

A woman with long dark hair is shown in profile, wearing large blue over-ear headphones. She is holding a smartphone in her hands and looking down at the screen, which displays a colorful game interface. The background is a dark, abstract digital space with glowing green and blue lines forming a grid pattern.

iab.

Casual Gaming Buyer's Guide

October 2024

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A note to the reader

Since casual games account for most games played on mobile (approximately 77% according to Newzoo 2024), we refer to casual and mobile gaming interchangeably throughout this guide. While mobile gaming is not synonymous with casual gaming, we have cited mobile gaming research as a proxy for casual gaming in instances where casual gaming-specific research is not available.

1. What Is Casual Gaming?

The [IAB Gaming and Esports Advertising Framework 2.0](#) defines casual games as video games targeted at a mass market audience, in contrast to hardcore games, which are designed for hobbyist gamers. Casual games can span any type of gameplay and genre, but they generally involve simpler rules, shorter sessions, require fewer learned skills, and lack finality. These games thrive on straightforward and fun gameplay mechanics that are easy to understand and master. They don't typically require a significant time investment or intense concentration, making them perfect for irregular and spontaneous play.

Casual games have become a cornerstone of the gaming industry, particularly on mobile and web platforms. Popular examples include Candy Crush Saga, Angry Birds, and FarmVille, all of which have attracted millions of players worldwide for their accessibility and engaging, yet uncomplicated, gameplay. This widespread appeal makes casual games a vital segment in the gaming ecosystem, representing a significant portion of the mobile and online gaming markets.

Within the broader category of casual games, hypercasual games have emerged as a distinct subgenre. Hypercasual games are even simpler in design, often featuring one-touch gameplay and extremely short, repetitive sessions. Examples include games like Flappy Bird and Helix Jump, which attract players looking for quick, easy-to-play experiences. Hypercasual gamers, who represent a subset of the casual gaming audience, are drawn to these ultra-simple mechanics and the immediate gratification they offer. They typically engage with these games in very brief, frequent sessions, often during idle moments throughout the day. Hypercasual gamers are unlikely to identify as gamers at all.

For advertisers, casual games offer a unique opportunity to reach a broad and engaged audience. The ease of play and the diverse demographic appeal of these games mean that advertisers can effectively target various segments, from younger audiences to older. This makes casual games an attractive option for brands looking to build awareness, drive engagement, and achieve measurable outcomes within a highly engaged user base.

2. The Casual Gaming Advertising Landscape

2.1 CONSUMER REACH AND ENGAGEMENT

Approximately 200 million people in the U.S. play casual games for an average of about 30 to 60 minutes per day. Women account for about 60% to 65% of casual gamers in the U.S. ([Statista 2023](#), [eMarketer 2023](#)).

2.2 THE CASUAL GAMES MARKET

In 2023, the global mobile gaming content market was worth \$136.2 billion U.S. dollars and is projected to reach \$163.8 billion U.S. dollars in 2028. Today, mobile gaming accounts for approximately 51% of total video game revenue worldwide, ([Statista, 2024](#)).

Mobile game advertising in the U.S. is projected to generate \$7.77 billion in revenue in 2024, ([eMarketer, March 2024](#)). This represents 90.4% of the total game advertising market, which is expected to reach \$8.59 billion.

2.3 POPULAR PLATFORMS FOR CASUAL GAMES

Mobile gaming stands out as the most prominent platform for casual games, encompassing both smartphones and tablets. The convenience of playing on-the-go coupled with the increasing sophistication of mobile devices has fueled this growth.

PC gaming offers versatility with control options ranging from mouse and keyboard to gamepads and touchscreens on laptops. It caters to a wide variety of casual games, from browser-based titles that require no installation to more complex downloadable games.

Console gaming, including popular systems like Xbox, PlayStation, and Nintendo, often allows for more immersive ad experiences, such as in-game product placements or sponsored content.

Cloud gaming, also known as streaming gaming, is an emerging platform that's gaining traction in the casual gaming space. This technology allows players to access games on virtually any device without local hardware or game installation. While cloud gaming is still evolving, it may offer new and innovative advertising models as the technology matures.

3. Opportunity for Advertisers: Why Invest in Casual Gaming?

With their frequent spontaneous play sessions and acceptance for in-game advertisements, casual and hypercasual gamers represent a valuable audience for brands looking to engage with a broad and diverse user base. Here are five reasons brands should be investing in casual gaming:

1 Reaching Large and Engaged Audiences

The casual gaming market presents an unprecedented opportunity to reach a vast and highly engaged audience. As of 2024, an estimated 190.6 million Americans play video games regularly, according to the Entertainment Software Association (ESA). Among these, casual games are particularly popular. Approximately 31% of gamers in the U.S. play casual games, making it one of the most favored genres, ahead of strategy and sports games.

