

**AdMazing**



**AN EMARKETER AND ADMAZING STUDY**

# FROM EXPERIMENT TO ESSENTIAL:

Why mobile gaming belongs  
in the modern media mix

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# INTRODUCTION

The power of mobile gaming is no secret to marketers. Many of their target consumers enjoy playing games on their phones. So it should make sense that extending media buys beyond traditional connected TV (CTV) or social media to include this high-engagement channel would only enhance results.

So why do only 1 in 10 marketers say their organizations use mobile gaming in campaigns regularly, according to a survey by EMARKETER in partnership with Admazing? The disconnect, this new research shows, ties back to measurement, clarity on the strength of the gaming audience, and a lack of insight in the incremental power mobile gaming campaigns add to broader media campaigns.

**"The power of mobile gaming is not just in its scale, but in its ability to connect brands with the right people in premium, high-attention moments," said Admazing co-founder and CEO Jorge Prado. "That's what turns impressions into impact."**

This report, based on a survey of 108 US marketers, shows how marketers can move past this disconnect, understand how measurement has evolved, and embrace a channel that could add better ROI to their campaigns.

# KEY SURVEY TAKEAWAYS



## **MARKETERS ARE FRUSTRATED WITH THEIR MEDIA MIX.**

They feel their campaign playbooks are missing their audiences or getting lost in the noise.



## **MOBILE GAMING'S REACH IS ESTABLISHED AND POWERFUL.**

Marketers realize that mobile gaming's audience is wide, diverse, and valuable. The vast majority think mobile gaming is a good fit for some brands, a strong complement to other channels, or essential.



## **MOBILE GAMING PLAYS WELL WITH OTHERS.**

Marketers believe mobile gaming campaigns can boost incremental reach beyond channels like CTV and social.



## **YET, MARKETERS ARE LEAVING MONEY ON THE TABLE.**

Confidence in the channel is not enough, as most marketers treat mobile gaming campaigns as optional.

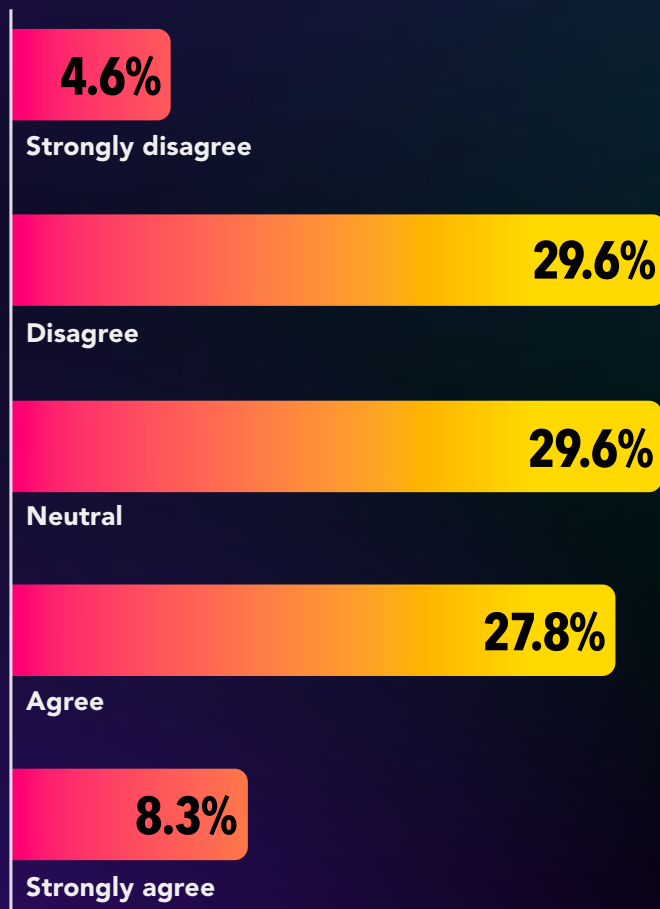


## **MARKETERS WANT ANALYTICS AND ASSURANCES.**

Awareness of the current state of measurement tools, audience validation, and attribution clarity can help marketers play along and reshape their media mix.

