

These apps are ahead of the game on virtual goods

Article

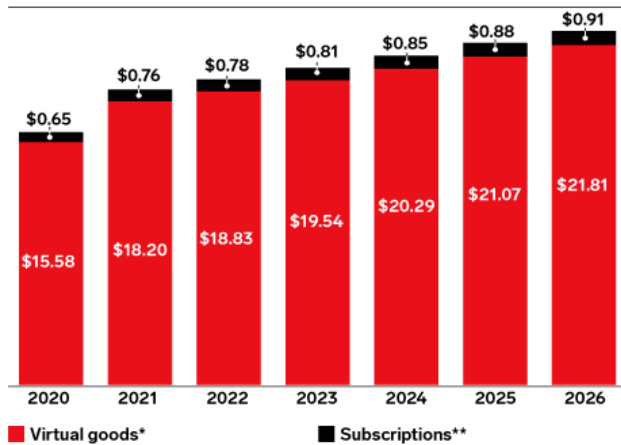
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US smartphone gamers will spend **\$18.83 billion** on virtual goods this year, a massive sum compared with the **less than \$1 billion** they'll spend on subscriptions. These intangible assets make up a growing industry in the gaming world, especially as more companies—from Nike to Spotify to Chipotle—enter the metaverse via games like Roblox.

Beyond the chart: Among US smartphone users overall, in-app spending will hit **\$42.31 billion** this year, split fairly evenly between gaming and nongaming apps. More than **half** of that total goes toward virtual goods, like avatar skins and video filters, and will continue to do so through the end of our forecast period in 2026. For retailers, that means smartphone users—gamers in particular—represent a market of people ready and willing to spend billions of dollars on products that don't involve the production costs or supply chain considerations of tangible goods.

US Total Gaming In-App Spending, Virtual Goods* vs. Subscriptions, 2020-2026**

billions



Note: total annual spending on in-app purchases in gaming mobile apps by smartphone users; numbers may not add up to total due to rounding; *virtual goods are intangible, nonphysical assets purchased with currency within a mobile app that has value only within that app; **a purchase within an app that gives the user access to benefits for a certain period of time
Source: eMarketer, April 2022

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