2 Accessing Hard-to-Reach and Diverse Audiences

Casual gaming has successfully bridged generational gaps, attracting both younger and older players who might not consider themselves “gamers” in the traditional sense. This demographic reach makes casual gaming an invaluable tool for connecting with diverse audience segments that may be underserved by other media channels. The interactive nature of casual games also offers unique engagement opportunities with hard-to-reach audiences. Games require active participation which leads to higher levels of attention and engagement. This is especially effective for reaching audiences who are typically resistant to traditional advertising methods. Branded content can be seamlessly integrated into the gaming experience in ways that feel natural and non-intrusive.

3 Casual Gaming Offers Consumers a Clear Value Exchange

Casual games are typically offered on a free-to-play basis which creates a salient value exchange for consumers. Players often receive in-game benefits or currency in return for engaging with advertisements, creating a positive association between ads and game enhancement. Due to this model, consumer acceptance for advertisements in casual games is generally higher than in other gaming genres. Nearly two-thirds of players who engage in free games stated they would be willing to watch a video in exchange for points, new levels, extra lives, or skills ([Google/Kantar TNS, 2018 Global Mobile Gamer Behavior and Attitude Report](#)).

4 New Link in Omnichannel Planning

As consumers spend an average of two and a half hours more on mobile devices than on connected TV (CTV), the importance of mobile as a channel cannot be overstated, ([eMarketer Forecast, June 2024](#)). Casual gaming is not just an additional channel in an omnichannel strategy; it's a new link that enhances and connects various touchpoints. By integrating mobile gaming into their omnichannel plans, advertisers can achieve mass reach, drive attention, and engage consumers in a more dynamic and meaningful way across the entire media landscape.

One of the unique aspects of casual gaming is its ability to complement other media channels. For instance, 76% of mobile gamers report playing games while watching TV or movies, ([Zynga YouGov Mobile Gamer Study, March 2024](#)). This behavior suggests that mobile gaming can effectively complement TV buys, as it engages consumers in a dual-screen experience.

In addition to complementing TV, mobile gaming also aligns well with other channels like podcasting and music streaming. Approximately 69% of mobile gamers play while listening to music, suggesting gaming can enhance audio-based campaigns. Similarly, with 80% of mobile gamers playing while passing time, brands have the opportunity to reach consumers throughout their entire day, seamlessly integrating into their daily routines and consumer journey, ([Zynga YouGov Mobile Gamer Study, March 2024](#)).

5 The Second Screen Is Now the Primary Screen for Consumer Attention

While traditional TV viewing is often passive, casual gaming demands a higher level of engagement, potentially making it a more effective channel for capturing consumer attention.

Moreover, mobile gaming offers more than just incremental reach; it provides mass reach in an environment that inherently drives attention. Unlike the passive consumption often associated with other media, mobile gaming requires active participation, making it a powerful tool for brands looking to engage consumers in a more immersive and interactive environment.

4. Who Plays Casual Games and What Are Their Media Habits?

Casual gamers primarily play for enjoyment and relaxation, seeking a stress-free gaming experience that offers an escape. Unlike hardcore gamers, they are less concerned with ranks or stats and more focused on sheer enjoyment. This non-committal approach to gaming is particularly appealing to those who may not identify as “traditional gamers” or view gaming as a primary hobby, yet they are an integral part of the gaming ecosystem ([Statista, March 2024](#)).

This section details the generational trends and play patterns of casual gamers.

4.1 GENERATIONAL BREAKDOWN OF CASUAL GAMERS IN THE U.S.

Generation Z (Born 1997-2012)	
Representation	Gen Z represents about 25% to 30% of casual gamers.
Preferences	Players in this generation enjoy fast-paced and social gaming experiences. They often play multiplayer casual games and are more likely to engage in games with social and competitive elements.
Millennials (Born 1981-1996)	
Representation	Millennials make up a significant portion of the casual gaming audience, often around 35% to 40% .
Preferences	They are highly engaged in mobile gaming and often play games that fit into their busy lifestyles. Puzzle, strategy, and social games are particularly popular among this group.
Generation X (Born 1965-1980)	
Representation	Gen X accounts for approximately 20% to 25% of casual gamers.
Preferences	This generation tends to enjoy games that offer a blend of nostalgia and simplicity. They often favor classic games, such as card games, word games, and trivia games.
Baby Boomers (Born 1946-1964)	
Representation	Baby Boomers make up about 10% to 15% of the casual gaming population.
Preferences	They tend to gravitate toward games that are easy to learn and play, such as solitaire, bingo, and other simple puzzle games.