# THE PROBLEM WITH TODAY'S MEDIA MIX

To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "Our media investment does not always reflect where consumers actually spend their time."



Despite the massive amount that advertisers pour into their media mix, most lack confidence that it is reaching who they want, where they want.

Total media ad spend in the US will reach \$463.93 billion in 2026, a growth of 8.5%, according to EMARKETER's December 2025 forecast. However, many marketers are disappointed in their media returns.

Only around a third (34.3%) of marketers say that their media investments always hit their mark, according to the EMARKETER and Admazing survey.

n=108. Source: EMARKETER and Admazing "Mobile Gaming Advertising Survey," February 2026

“There’s a lack of transparency on the big platforms, but really throughout the system,” said Yory Wurmser, principal analyst, advertising, media & technology, at EMARKETER. Wurmser has spent a decade researching and analyzing mobile trends, including mobile gaming. “When you get into the open web, some of the signals that are coming through the bid stream have reduced fidelity just because they go through a bunch of steps, and you can end up with much less detail than you do at the start.”

One problem is marketers are over-leveraging channels compared with the time consumers spend on them. For example, social network ad spend will make up 26.9% of marketers’ total media ad spend this year, according to EMARKETER forecasts. However, consumers will only spend 12.5% of their total time spent with media on social platforms. And that gulf is expected to widen.

**Social network ad spend will make up**



**26.9%**

**of marketers’ total media ad spend. However, consumers will only spend**



**12.5%**

**of their total time spent with media on social platforms.**

Source: EMARKETER

# MOBILE GAMING'S UNIQUE REACH

**9 IN 10**

marketers are at least slightly confident that mobile gaming can reach their target audience.

**1/3**

are very confident or extremely confident that their desired demographic plays mobile games.

**55.6%**

are at least moderately confident that mobile gaming ad formats can effectively support brand storytelling.

As marketers appraise their familiar ad channels, under-leveraged environments like mobile gaming have earned exploration.

In fact, nearly 9 in 10 marketers are at least slightly confident that mobile gaming can reach their target audience, according to the survey. Almost a third are very confident or extremely confident that their desired demographic plays mobile games.

- Only 22.2% of marketers disagree that mobile gaming reaches a broad, diverse audience, according to the survey.

Additionally, over half (55.6%) are at least moderately confident that mobile gaming ad formats can effectively support brand storytelling, the survey found.

Source: EMARKETER and Admazing

“Most people in this country are gamers, as are the majority of internet users worldwide,” said Wurmser. “There’s a lot of detailed information within games about the type of buyer. So there’s a combination of a very diverse audience within games and a lot of detailed behavioral data from gameplays.”

Over half of the US population (54.4%) will be mobile phone gamers in 2026, according to EMARKETER’s October 2025 forecast.

Mobile gaming provides marketers with the ability to launch interactive campaigns that can actively engage audiences.

- **86.1% of marketers say attention quality (whether their audience is actively engaged with a campaign versus passively exposed) is at least moderately important.** Over half (56.5%) say it’s at least very important to them, according to the survey.

And the channel can reach valuable consumers who make purchasing decisions for their whole families.

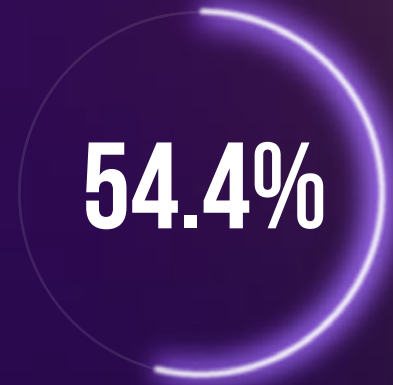
“Most gamers also do a lot of the shopping for their household,” said Wurmser. “CPG, grocery, and even home improvement advertisers could find opportunities as games improve their targeting and measurement.”



