPV, licensing, cost-plus, subscription, ongoing service model.
 - As engagement is the ultimate goal of playables, **cost-per-engagement (CPE)** is the preferred pricing model.
- **Understanding Publisher Inventory When Buying Playable Ads:** Publishers employ different payment models for playable ads and may utilize different methodologies for counting metrics. Given the interactive nature of playables, it is important to understand the publisher inventory where the playable is being run when deciding on a pricing model. Below are suggested questions to ask when buying:
 - Where and when will my playable be served within a consumer content session? Is my playable the first and/or only playable the consumer is going to see for the day, the fifth hour, etc?
 - How are meaningful engagement metrics defined and incorporated within the various publisher placements?
 - If buying playables on a CPM basis, am I charged an impression upon ad load or upon ad view?
 - If buying playables on an engagement basis, how do you define an engagement? Note, industry standard is for playable engagements to be counted when the consumer makes the first move or takes the first tangible action within the experience.

MEASUREMENT

As described earlier, playable ad units are comprised of a number of creative elements, each of which is trackable, that allow brands to measure a broad set of metrics tied to their playable ad campaign. In addition to standard ad metrics, including CPM, CTR, ROAS, etc., playables have the unique ability to provide valuable engagement and time spent metrics and directly track brand performance.

Since consumers are fully engaged with playables - leveraging touch in addition to sight, sound and motion - brands are able to collect metrics they may not be able to collect or measure with other units, such as video or display ads.

Below highlights the range of metrics a brand can collect from a playable for creative performance, brand performance and post-engagement performance. Note: This is not an exclusive list.

Creative Performance

Key performance metrics for each core element of a playable

Tutorial Prompt Metrics:

- Click-to-Open / Click-to-Play / Swipe-Up-to-Play Rate
- Click-to-Start/Engage
- If there is a Lead-in Video, all standard video metrics are collected; impressions, CTR, watch time, viewability.

Game/Interactive Experience Metrics:

- Engagement Rate
- Time Spent
- If there is persistent Call-to-Action (CTA), Click-through Rate (CTR)
- Custom Metrics (ad-specific): i.e., numbers of brand items collected, power-ups achieved, levels played, retail partner exposures, etc.

End Card Metrics:

- Click-through Rate*
- Replay Rate (metric unique to playables)
- Share Rate

*You may see a lower CTR from impression than standard video ads, but this can be misleading. Because consumers need to engage with the playable ad before having an opportunity to click through to a site or app store, there are far fewer mistaken clicks with playable ads. While the CTR may be lower than rates for standard video or display ads, the quality of each click through is assumed to be greater.



Brand Performance

- Brand Study Metrics: Awareness, Consideration, Purchase Intent, etc.

Post Engagement Performance

- Playables can drive particular behavior, and they are all measurable: mcommerce sales, downloaded coupons, sign up for sweepstakes/email lists, watch video, etc.
- Return On Ad Spend (ROAS)/ Return on Investment (ROI)
- Lifetime Value (LTV) (metric predominantly for app installs/mobile games)

BRAND SAFETY/FRAUD/VIEWABILITY

BRAND SAFETY

Brand safety is a major concern for advertisers and, according to a [2018 survey by Verizon Media Group](#), 99% of advertisers surveyed are concerned with their ads appearing in brand safe environments.

Playables are one of the safest ad units available from a brand perspective, and here are a few reasons why:

- **First**, playables almost always run full screen on mobile, and this 100% viewable experience ensures consumers are fully focused on the brand experience without the risk of unwanted or inappropriate brand adjacencies.
- **Second**, due to the premium nature of the ad experience, in many cases playables are directly sold into placements on leading social platforms and entertainment/media apps. With brands fully aware of the location of the ad unit, brand safety concerns are lessened.
- **Third**, when run programmatically through mobile exchanges and/or ad networks, mobile games are a prime placement channel for playable distribution. Mobile games happen to be one of the safest and underutilized environments for brand advertising. The highly curated nature of mobile games - having to be approved by both app/play stores and the ad exchange or network to be eligible to display playables - combined with the fact that most mobile games do not allow for user-generated content helps ensure a brand safe environment.

FRAUD/VIEWABILITY

While in-app ad spending on mobile is forecast to [grow by over 25% in 2019 to a staggering \\$77 billion](#), rising in parallel are concerns over in-app ad viewability and fraud. A recent [survey by Forrester Consulting commissioned by PubMatic](#) shows fraud and viewability as the top concerns for brands and agencies when it comes to programmatic in-app advertising.

