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US Consumers Appreciate In-Game Ads

Two in Three Would Give Up Social, TV Over Mobile Gaming

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Mobile gaming is quickly gaining popularity as an American pastime, topping social media and TV, according to a recent survey. For marketers, this medium is particularly beneficial, as in-game ads work to engage players and raise brand awareness.

According to a March 2019 survey from mobile ad and app monetization company Tapjoy, 69% of US consumers said they would rather give up social media apps or TV than lose their favorite mobile games.

Members of this dedicated gaming cohort are important because they're paying attention (and even appreciate) the in-game ads they receive. Respondents were more than twice as likely to pay attention to advertisements placed in mobile games (41%) than ads place on the internet (17%), in magazines (15%) or on billboards (15%), per Tapjoy.

And while most find digital ads to be annoying or distracting, the survey found that 76% of US mobile gamers prefer opt-in rewarded ads, compared with 24% that prefer mandatory ads. And this holds true for different demographics across the board—three-quarters of US millennials said they preferred opt-in rewarded ads over interstitial, and 67% of US parents said they would likely engage with a video ad in exchange for a reward.

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What Are US Mobile Gamers' Attitudes Toward In-App Advertising?
% of respondents, by demographic, March 2019

Millennials (23-38)

76%	prefer opt-in rewarded ads over interstitial ads
10%	avoid engaging with rewarded in-app ads

Parents

93%	prefer to view ads as part of gameplay
67%	would likely engage with a video ad in exchange for a reward
13%	said they avoid in-app rewarded ads

High-income ($75,000+)

74%	prefer opt-in rewarded ads
40%	understand that rewarded ads support game developers
6%	said it's unlikely they would engage with a rewarded video ad

Source: Tapjoy, "Modern Mobile Gamer Personas 2019," May 15, 2019

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"The rewarded model is the most effective model of advertising in mobile games because players understand there is a value exchange, and they appreciate that a brand is giving them the ability to progress in the game without having to pull out their wallets," said Emily Robinson, vice president of marketing at Tapjoy. "This appreciation for the advertiser drives deep brand awareness, brand recognition, message recall and purchase intent with consumers."

Part of the success of interactive ads comes from the satisfaction people get when rewarded for watching or interacting with ad content while gaming—something that social media can't do. When Tapjoy asked users how they felt playing mobile games vs. scrolling through social media, 59% said relaxed (vs. 44%), 37% said engaged (vs. 28%) and just 11% noted feeling stressed when playing mobile games vs. 17% who said the same of social media.

"When people are gaming, they are engaging in this concept of eustress, which is actually beneficial stress that happens while playing games," Robinson said. "This gives the player a feeling of fulfillment and achievement. It isn't a passive medium like social or the inattentive environment of television. You have to be engaged and focused."

And data suggests these playable methods work. According to an August 2018 survey from app monetization company Fyber, 28% of US agency professionals surveyed cited playable ads as the most effective in-app ad format, followed by 23% who listed interactive ads.

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

% of respondents

Format	%
Playable ads	28%
Interactive ads	23%
Rewarded videos/opt-in	22%
Rich media ads	20%
Native ads	4%
Meta ads	3%

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

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By the end of 2019, 147.1 million people in the US will play mobile games, per our estimates. That's compared with 90.6 million digital console players.