**Most people in this country are gamers, as are the majority of internet users worldwide.**

— Yory Wurmser

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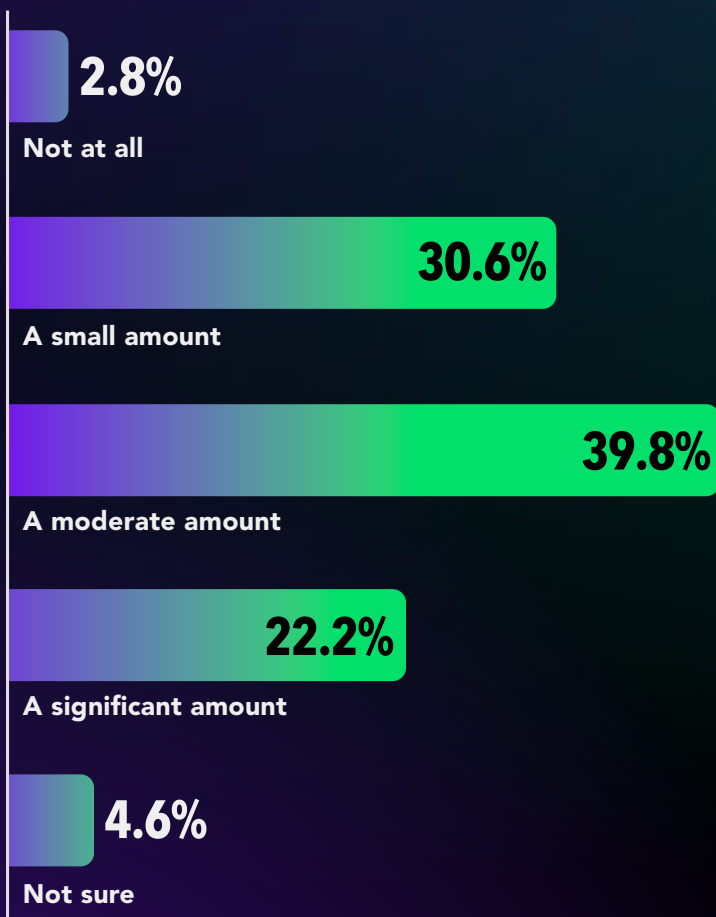


**of the US population will be mobile phone gamers in 2026.**

Source: EMARKETER

# BEYOND THE BOUNDARIES

To what extent do you believe mobile gaming can deliver incremental reach beyond connected TV (CTV) and social media?



Mobile gaming isn't an all-or-nothing investment. As channel and platform fragmentation dilutes attention, mobile gaming adds a powerful element to the broader media mix.

**Nearly two-thirds (62.0%) of marketers believe mobile gaming can at least moderately deliver incremental reach beyond CTV and social,** according to the survey.

- 22.2% believe mobile gaming can significantly deliver incremental reach.
- Additionally, 30.6% of marketers see mobile gaming as a strong complement to other channels, per the survey.

n=108. Source: EMARKETER and Admazing "Mobile Gaming Advertising Survey," February 2026

Mobile games occupy a unique place in consumers' habits. They're played throughout the day, often as part of a second-screen experience, giving brands an opportunity for increased exposure.