What Key Challenges Do Companies Worldwide Encounter with Programmatic In-App Advertising?

% of respondents, brands vs. agencies, Nov 2018

	Advertising		Video	
	Brands	Agencies	Brands	Agencies
Fear of fraud	52%	36%	57%	42%
Viewability measurement challenges	42%	48%	44%	44%
Brand safety concerns	38%	46%	37%	36%
Attribution concerns	26%	36%	24%	26%
Concerns about effective targeting	25%	38%	32%	38%

Note: n=336 media-buying/planning decision makers at brands, agencies and ad tech companies in Denmark, Finland, Singapore, Sweden, the UK and the US; excludes social media

Source: Forrester Consulting, "The Move Toward In-App Advertising" commissioned by PubMatic, Feb 5, 2019

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www.eMarketer.com



There are several ways in which playables, due to their advanced structure and design, inherently protect against fraud and viewability risks.

- **First**, **MRAID 3.0** is a key factor in the uniform application of playables to ensure timely ad load for a seamless consumer experience. Any errors to the display of playables can be flagged for the advertiser, publisher and/or service provider.
- **Second**, **Open Measurement Software Development Kit (OM SDK)** was released in 2018. This standard simplifies measurement and verification of viewability for ads served in-app on mobile, including playable ads. OM SDK has been very well adopted and includes all major SDK providers and is supported by all major measurement verification service providers. A list of Ads SDKs and apps that are certified for OM SDK integration is available [here](#). This covers approximately 2 billion devices on iOS and Android platforms. OM SDK framework allows for consistency in viewability measurement across apps, devices and campaigns.
- **Third**, because playables are interactive and lack uniformity across creative executions and individual play sessions, they are difficult for bots to infiltrate, unlike video or display ads. Any suspicious patterns of interaction with a playable can be quickly identified and addressed. When run programmatically, appropriate models and algorithms can automatically reduce bids to zero for suspicious placements, helping to ensure only real human beings are served playable ads.
- **Fourth**, when playables are sold using the cost-per-engagement (CPE) model - payment only when the consumer has tangibly engaged - the fraud/viewability risk shifts away from the advertiser. The cost for fraudulent or non-viewable impressions, instead, is borne by the publisher or service provider.

INDUSTRY RECOMMENDATIONS

Playables are premium ads comprised of a seemingly complex structure, but that does not necessarily mean they are "more difficult or timely" to make than other ad units, including video. Quality and experience are key, and brands can create either completely custom experiences or use established templates that have seen success.

Below are best practices to consider when starting a playable ad campaign to ensure it meets KPIs and drives performance for brands.

Best Practices

- **Focus on Campaign Objectives & Maintain Thematic Consistency**

From the tutorial prompt to the end card, center the experience around a key theme and one call-to-action or user engagement that supports campaign KPIs. Too many flashy features tend to distract audiences. Providing a simple and clear experience will help drive the desired action.

- **Create an Intuitive Experience**

The playable should be recognizable to consumers, and they should intuitively know how to play (even though brief tutorial is provided). As a guide, look to the most popular games in the Apple App Store or Google Play Store for inspiration on types of experiences to consider.

- **Demographics Matter**

To best captivate your target audience and drive KPIs, select a game genre or type that is popular with the target audience. Playable providers can help choose the most effective experience to reach goals.

- **Keep the Experience Brief**

Optimal timing for playables ranges depending on the experience and KPI. Playable providers will provide guidance on the duration to achieve campaign objectives. It's important to remember playables are ads and a lengthy experience may leave a negative impact. Additionally, it is key to keep the tutorial prompt succinct to allow the user to engage and act as quickly as possible.

- **Provide Clear Brand Guidelines**

Giving playable providers or agencies a brand style guide or comprehensive asset pack that includes brand guidelines with creative assets (key art, fonts, color, etc.) ensures the brand is represented accurately to enhance consistent and accurate brand messaging.

- **Have a Strong and Persistent Call-to-Action**

Playables are built for full-funnel marketing within a single ad unit. Having a CTA embedded throughout the experience for a specific campaign objective (e.g., app install, sweepstakes sign-ups), gives the consumer the opportunity to act quickly and head further down the sales funnel, which is the ultimate goal of the playable.

- **Keep Mobile in Mind**

Playables are designed for mobile engagement. Although most playables appear vertically, playables should be built responsive to adapt to any mobile placement.



