



Gaming as a scalable driver of brand growth

A maturing ecosystem at the IAB PlayFronts 2024

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A maturing gaming sector setting up for brand growth

Gaming scale and investment

Around [3.3 billion people now play video games](#) worldwide, across console gaming, esports, casual mobile games, and social games. This is around [65% of the world's online population](#) and even more in mature markets like [the US, where around 80%](#) of people play games.

According to recent [OMG/WARC research, gaming](#) (on consoles alone) will [grow 50% by 2028](#), eclipsing both broadcast radio and print media in terms of time spent.

Video games are one of the largest entertainment sectors, with a [USD 190bn global revenue](#) forecast in 2024. Larger than [music and movies combined](#).

However, advertiser investment has long fallen [behind the growth in time spent](#) with games despite the audience indexing highly against the most sought-after demographics.

In the US, 46% of the 213 million regular gamers are female, [87% of US mothers play games](#) in younger demographics, 90% of Gen Z and 94% of Gen Alpha identify as gamers - where games take up more time than social media at [around 10 hours per week](#).

According to Playwire, about [half of Gen Z](#) say a brand's appearance in-game is more important than in real life.



In-game ad spending is forecast to be around USD [9.5bn this year and double to over 18bn](#) by the decade's end. This means that only around 3 dollars are spent on ads per player worldwide compared with [40 dollars spent per user on social](#) media.

The growth in time spent with [video games in recent years is under-leveraged](#). It provides a route for brand growth if the formula of format, model, technology, attention, and creativity can be perfected.

IAB PlayFronts 2024

The IAB in the US has been tracking developments in a maturing games sector through the annual [PlayFronts](#).

The event seeks to illustrate the true nature of the opportunity to reach gamers. A new IAB report, ['Changing the Game,'](#) published at PlayFronts 2024, details how in-game advertising can drive brand and sales performance most effectively through innovative formats, models, and tech.

Digital Turbine shared research illustrating many [brands' potential to reach affinity audiences](#) through different game formats and that spending balanced with social investment will generate better reach and returns.

Activision Blizzard shared [new segmentation research](#) exploring the structure of the US gaming audience, breaking out [six segments](#) from gaming veterans to casual connectors.



- Each has a different relationship with games and a preferred suite of genres and devices.
- Mobile gaming is near universal, with 86% playing on their device at least once per week.

A key barrier to the effectiveness of in-game ads is the very [focus and attention](#) that other media covert, which hinders the adoption of successful formats in other media as gamers reject messages that [interrupt the flow of their gaming](#) experience.

As the Activision-Blizzard study states, 'all segments share a common value: they appreciate rewards linked to advertisements but dislike when an ad interrupts gameplay.' 57% do not like forced or interruptive ad experiences.

A maturing sector

Despite considerable time spent in gaming environments, infrastructure has lagged, hindering [serious investment by global brands](#), but this is changing.

Brand safety and appropriateness have been critical concerns. A recently announced global initiative between Super League and Common Sense network delivers [safe, age-appropriate advertising](#) for marketers looking to reach youth audiences.

Specialized AdTech platforms for gaming and entertainment, such as [Venatus](#), unlock [investment in new ad formats](#) through an approach focused on sustainable advertising practices that drive results while balancing the needs of users and the community.

The largest online platforms have ad managers that enable various advertisers to adopt best practices, manage inventory, and format delivery. The big gaming platforms, like [Roblox, are now following](#) suit.



The Roblox ads manager guides [brands](#) and [developers](#) to create immersive ad experiences best aligned with users' intentions and an emerging creator economy.

For example, a [Hamilton Simulator](#) in Roblox brings the hit musical to new audiences and delivers a different experience.

Specialist skill sets also improve esports as [publishers get out of hosting events](#) instead of working with companies focused on creating and monetizing immersive live events.

Future paths

Video games are by no means a new sector- OMG has been active for decades, with a specialist gaming unit, [Zero Code](#), operating since 2006, advising clients on how best to engage with this large but still emerging media channel—winning over 80 awards with sector [leading creativity and effectiveness](#).

OMG agencies worldwide have led in tracking gamer profiles and attitudes, including market-leading research across [the APAC region](#).

The OMG UK Futures team recently published '[Avoiding The Regretaverse](#),' a framework for strategically considering the potential of immersive content and how games provide an immediate scalable opportunity.



The [report](#) details how brands should act, delivering value by being [definitive](#), [discerning](#), and [durable](#).

Games have long provided a large global audience that delivers high levels of attention and engagement; for instance, Roblox claims over [210m monthly players](#) alone.

A more mature advertising ecosystem encompassing effective and appropriate targeting, ad serving, engaging native formats that fit with the consumer experience, commerce opportunities, and accurate measurement techniques means that games are [well placed as a strategic lever for growth](#).

As [immersion and AI in games](#) become more sophisticated in the coming years, brands that have [cracked a gaming formula](#) will enjoy a significant competitive advantage.



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