△ liftoff

Mobile Ad Creative Index
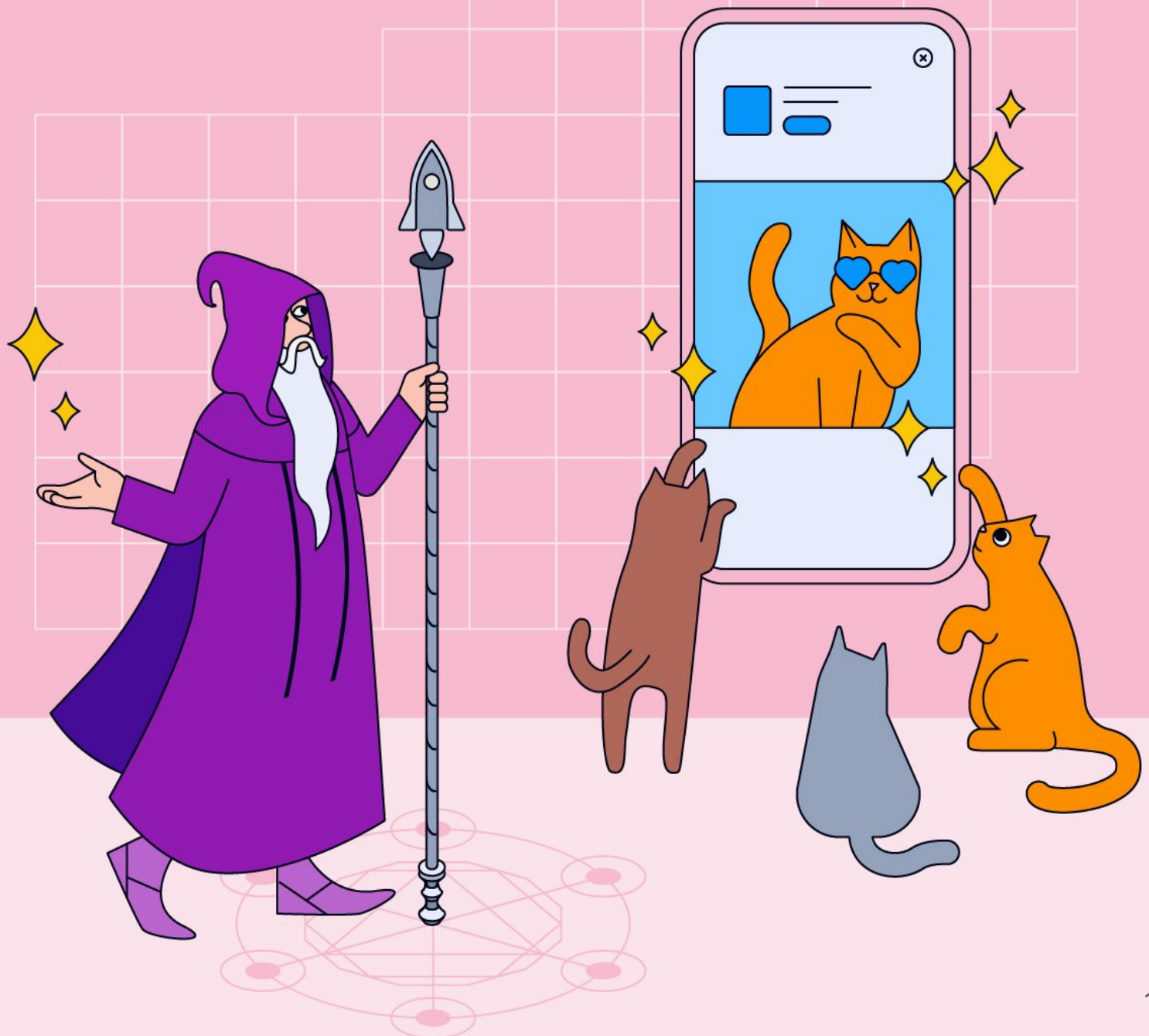
Contents
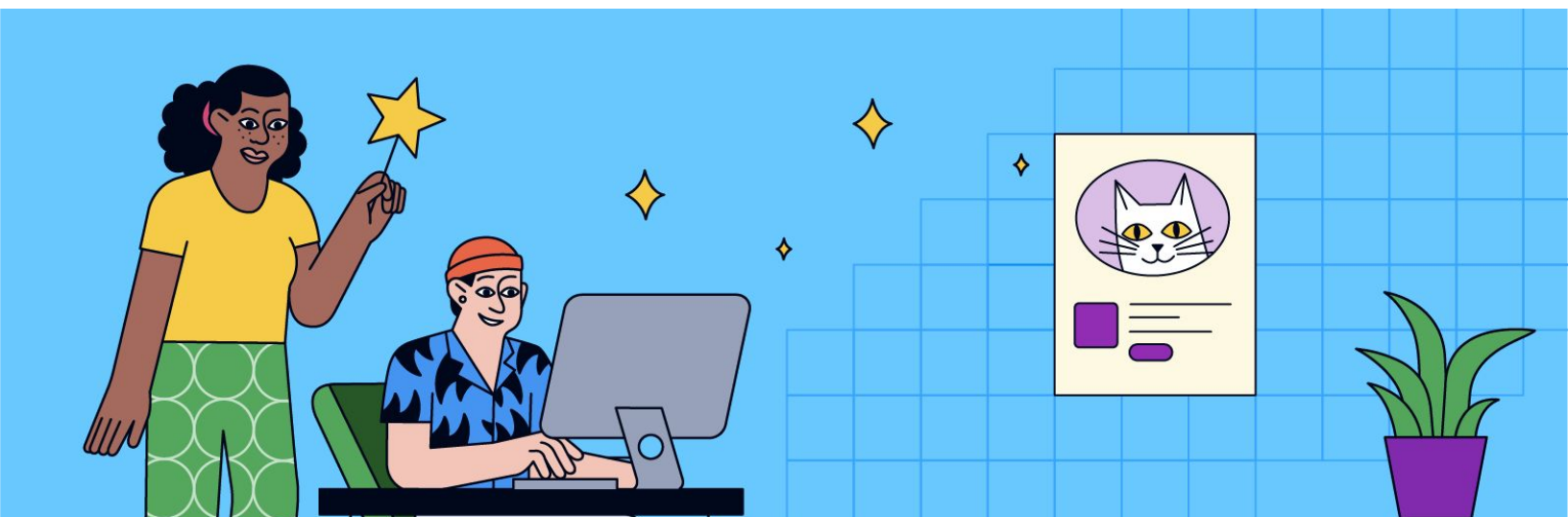
Introduction