Source: [How Different Generations Engage with Video Games Today, Newzoo \(2023\)](#) - Provides insights into the age distribution of casual gamers, highlighting that Millennials and Gen Z are the most active players in the casual gaming space.

4.2 PLAY PATTERNS

Short Sessions Throughout the Day

Casual gamers exhibit unique play patterns often in short sessions that fit seamlessly into their daily lives. They tend to play spontaneously, irregularly, or infrequently. Hypercasual gamers may engage with games in very short bursts, capitalizing on moments of downtime throughout the day. Whether during a commute, a lunch break, or while watching TV, casual and hypercasual games provide a convenient and enjoyable way to pass time or relax. Despite the brevity of individual sessions, the total time invested by casual gamers can be significant and highlights the potential for sustained engagement.

Casual Gaming as a Companion Second Screen

A staggering 85% of people use another device while watching TV and the second screen becomes a significant focal point for their attention. Gaming has emerged as the number one second-screen activity. An impressive 91% of gamers have their mobile phones in hand while watching TV. This multitasking behavior skews heavily towards younger audiences. The statistics paint a clear picture of this generational divide:

- 68% of 18-34 year olds game while watching TV
- 53% of 35-54 year olds engage in this behavior
- 42% of those 55 and older combine gaming with TV viewing

These figures not only reflect current trends, but also provide insight into the future. As younger generations age, their multitasking behaviors are likely to continue. The gap between gaming and streaming becomes much narrower among younger audiences, while the gap with live TV widens, ([The Engagement Game, Activision Blizzard Media, April 2022](#)).

Prime Time for Casual Gaming

Gaming has emerged as a dominant force alongside traditional entertainment forms such as live TV, streaming services, and social media. Activision Blizzard Media surveyed 2,000 U.S. adults age 18 and above, and found that gaming has established itself as one of the most popular platforms in daily media habits. Similar to social media and streaming TV, gaming experiences its peak engagement during the evening prime time hours of 6-10 PM. This alignment with traditional entertainment prime time suggests that gaming has successfully integrated itself into the daily routines of many consumers and now competes with other activities for attention during these hours.

However, what sets gaming apart is its ability to transcend traditional time constraints. Unlike past daily entertainment habits where leisure time was mostly confined to after-work hours or before bed, mobile devices have democratized gaming. Now, any moment can be an opportunity for gameplay. This shift has expanded the potential touchpoints for brands to connect with players throughout the day and in return creates a near-continuous engagement opportunity.

4.3 GENRE POPULARITY AND TRENDS

The casual gaming landscape encompasses a diverse array of genres. Popular casual gaming genres include:

Action and adventure games on mobile platforms are seeing a surge in popularity among Gen Alpha and Gen Z as they offer an engaging blend of fast-paced action and immersive storytelling, tailored specifically for the mobile gaming environment. These games combine the thrill of real-time action with the intrigue and exploration typically found in adventure games, creating a captivating experience for players. Popular examples within this genre are Plants vs. Zombies and Clash of Clans.

Hypercasual games have emerged as a dominant force in the casual gaming market. Characterized by their simple gameplay mechanics, the success of these games can be attributed to their easy to understand concepts and the quick gratification they provide players. Games like Subway Surfers, Helix Jump, and Hole.io exemplify this genre.

Role-playing games (RPG) on mobile platforms are becoming increasingly popular due to their ability to merge traditional role-playing game elements with other genres, such as strategy, action, or puzzle mechanics. This trend is largely driven by the evolving preferences of mobile gamers who seek engaging experiences that are also time-efficient. Titles such as RAID: Shadow Legends and Top Troops are very popular within this genre.

Simulation games have also gained considerable traction. This category includes a wide range of titles from life simulations to management games. Simulation games like Township, HayDay, and Farmville are popular titles that provide more of an immersive and strategic experience for players.

Social casino games represent a significant portion of casual games and have built a substantial player base. Titles such as Monopoly Go, Slotomania, Coin Master, and Big Fish Casino are the most popular within this genre.

Sports and racing games on mobile platforms have traditionally attracted a predominantly male audience, especially those that emphasize competitive gameplay and realistic simulations. These games appeal to players who are looking for the thrill of real-life sports or the adrenaline rush of high-speed racing, all within the convenience of a mobile device. Examples of popular titles are Need for Speed and Golf Rivals.

Word and puzzle games stand out as one of the most popular genres within casual gaming. A significant majority of casual gamers regularly engage with puzzle games, highlighting the wide appeal of these accessible and mentally stimulating titles. Games like Candy Crush Saga, Trivia Crack, and Words with Friends have become household names with millions of American players engaging with these titles regularly. Also, Match-3 games, a type of puzzle where players match tiles to create lines, chains, or groups of three or more of the same type of tile, continue to be a significant subcategory within the puzzle genre.