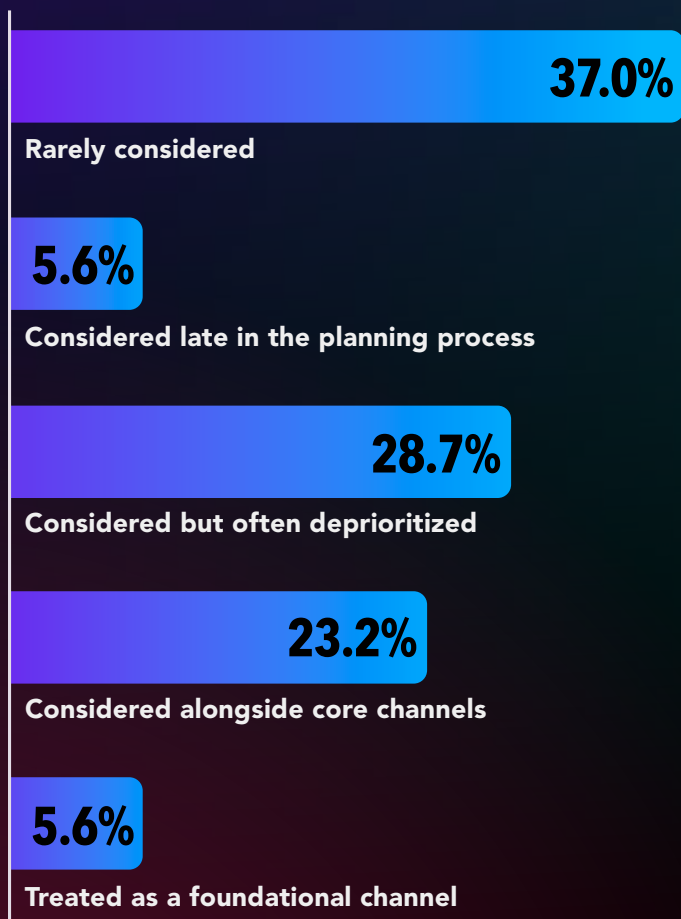
- 81.2% of the US population will be second-screen users in 2026, according to EMARKETER's December 2025 forecast.
- 41.7% of marketers say mobile gaming would naturally play in their brand media strategy by complementing second-screen behavior, according to the survey.

Mobile gaming audiences are not only broad and varied, they're also plugged into a wide media landscape, making them a target for brands looking to extend their reach beyond CTV and social media.



# WHY MOBILE GAMES ARE OVERLOOKED

Which best describes how mobile gaming is typically treated during brand media planning?



Despite marketers' frustration with their return on media investment and confidence in gaming audiences, they rarely prioritize the channel.

Only 28.7% of marketers consider mobile gaming alongside core channels or treat it as foundational, according to the study. Most rarely consider it, consider it late, or often deprioritize it.

- Over a third (35.4%) of B2B/ B2C marketers neither use nor actively consider mobile gaming for brand campaigns.
- Just 10.2% of marketers say their organizations regularly use mobile gaming for brand campaigns.

n=108. Source: EMARKETER and Admazing "Mobile Gaming Advertising Survey," February 2026

“Historically, a lot of [deprioritizing mobile gaming] had to do with two things,” said Wurmser. “There was a feeling that gamers would find advertising distracting and react negatively to advertising... Secondly, the measurement was really kind of poor. That was a huge problem.”

Whether it’s perceptions of players, inexperience with the channel, or lack of budgetary alignment, marketers put mobile gaming on the back burner. US mobile game ad spend will reach \$9.00 billion in 2028, but its growth will slow, EMARKETER forecasts.

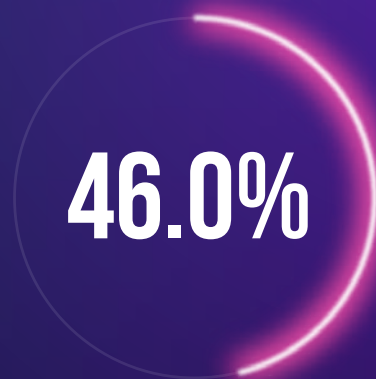
Mobile gaming ad spend grew 6.0% last year, will grow 5.5% in 2026, and is expected to grow 4.5% in 2027, according to EMARKETER, and will only make up 2.1% of total digital ad spend in 2026.

A large share of mobile gaming ad spend is driven by user acquisition. Mobile games spent \$25 billion on user acquisition last year, an increase of 3.8% from 2024, according to AppsFlyer.