2022 was a year of profound macroeconomic change. Inflationary pressures and slowdowns in growth impacted the technology sector as a whole, and mobile marketers entered the new year facing rising costs and reduced budgets. As an industry, mobile advertising also continues to adapt to changes in privacy compliance, from the continued rollout of Apple's SKAN to the GAID deprecation that's just on the horizon.

While challenges lie ahead, there's cause for optimism. Digital marketing spend has hit a snag, but mobile ad revenue around the globe is still projected to grow. Insider Intelligence projects that ad budgets will rebound in the next two years, and advertisers that can continue to spend stand to gain significant market share.

Across all app verticals, creative remains one of the key levers for growth for many advertisers. To attract new users and scale in an uncertain climate, marketers need to think big. It's no longer enough to run business-as-usual campaigns. Advertisers need to tap into what motivates users and communicate the real value their products can bring.

To assist mobile marketers at this unique time, our report provides the latest cost and revenue benchmarks for ad formats across five verticals: gaming, e-commerce, finance, entertainment, and dating & social.

This year, we want to look beyond best practices to the trends driving revenue for advertisers now. Industry pressures can accelerate innovation, and mobile marketers are experimenting and adapting with remarkable success. In the final section of this report, we dive deeply into five trends that are moving the needle: extended ad experiences, taking playables beyond gaming, leveraging gaming motivations, long-form video ads, and user-generated content ads.

Highlights & Methodology

Gaming

With an average CPI of $1.31, playable ads are by far the most cost-effective option for driving installs for gaming apps.