5. How to Advertise in Casual Games

5.1 WHY INCLUDE CASUAL GAMING IN YOUR MEDIA PLAN

Incorporating casual gaming into your media strategy is a major component in creating a well-rounded and effective campaign. When integrating casual gaming, consider the unique engagement opportunities it offers. Gaming provides an interactive environment where brands can create memorable experiences that resonate with players. This engagement factor can lead to higher brand recall and more positive associations. The diverse range of casual games allows for precise targeting based on interests, behaviors, and demographics. This granularity enables advertisers to tailor their messages and creative executions to specific segments within the broader gaming audience.

Casual gaming can also complement other media effectively. For example, a campaign could use TV for broad awareness, social media for brand consideration, and casual gaming for engaging interactive brand experiences and reaching harder-to-access demographics. Including casual gaming in your media plan can provide a valuable avenue for reaching diverse audiences, particularly younger demographics that may be less accessible through traditional channels. By carefully analyzing reach potential and aligning gaming initiatives with overall campaign objectives, advertisers can leverage casual gaming to enhance the effectiveness of their media strategies.

5.2 HOW TO ACTIVATE IN CASUAL GAMES

Activating a campaign in casual gaming is not dissimilar from activating in media generally:

- 1 Identify your target audience: Who are you trying to reach?
- 2 Define your objective: Are you trying to drive awareness, engagement, or outcomes?
- 3 Execute creatively: Choose your ad formats
- 4 Measurement and attribution: Assess the effectiveness of your campaign

1 Identify your target audience: Who are you trying to reach?

Once you've identified your desired audience, you can target them in casual gaming like you would in any other media.

2 Define your objective: Are you trying to drive awareness, engagement or outcomes?

Casual gaming is not only measurable, it is the most measurable of all gaming formats as most games are accessible via mobile and desktop. Most casual games allow for brands to use standard ad tags (ad serving and tracking), brand safety, ad verification, brand studies, and even attribution. Depending on brand objectives, it is important to consider what metrics are most important based on the objective. Some of the most common objectives and corresponding success metrics are laid out below, but this is not an exhaustive list as each advertiser will have different priorities. We encourage teams to explore measurement capabilities with their casual game partners, especially if brands are using custom creative.

Objective	Metric
Drive Awareness	Brand Awareness Lift, Ad Recall, Impressions/Views, Reach, Purchase Intent
Drive Engagement	Consideration, Brand Favorability, Engagement Rate, CTR, Video Completion Rate
Drive Outcomes	Conversions (e.g., purchase, subscriptions, registrations), Lead Gen, ROAS

3 Execute creatively: Choose your ad formats

The choice of KPIs influences the type of creative and media strategy, as well as the selection of games and content for activation. Casual gaming offers a wide array of ad formats, each designed to cater to different advertising goals and user experiences. These range from highly customizable game-integrated ads to more traditional video and display units, as well as opt-in rewarded ad options. The infographic below maps available ad formats to the metrics they are most conducive to driving.

METRICS USED TO EVALUATE GAMES ADVERTISING

Top 3 by Ad Format



IAB recently released the first ever [Creative Guidelines and Best Practices in Gaming](#) which introduces essential guidelines around creative in games advertising to ensure effective and respectful advertising across various gaming platforms. Formats covered in the guide include:

ADJACENT: The ad placement is next to the game, such as a banner image ad below a mobile puzzle game.

ADVERGAMES: A custom game designed around a specific product or brand.

AUDIO: The ad placement is purely audio in nature, overlaid during gameplay without pausing the game.

BRANDED WORLD: A brand can develop a fully immersive, branded experience such as an island, an independent gameplay experience, or a branded level.

HARD CODED: The ad placement is built into the game and unchangeable; it can only be changed by modifying the source code and recompiling.

INTERSTITIAL: The ad placement is around the game and as gameplay stops the ad itself becomes the focus.

INTRINSIC IN-GAME: These ad placements, product placements, and experiential environments are in the game and a seamless part of gameplay.

REWARDED: The ad placement provides an opportunity for users to opt-in to watch a video or engage with a playable ad in exchange for a reward within a gaming environment.

SKINS/BRANDED DIGITAL OBJECTS: A brand can create a “skin” or item that players acquire in-game which changes the appearance of their avatar/character, or provides an advantage (e.g., a tool or weapon).

SPONSORED: A brand can sponsor gameplay through special levels and brand themed in-game events.

4 **Measurement and attribution: Assess the effectiveness of your campaign**

While different gaming publishers may not all offer the same measurement options, broadly speaking, the same third-party measurement partners used across other digital channels are available across casual gaming as well and are standardized on the [IAB Open Measurement \(OM\) SDK](#).