Marketers doubt if players can be swayed by mobile gaming campaigns. Almost half (48.2%) are concerned that players lack purchase intent, per the EMARKETER/Admazing survey.

Meanwhile, 46% of game players often make in-game purchases based on in-game ads, according to a May 2025 survey from Bain & Company.

**THE BOTTOM LINE: MARKETERS SEEK MORE ASSURANCE AND MATURITY FROM THE MOBILE GAMING ECOSYSTEM.**



**of game players often make in-game purchases based on in-game ads.**

Source: Bain & Company

# RIISING TO THE CHALLENGES

The vast majority of marketers aren't disregarding mobile gaming. They just want assurances that they can actually reach their audiences and need tools to measure campaign impact.

Social media took years before marketers felt comfortable making it a large part of their media mix. Social network ad spend was only \$1.71 billion in 2010, compared with the \$124.88 billion expected in 2026, according to EMARKETER forecasts.

Only 7.4% of marketers think mobile gaming is not a good fit for most brands, according to the survey. Some 26.9% think the channel is promising but not yet proven. **"Mobile gaming has evolved into a measurable, performance-driven environment,"** said a customer service manager for DISQO.

"With deterministic exposure tracking and incrementality design, brand lift measurement can help brands reliably assess shifts in awareness, consideration, and even behavioral outcomes like search and site visitation through outcomes lift."

Skeptical marketers need more accountability into their campaigns' performance for mobile players. Measurement is top of mind.

When asked what measurement-related concerns limit their investment in mobile games, the top three answers were difficulty proving brand lift (49.1%), limited attribution clarity (46.3%), and lack of standardized metrics (44.4%), according to the survey.