Entertainment

At $5.98 and $1.88 per install, native ads offer the best deals on both iOS and Android.

E-Commerce

For e-commerce apps, banner ads offer the best CPA at $4.13 per purchase and the second-highest install-to-action (ITA) rate at 45%.

Finance

Banner ads are the most lucrative ad format for finance apps on both iOS and Android.

Dating & Social

For dating and social apps, interstitial ads offer the best Day 7 return on ad spend (ROAS) at 44%.

This report is based on data from

Jan 1 2022 - Jan 1 2023
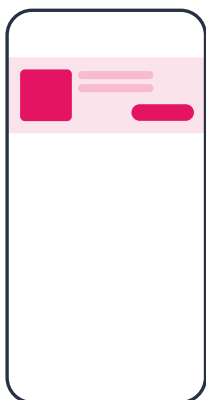
1 Trillion
Impressions
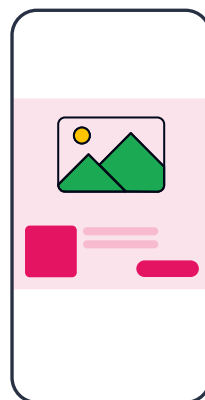
24.5B
Clicks

240M
Installs

Ad Format Definitions

Banner

Traditional ad units served at the bottom or top of a smartphone screen. Banners are one of the few mobile ad formats that can easily be implemented into nearly any mobile app.

Native

Designed to match the form and function of the user experience in which they are placed. The most common native ad formats are in-feed units, paid search units, recommendation widgets, and promoted listings.
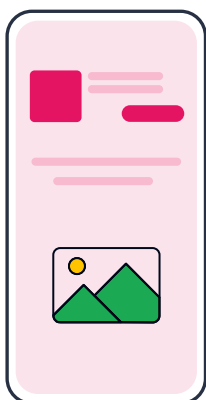
Interstitial

Full-screen ads that appear during transitions within an app. This provides a smooth change between two levels of a mobile game or between two stories in a news app, making them less intrusive and more engaging.

Playable

These interactive ads allow users to play before they buy. Those who view the ad can interact with it as a preview of what they could do in the app. A playable could show the first moments of a game, for example.
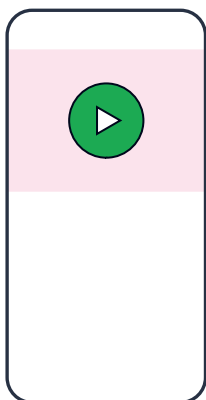
Video

This ad creative uses video to engage audiences. Rewarded video offer users perks and prizes in exchange for watching or interacting with an ad.

Benchmarks & Tips

CPI and Seasonal Trends by Ad Format

CPI by Ad Format, All Verticals

◆ At $1.01, native is the most cost-effective format. But advertisers should remember that their effectiveness will depend on placement and context.

◆ Banner and playable formats come at a similar cost ($1.86 and $1.66, respectively).

◆ Video and interstitial ads cost 3x and 4x more per install, respectively, than native ads.