Measurement options include the following:

- Ad effectiveness studies
- Brand lift studies
- Site visits
- Conversions
- Downloads
- In-store foot traffic
- Location visits
- Tune-in
- Campaign engagement metrics
- Attention metrics

5.3 PROGRAMMATIC VS. DIRECT/CUSTOM INTEGRATIONS: WHEN TO USE EACH AND WHY?

There are two primary avenues for serving creatives, programmatic and direct placements. Each approach offers distinct advantages and considerations, making the choice between them crucial for campaign success.

Programmatic advertising in casual gaming provides several key benefits. It allows for global frequency capping across multiple campaigns, gaming partners, publishers, and devices which ensures that users are not overwhelmed with repetitive ads. Advanced targeting capabilities let advertisers reach specific audience segments with precision. Measurement is often more comprehensive with programmatic because it offers real-time detailed insights into campaign performance. Programmatic platforms optimize creative placements and game selections across multiple publishers and gaming partners in real time based on campaign goals to improve overall efficiency and return on investment.

Direct integrations offer unique advantages for advertisers seeking premium placements or deeper integration with in game content. Through direct partnerships, brands can negotiate for coveted ad spots, use game assets in creatives, orchestrate takeovers for maximum visibility, and maintain more control over measurement methodologies. Many of these direct integrations are actually served programmatically, but are not subject to global frequency capping due to the specific nature of the publisher relationship.

The choice between programmatic and direct often depends on campaign objectives, budget, and level of integration. Programmatic excels in efficiency and reach, while direct integrations create bespoke and highly engaging experiences. The industry is evolving to bridge the gap between these two approaches. Companies like Anzu, Frameplay, and AdArcade are pioneering solutions that allow custom creative to be served programmatically across multiple games. The hybrid approach aims to combine the efficiency and targeting of programmatic with the customization and premium placement of direct integrations. Many successful campaigns leverage both.

5.4 BEST PRACTICES FOR ACTIVATING IN CASUAL GAMING

- Work with a subject matter expert in casual gaming advertising whether that be an internal resource, a trusted publisher and/or your agency partner.
- Understand the client challenge, campaign objective, and target audience to select the best gaming strategy (best channel, creative format, and inventory mix).
- Identify the role of casual games and establish a measurement plan early in the campaign planning process.
- Understand that different gaming formats will yield different results and should be considered when evaluating performance.
- Monitor performance throughout the campaign and optimize accordingly.

6. The Importance of Transparency

In the complex landscape of digital advertising, transparency is paramount for ensuring trust and effectiveness in inventory auctions. Working with publishers who prioritize transparency is crucial for advertisers looking to maximize their investment. Advertisers should seek out publishers that consistently provide transparent signals in the bidstream.

First, work with publishers who offer deterministic identifiers such as Unified ID 2.0 (UID2) and RampID, which are vital for accurate audience targeting. Additionally, sending comprehensive device information, including device IDs and full IP addresses, helps in tracking and optimizing ad performance. Global placement IDs should be clearly identified, allowing for precise tracking of ad placements across platforms. Similarly, video placement declarations must be accurate to ensure that video ads are displayed in the appropriate context.

For campaigns involving rewarded traffic, publishers should use the OpenRTB 2.6 field (rwdd=1) to specifically declare such traffic, ensuring transparency in the nature of user engagement. Moreover, any ads served through rewarded placements should be explicitly labeled as rewarded inventory, preventing any potential misrepresentation. The accuracy of page URLs is another critical aspect of transparency. Publishers must provide complete and precise URLs, maintaining all query string parameters and key value pairs. All in-app impression opportunities must transmit a transparent and valid app.bundle and app.storeURL signals. The accurate transmission of these identifiers allows DSPs and advertisers to verify the legitimacy of the app inventory they are buying. This practice aligns with IAB Tech Lab's guidelines, which emphasize the role of proper app identification in mitigating the risks of misrepresented inventory, domain spoofing, and other forms of ad fraud. Clear identification of content genre helps in aligning ad creatives with the right context, enhancing relevance and user engagement. Blocked advertisers should be transparently listed using the badv field, ensuring that unwanted brands are effectively excluded from campaigns. Finally, compliance with Open Measurement SDK (OMSDK) standards is necessary to maintain consistency and reliability in ad viewability and verification.

By prioritizing these transparency measures, advertisers can build stronger relationships with publishers, optimize their campaigns, and achieve better overall outcomes in their digital advertising efforts.