- **Test, Track, Optimize, Repeat**

- a. **Test:** A/B Test elements within playables to see what variables drive the most action. Variables include game length, level of difficulty, different visuals or copy, etc.
- b. **Track:** Playables provide first party data that can be tracked to determine the optimal creative execution for the playable to drive the brand's core KPIs.
- c. **Optimize:** Edit playable creative dynamically, in real time so identified target audiences receive the iteration of the playable experience best suited for them to drive action.
- d. **Repeat:** New consumers are constantly interacting with the playable and first party data should be leveraged to continuously optimize the experience.

CONCLUSION

As a form of content and immersive marketing, playables are a highly engaging ad format that enables full-funnel marketing in a single ad unit. It represents the culminating output of technological advances in the advertising space coupled with evolving consumer behavior. The effectiveness, scalability and authenticity of playables are growth drivers in a world where consumers respond more positively to creative and organic brands experiences.

Originally developed for the mobile game industry, playables have progressed beyond the gaming niche and entered the mainstream due to the creativity of brands and agencies and receptiveness of consumers. The consumer experience within the ad unit is immersive, interactive and perhaps most importantly, convenient. This provides instant value to the user, a fun and frictionless way to deepen their connection with a brand, driving brand affinity and action.

Consumer convenience, scalability through programmatic buying options and full-funnel marketing measurement opportunities make it clear that playable ads are not only here to stay, but they will continue to rapidly grow in popularity alongside technological advancement and shifting consumer behavior.

APPENDIX

EXTENSION OF THE CONSUMER JOURNEY (pp. 10-21)

Optional Creative Elements

Playables are custom ad units, so brands have the option to incorporate elements in addition to the three core creative elements that make up a standard playable ad; tutorial prompt, game/interactive experience, end card. Even though pre- and post-playable creative elements can be used, it is important to remember to keep the experience brief for optimal results (as listed in Best Practices on [p.28](#)).

Optional Pre-playable Content

Pre-playable content typically focuses on the brand and not on the gameplay/interactive experience to come, and it can be existing creative or new content. It is advised to ONLY use a pre-playable if deemed necessary. If there are too many elements before the gameplay/interactive experience, many consumers will close the ad and the brand will not meet the intended KPIs.

Optional Post-playable Content

After the end card, a brand can have additional elements: video content, image, additional end cards. Since this content is at the end, it will not negatively influence the gameplay/interactive experience or calls-to-action, but it is advised to ONLY add if deemed necessary since it is best practice to keep the experience brief and focus on only one call-to-action or brand message per playable. Too many messages within one ad unit can blur the key brand message and campaign objectives may not be achieved.

EXTENSION OF HOW TO BUY AND PRICING (pp. 22-23)

Additional Information on Programmatic Trading

Through programmatic trading there are options for a publisher to transparently disclose their domain/ name or make it anonymous, masking it. Due to increased demand for transparency, a seller that chooses to mask their domain/name may be excluded from some buyers' programmatic trading.

Open Market

This is an open mode of buying and selling where a media owner can offer their ad inventory for sale to buyers, often through real-time auctions. There are options to disclose the publisher's name, or make it anonymous, masking it.

Private Market

A unique set of biddable inventory (differentiated placements or data) that is not available in full transparency in a general RTB auction. PMP inventory is packaged within a publisher's SSP and offered to selected buyers/bidders. A buyer can use a deal ID (a universal identifier/numeric keycode) to gain access to and bid on the specific PMP inventory. PMPs can be sold based on pricing, preferred access or via multi-seller deals depending on the terms agreed by both the buyer and seller through the negotiation. Typically, both types of buys are executed in a non-guaranteed basis, however there is also an option to buy PMP inventory in a guaranteed deal.

Programmatic Guaranteed

Also known as programmatic direct, programmatic guaranteed gives advertisers access to premium inventory while also allowing them to overlay first party and third party data. It's a win-win situation



where buyers choose which audience and impressions to bid on while publishers are guaranteed a certain level of pricing. It's important to distinguish programmatic guaranteed from automated guaranteed, which is a deal that's negotiated directly between a buyer and seller, and where both inventory and pricing are guaranteed.

Traditionally, auctions have been based on a second price model, where the highest bidder wins, but pays the second highest bid price plus a small premium. Today, the industry is moving to a first price auction model, where the winner pays their actual bid price. For any programmatic buyer or seller, it is important to understand which auction dynamics your inventory is being bought or sold.