Social network  
ad spend was

**\$1.7B**

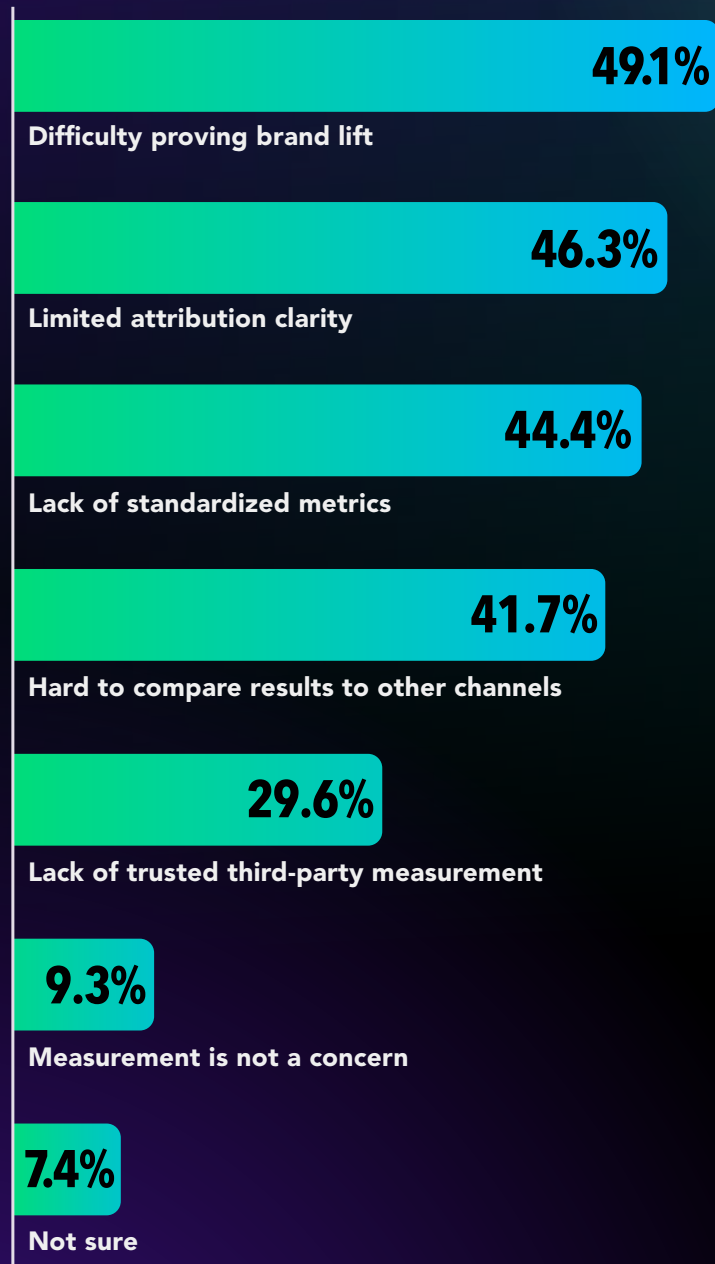
in 2010  
compared with

**\$124.8B**

expected in 2026.

Source: EMARKETER

## Which measurement-related concerns limit your investment in mobile gaming?



Note: Respondents could select all that apply.  
n=108. Source: EMARKETER and Admazing  
"Mobile Gaming Advertising Survey," February 2026

Less than 4 in 10 marketers are at least moderately confident that they can measure brand impact from mobile gaming campaigns.

Though mobile gaming has grown giant over the last 15 years, its ad infrastructure has been slower to develop. This has led to a reduced number of tools and best practices long established by other digital channels.

"It was unproven whether branding would work," said Wurmser. "Until a couple years ago, the whole ecosystem for gaming was built on direct response and really geared toward app install for games."

The growth of formats like rewarded video over the last 10 years has put more impactful tools in the hands of marketers. When asked for the most successful format in mobile games, marketers' top answer was rewarded ads (40.7%), according to the survey.



**Technology is becoming more and more available to help us drive those impactful impressions, combined with adding new technologies to measure that.**

— Jorge Prado

CO-FOUNDER AND CEO, ADMAZING

The measurement challenge was complicated by the release of Apple's iOS 14.5 in 2021, which hobbled attempts at tracking campaigns and serving personalized ads.

"The deprecation of app tracking [within iOS] kind of broke the whole model for a lot of these games and it took a while for them to figure out how to compensate for that," said Wurmser. "A lot of that had to do with shifting to more hybrid types of monetization, but part of that also is expanding into new types of advertisers. To do that, they really needed to build a whole infrastructure, which included things like attribution. That infrastructure is just coming online."

While this challenge has impacted iPhone users, Android users have remained more addressable for marketers. Almost half (46.4%) of US smartphone users will be an Android user in 2026, EMARKETER forecasts.

The mobile gaming industry and advertising leaders are working to chip away these challenges. For example, last year the Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB) released its Gaming Measurement Framework to help marketers set benchmarks and key goals, with particular attention paid to how gaming differs from other digital channels. The framework seeks to help marketers with various mobile gaming formats including in-game ads, rewarded ads, and interstitial ads.

"Since the beginning, Admazing has always developed their technology only to look for the right user at the right time, in the right device, regardless of the game," said Prado. "Technology is becoming more and more available to help us drive those impactful impressions, combined with adding new technologies to measure that."



## BIG BRANDS ARE STARTING TO LEAN IN MORE WITH PROMISING RESULTS.

"Mobile gaming ad campaigns consistently deliver outsized impact, including online ad awareness, **purchase intent—which is 3.5 times stronger than the US norm, with a 7.1 percentage point lift—** and affinity, confirming the channel's ability to drive both visibility and persuasion when the ad experience fits the gameplay moment," said Pedro Sánchez López, senior director of brand & media at Kantar.

"Reliability in mobile gaming has matured YoY," López continued. "With increasingly consistent signals showing that the channel can drive meaningful brand and business outcomes. This momentum reflects a broader market shift: **Consumer receptivity to gaming ads has grown from 25% in 2012 to 54% in 2025,** creating a more fertile environment for impact. As a result, standardized format combinations—such as rewarded video, interstitial display, or playables—and stronger-than-norm creative that is more enjoyable, distinctive, and clearly branded are now driving consistent, repeatable lifts across brands."