7. Brand Safety and Privacy

Brand safety and privacy considerations in casual gaming mirror those in other digital advertising formats. Advertisers can manage these aspects through established methods, such as setting parameters in programmatic buys via partners like DoubleVerify, similar to display advertising. The privacy safeguards and use of clean data in gaming environments are comparable to those in typical online video and display campaigns. Targeting strategies can leverage third-party data matched with first-party data through clean room distributors like LiveRamp to build look-alike models or implement suppression. This approach provides advertisers with multiple avenues to serve ads in a targeted, broad, and safe manner. An additional consideration unique to gaming is the game's suitability to the brand. For example, an energy drink ad would naturally fit within a game like Call of Duty Mobile because it aligns with the game's high-energy and action-packed nature. Similarly, casual games with themes related to cooking, fashion, or puzzle-solving might be more suitable for brands in relevant industries.

To enhance brand safety and privacy measures, advertisers should prioritize partnerships with publishers who have implemented strong authentication strategies. Mobile gaming's appeal to casual gamers largely stems from its free and readily available nature. Users understand that in exchange for free access, they will be served advertisements. This is a clear value exchange that forms the foundation of the casual gaming ecosystem. Platforms with a single sign-on (SSO) solution are attractive to advertisers. SSO allows publishers to gather consented data about users for monetization purposes and makes these platforms premium destinations for ad placements. The adoption of SSO enables publishers to maintain addressability while providing users seamless free of charge access to their favorite games with a more tailored and premium ad experience. The casual gaming industry is increasingly adopting contextual targeting methods that allow advertisers to place ads based on the content and context of the game, rather than relying solely on user data.

Many casual gaming publishers are also implementing AI-driven brand safety tools that can analyze game content in real-time. These tools ensure ads are not placed next to inappropriate content, even in user-generated content within games, further enhancing brand safety. Casual games often have a broader and more diverse audience compared to hardcore gaming titles. This diversity can be advantageous for brands looking to reach wide demographics, but also escalates the considerations of ad content to ensure it's appropriate. Implementing these strategies keeps access to casual games free and seamless while improving the overall ad experience. As a result, consumers, publishers, and advertisers in the casual gaming ecosystem all win.

8. Examples and Case Studies: Brands Winning in Casual Gaming

8.1 BRAND: SAM'S CLUB (ZYNKA)

Campaign Objectives: Drive awareness and engagement of the Sam's Club brand amongst members and prospects during the holiday season.

KPIs Measured: Engagements, Interactions, Clicks, Impressions, and Video Completion Rate

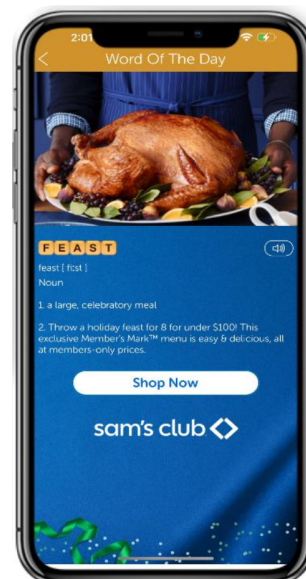
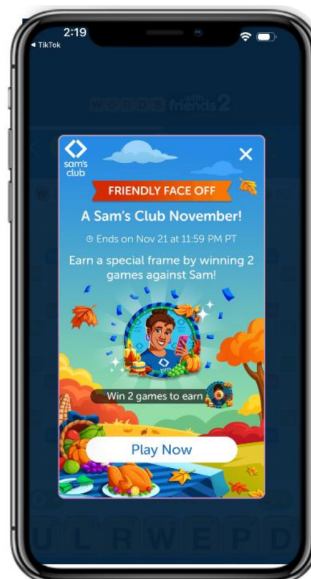
Description of Experience: Effectively engaged Sam's Club members and new prospects in an immersive gaming environment to deliver full-funnel metrics for the Happy Host campaign by using strategic campaign audience targeting and high-impact placements.

Outcomes:

- Increased brand awareness and drove significant lift in brand perception
- Drove full-funnel impact among targeted audiences
- Drove in-store visits and gained competitive market share
- Increased Sam's Club mobile app use

Key Learnings: Slightly higher interaction and engagement among prospective users showing interest in the Sam's Club brand overall. High engagement among custom units was seen throughout with native high and low scoring units at ~3.5% CTR per unit. Sponsorships and integrations reached millions of unique users during short high-impact flights making for efficient unique reach at low effective CPM.

Ad Format Used: Integrations, Sponsorships, Playables, Rewarded Video, Banners



8.2 BRAND: QUIKTRIP (ANZU)

Campaign Objective: The intrinsic in-game ad campaign aimed to drive awareness, reaching new, untapped audiences in cities and states where QuikTrip stores are located.