At a basic level programmatic buyers and sellers must select a DSP/SSP which supports the correct creative formats; i.e., Standard IAB, VAST or DAAST to dynamically make inventory available to buyers and deliver campaigns effectively. There are additional products, features and technologies which are available to buyers and sellers to utilize to enable a richer creative and user experience.

RELATED IAB TECHNICAL STANDARDS

IAB New Ad Portfolio

"The IAB New Ad Portfolio replaces all the previous creative display guidelines for mobile and desktop – including the Universal Ad Package (UAP), rich media units, and other ad units' related guidance. Streamline design and cross-screen production in this mobile world: Start transitioning your creative and ad placements to the new flexible ad units!

The new ad units are based on aspect ratio and size range rather than fixed pixel sizes. Flexible sized ad units allow for ad delivery across multiple screen sizes and integration with responsive website design. The creative design can scale to different screen sizes."

*Source: IAB New Ad Portfolio

Mobile Rich Media Ad Interface Definitions (MRAID)

"MRAID," or "Mobile Rich Media Ad Interface Definitions" is the common API (Application Programming Interface) for mobile rich media ads that will run in mobile apps. This is a standardized set of commands designed to work with HTML5 and JavaScript that developers creating rich media ads use to communicate what those ads do (expand, resize, get access to device functionalities such as the accelerometer, etc) with the apps into which they are being served."*

*Source: Mobile Rich Media Ad Interface Definitions (MRAID)

Open Measurement SDK

"The Open Measurement Software Development Kit (OM SDK) is designed to facilitate third-party viewability and verification measurement for ads served to mobile app environments without requiring multiple ad verification service providers' (Measurement Providers) Software Development Kit (SDK).

The development of one SDK enabling third-party ad measurement and verification is an industry wide effort and will be used by Integration Partners (app publishers and ad SDK developers) as well as Measurement Providers. We encourage the adoption, integration, and use of the OM SDK by everyone for easy ad verification and viewability measurement purpose."*

*Source: Open Measurement SDK



OpenRTB (Real-time Bidding)

"Real-time Bidding (RTB) is a way transacting media that allows an individual ad impression to be put up for bid in real-time. This is done through a programmatic on-the-spot auction, which is similar to how financial markets operate. RTB allows for Addressable Advertising; the ability to serve ads to consumers directly based on their demographic, psychographic, or behavioral attributes."*

* Source: OpenRTB (Real-Time Bidding)



ABOUT THE IAB

The **Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB)** empowers the media and marketing industries to thrive in the digital economy. Its membership is comprised of more than 650 leading media and technology companies that are responsible for selling, delivering, and optimizing digital advertising or marketing campaigns. The trade group fields critical research on interactive advertising, while also educating brands, agencies, and the wider business community on the importance of digital marketing. In affiliation with the IAB Tech Lab, it develops technical standards and best practices.

IAB and the IAB Education Foundation are committed to professional development and elevating the knowledge, skills, expertise, and diversity of the workforce across the industry. Through the work of its public policy office in Washington, D.C., IAB advocates for its members and promotes the value of the interactive advertising industry to legislators and policymakers.

There are 43 IABs licensed to operate in nations around the world and one regional IAB, in Europe. Founded in 1996, the IAB is headquartered in New York City and has a San Francisco office.

About the IAB Mobile Marketing Center of Excellence

The **IAB Mobile Marketing Center of Excellence**, an independently funded and staffed unit inside the IAB, is charged with empowering the media and marketing industries to thrive in a "mobile-always" world and in an increasingly "direct brand economy," where user experience and consumer relationships are at the heart of modern-day marketing and a significant driver of publisher transformation

Since its launch in 2010, the Mobile Center has helped accelerate the growth of the mobile ecosystem through standard setting, best practices, consumer research and public advocacy. IAB Mobile Center focuses on the intersection of creativity/innovation and technology, both of which enhance the consumer's mobile experience and journey, whether that be on a phone/tablet, in a car, in a store or on the street. With significant growth still to come for mobile ad spend, from IAB standard display to content marketing, AI, Voice, VR and AR to podcasts, game advertising and more, the IAB Mobile Center strives to help the industry – both buy- and sell-sides – make sense of advancements with education, standards and guidelines as applicable.

About the IAB Games Committee

The **IAB Games Committee** is the only industry organization dedicated to the advancement of game advertising for all audience demographics. The committee, comprised of over 150 members from leading game publishers, technology providers and others, works to dispel prevailing myths about the nature of gamers and gaming with the goal of attracting more brand marketers to this medium which has proven value and scale for all demographics and across all channels. We also work to integrate games into the larger digital conversation at IAB.