Additionally, AI's impact on the advertising industry promises to streamline mobile gaming campaigns, in creative, personalization, targeting, and measurement.

"[AI] makes dynamic creative much more effective and better optimized," said Wurmser. "So it's going to be a lot more efficient to add advertising within games. Ads can be personalized with much greater scale than before."



**AI makes dynamic creative much more effective and better optimized, so it's going to be a lot more efficient to add advertising within games. Ads can be personalized with much greater scale than before.**

— Yory Wurmser

PRINCIPAL ANALYST, ADVERTISING,  
MEDIA & TECHNOLOGY, EMARKETER



AI could also assist marketers as they navigate a ramp-up in mobile privacy considerations and help reach players with personalized and trackable campaigns.

“As privacy changes the rules of digital advertising and signal loss becomes standard across platforms, AI-driven modeling, smarter optimization, creative personalization, and deeper campaign analysis are allowing gaming environments to operate with more precision and accountability,” said Eddy Prado, co-founder and chief product officer at Admazing. “What once felt experimental is starting to look far more structured and measurable. AI is helping mobile gaming align with the standards brand marketers expect: clearer measurement, faster creative iteration, and more disciplined budget allocation.”

As the industry builds out its ad infrastructure and new tools improve targeting and measurement, mobile gaming is meeting more advertisers’ needs than ever.

**“Measurement quality in mobile gaming has advanced significantly, moving from basic awareness and engagement metrics to reliably connecting ad exposure to real, incremental business outcomes,”** said Erika Digirolamo, vice president of media solutions for general merchandise and SMB at Circana. “With stronger privacy-safe signals, richer connections to off-platform data, and more sophisticated testing capabilities, we can measure incremental business impact with far greater precision than just a few years ago.”



# YOUR GAME PLAN FOR SUCCESS IN MOBILE GAMING



## POWER UP YOUR MEDIA MIX

While digital trends like social video have claimed a lot of campaign focus, marketers are flooding the zones enough to meaningfully reduce returns. Ask yourself: Are you sinking budget into Instagram Reels or CTV only to see hard work drown in noise or go unnoticed by an audience? Mobile gaming ad formats have evolved to connect with players in ways they prefer, including through rewarded and playable ads.

More people than ever are multitasking. EMARKETER forecasts over 80% of US consumers will be a second-screen user this year. And almost half (48%) of Gen Alpha play mobile games while watching TV, according to a February report from Precisify. Try running mobile gaming ads in parallel to complement a robust media mix, reaching players where they spend the most time.



## REEVALUATE THE STATE OF MOBILE GAMING

Mobile gaming advertising has matured quickly. The industry has built out its ad infrastructure, measurement capabilities, and has cemented best practices for advertisers. If the channel didn't meet your needs 10 years ago, or even five years ago, it's time to take a new look.



## EXPERIMENT WITH AI MOBILE GAMING WORKFLOWS

AI is reshaping mobile gaming the same way it is upending the rest of the advertising industry. Already, generative and agentic tools are streamlining the entire campaign process, from creative to measurement. On the development side, AI is being widely adopted by game companies, promising swifter releases of finely tuned experiences. This potentially means more inventory, advanced personalization, and rapid iteration for marketers.

## ABOUT THE SURVEY

This survey was developed and fielded by EMARKETER in collaboration with Admazing in February 2026.

We surveyed 108 US marketing professionals to gather their attitudes and experiences with mobile gaming.

## ABOUT THIS REPORT

Research for this report was compiled by members of the EMARKETER Studio team in partnership with Admazing, using the above-mentioned survey, as well as reports, forecasts, and analysis by EMARKETER.

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Admazing is a mobile gaming ad platform that connects brands with 200 million US players through premium formats like rewarded video and interactive playables.

Powered by proprietary Games IQ™ technology, Admazing identifies the highest-performing inventory across 1 million-plus games to drive measurable results and impact.