KPIs Measured: Reach, Viewability, and On-Screen Rate

Description of Experience: Through a full year partnership, QuikTrip ran display and video ads within Anzu's intrinsic in-game ad placements, frequently rotating in new creatives to promote seasonal messaging and new food options available within QuikTrip stores. By using Anzu's geo-targeting capabilities and running ads across the list of 80+ PC and mobile titles QuikTrip was able to reach active gamers who were located near their stores, keeping QuikTrip top-of-mind across their key audiences. QuikTrip also worked with Anzu's in-house design team to optimize their creatives for in-game (in line with IAB creative guidelines) to ensure they got the most out of them and caught a player's attention as they navigated the 3D world.

Outcomes:

- Over 3 million total unique reach
- 98% viewability (vs. 52% desktop display norm)
- 96% on-screen rate

Key Learnings: Anzu's solution provides a low-barrier access to gaming and allows brands to reach new audiences and engage with consumers in a way that makes most sense to them and adds to their experience. Anzu's tech and integrations with ad tech vendors provide the comfort of understanding that the creatives are viewable and the performance is verified, and that the gaming campaign was running in a brand-safe environment.

Ad Format Used: Intrinsic in-game advertising (display and video)



8.3 BRAND: WONKA (ZYNGA)

Campaign Objective: Drive awareness, consideration and ultimately purchase of tickets to watch the Wonka movie.

KPIs Measured: Awareness, Consideration, and Foot Traffic

Description of Experience: Leveraged in-game integrations in four games, including Words With Friends, and high-impact video across the Zynga network targeting family film viewers and frequent moviegoers. Also used first impression takeovers (FITOs) to extend reach on the day of release.

Outcomes:

- Drove full-funnel metrics for awareness and consideration (show +)
- Delivered hundreds of millions of paid and earned impressions
- Drove ticket sales

Key Learnings: Not only drove awareness, consideration, and foot traffic among frequent movie goers, but also among infrequent movie goers.

Ad Format Used: In-game integrations, non-skip video, FITOs



8.4 BRAND: MAYBELLINE (ACTIVISION BLIZZARD MEDIA)

Campaign Objective: To drive awareness, consideration, and favorability for Maybelline's Lifter Gloss Candy Drop among new and younger audiences through an innovative and engaging digital activation.

KPIs Measured: Engagement Rate, Mini Games Played, Website Traffic Lift, Ad Recall, Awareness, and Consideration

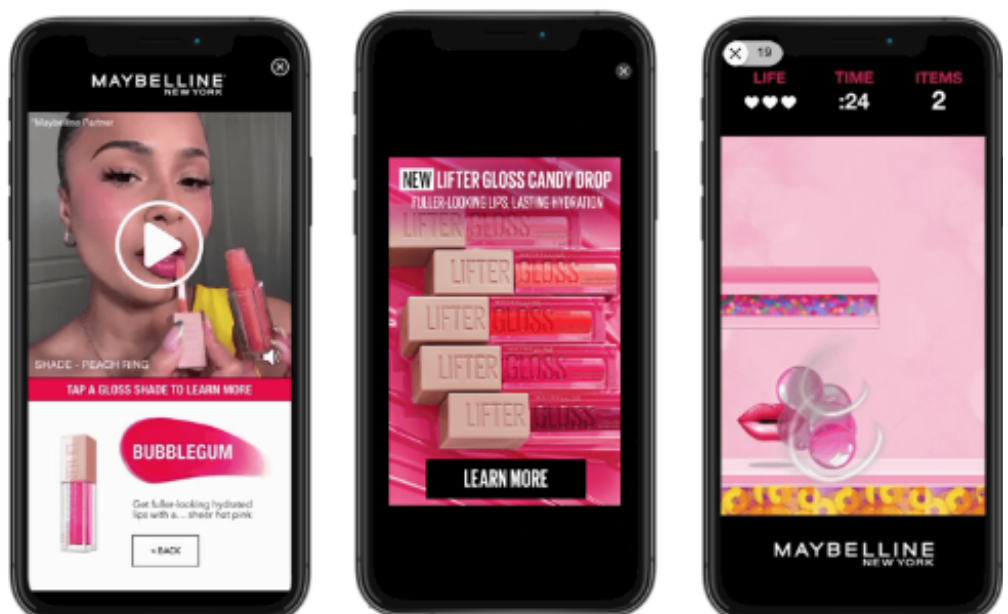
Description of Experience: The campaign featured a series of engaging ad formats, including rewarded video, a custom playable, and Activision Blizzard Media's latest ad format, interactive video. These interactive ads highlighted the vibrant Lifter Gloss Candy Drop collection, encouraging users to explore the available range of shades. The playable ad provided a gamified experience that seamlessly integrated elements of both Maybelline and Candy Crush Saga, while the interactive video enabled product exploration with a strong call-to-action that drove consideration.

Outcomes:

- 98% engagement rate
- Over 12 million custom playable mini-games played
- 552% increase in website traffic, with daily visitors rising from 15,000 to 100,000
- Significant +23% growth in ad recall, +14% increased awareness, and a notable +4% uptick in consideration for the new Lifter Gloss Candy Drop collection

Key Learnings: A well-aligned brand with strong synergy between its product offering and ad platform can significantly enhance campaign performance. Integrating interactive, gamified ads provides a native player experience that often results in higher engagement. A focus on strong branding and prominent product placement within ad formats results can lead to increases in brand metrics, such as ad recall and awareness. Additionally, opt-in ads that offer in-game rewards and boosters drive ad engagement while helping players advance their gameplay, resulting in positive brand associations. Finally, using custom creative formats that are designed to drive desired brand objectives, such as consideration or conversion, can dramatically boost engagement and drive substantial increases in website traffic and brand consideration.

Ad Format Used: Rewarded Video, Playable, and Interactive Video



9. Conclusion and Future Outlook of Casual Gaming

As the casual gaming industry moves forward, brands that prioritize innovation, creativity, and player-first approaches will thrive in this dynamic and exciting advertising space. Brands can unlock the full potential of this market and achieve long-term success by staying informed, adaptable, and committed to providing value to casual gamers. By leveraging the insights and best practices outlined in this Casual Gaming Buyer's Guide, brands can navigate the landscape with confidence by crafting authentic and effective campaigns. The casual gaming market presents a significant opportunity for brands to expand their reach, engage with diverse audiences, and drive business growth.

The casual gaming industry is poised for significant growth driven by continued advancements in technology. The increasing adoption of 5G networks, cloud gaming, and virtual reality (VR) will reshape the landscape. These advancements and adoptions will lead to more seamless and immersive experiences across devices. Artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) are being used more now to personalize gaming experiences, adapt difficulty of gaming levels, and even optimize ad placement. This is resulting in higher engagement and monetization opportunities for brands. Even blockchain technology is being used in play-to-earn and in-game assets games. This adds to the list of creative and innovative ways for brands to connect with casual gamers.

Brands should prioritize understanding the audience they are trying to reach and how these audiences show up in casual games in order to create successful targeted campaigns. Brands should also be embracing and experimenting with different kinds of in-game, native, and rewarded video ad formats within their gaming experiences. Collaborating with game developers and publishers that create experiences for gamers is very beneficial. This way all stakeholders are aligned with the brand's values and the capabilities of the developers within specific games. Monitoring emerging trends, technologies, and popular game genres are ways for brands to remain agile in adapting their strategies. It will be the brands that embrace the casual gaming opportunity and adapt to the evolving ecosystem that will be well-positioned to build lasting connections with gamers, increase brand awareness, and drive conversions.

Acknowledgements

This Buyer's Guide was developed by the IAB Casual Gaming Buyer's Guide Working Group, which operates under the umbrella of the IAB Games Committee and IAB Games Board within the IAB Experience Center.

OBJECTIVE OF THE IAB CASUAL GAMING BUYER'S GUIDE

This Casual Gaming Buyer's Guide will arm brands and advertisers with vital insights and tools for navigating the casual gaming market successfully. This guide will specifically aid industry leaders and innovators in the casual gaming and mobile entertainment space, as well as marketing strategists focused on gamer engagement. The primary objective is to improve casual gaming advertising by promoting genuine interactions between brands and gamers, aiming to establish an ecosystem where advertising positively impacts the gaming experience for all.

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About IAB

INTERACTIVE ADVERTISING BUREAU (IAB)

The Interactive Advertising Bureau empowers the media and marketing industries to thrive in the digital economy. Its membership comprises more than 700 leading media companies, brands, agencies, and the technology firms responsible for selling, delivering, and optimizing digital ad 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, IAB develops technical standards and solutions. IAB is 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., the trade association advocates for its members and promotes the value of the interactive advertising industry to legislators and policymakers. Founded in 1996, IAB is headquartered in New York City.

ABOUT THE IAB EXPERIENCE CENTER

This project was commissioned by the Games Board within the IAB Experience Center. The Experience Center focuses on emerging platforms and evolving consumer behaviors to help the industry understand and reach the audiences of tomorrow and helps brands future-proof. For more information on the Experience Center please contact Zoe at zoe@iab.com

ABOUT THE IAB GAMES BOARD

The IAB Games Board brings together leading companies at the intersection of gaming and advertising to help brands tap into this media channel where increasingly more consumer attention is going. For more information on this group or to see if your company qualifies to be a part of this group, please contact Zoe at zoe@iab.com

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