CPI by Ad Format and Seasonal Trends

Legend: Banner · Interstitial · Native · Playable · Video
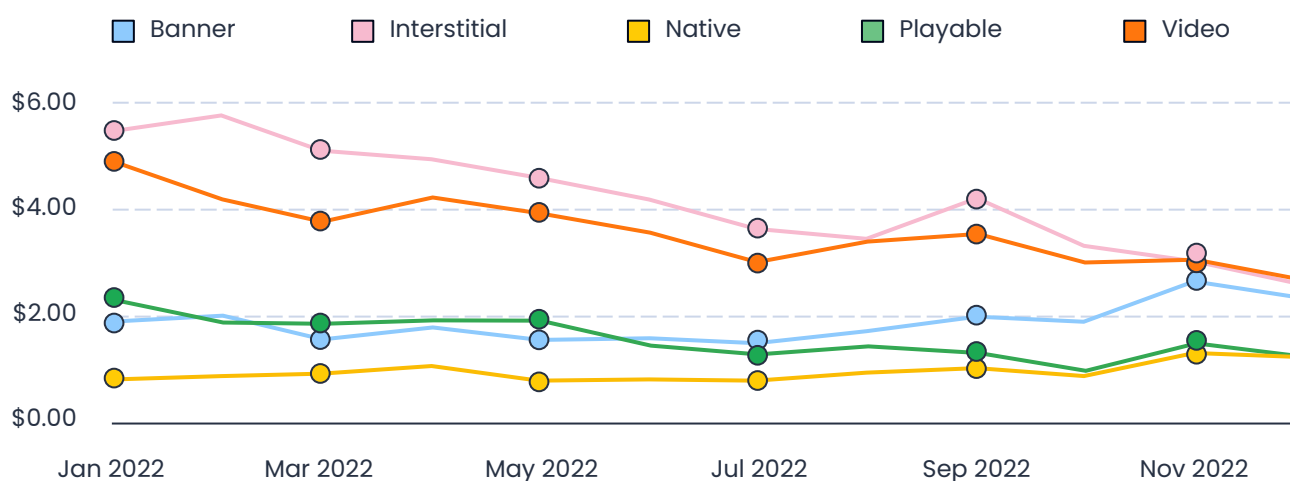
- ◆ Interstitial ads consistently cost more than other ad formats, but CPI for this format hit a 2022 low of $2.60 in December.
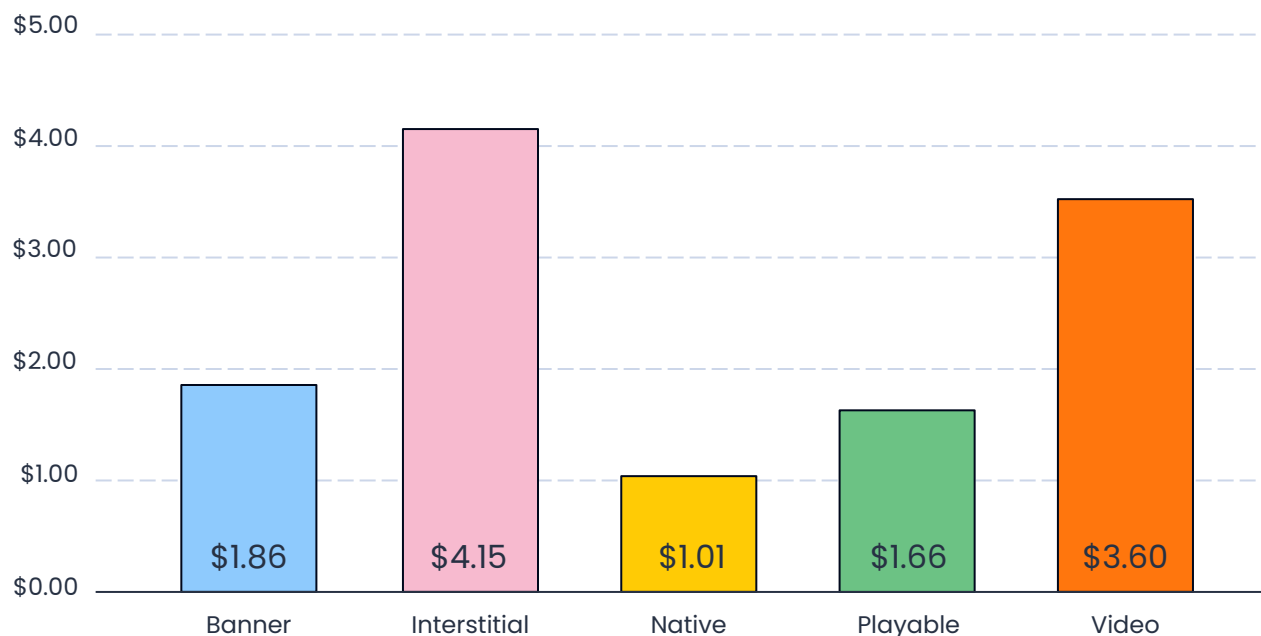
- ◆ Overall, CPI for video and playable ads declined over the course of the year. They also hit annual lows of $2.66 and $1.29 in December.

- ◆ Banner and native ads hovered around $2.00 and $1.00, respectively.
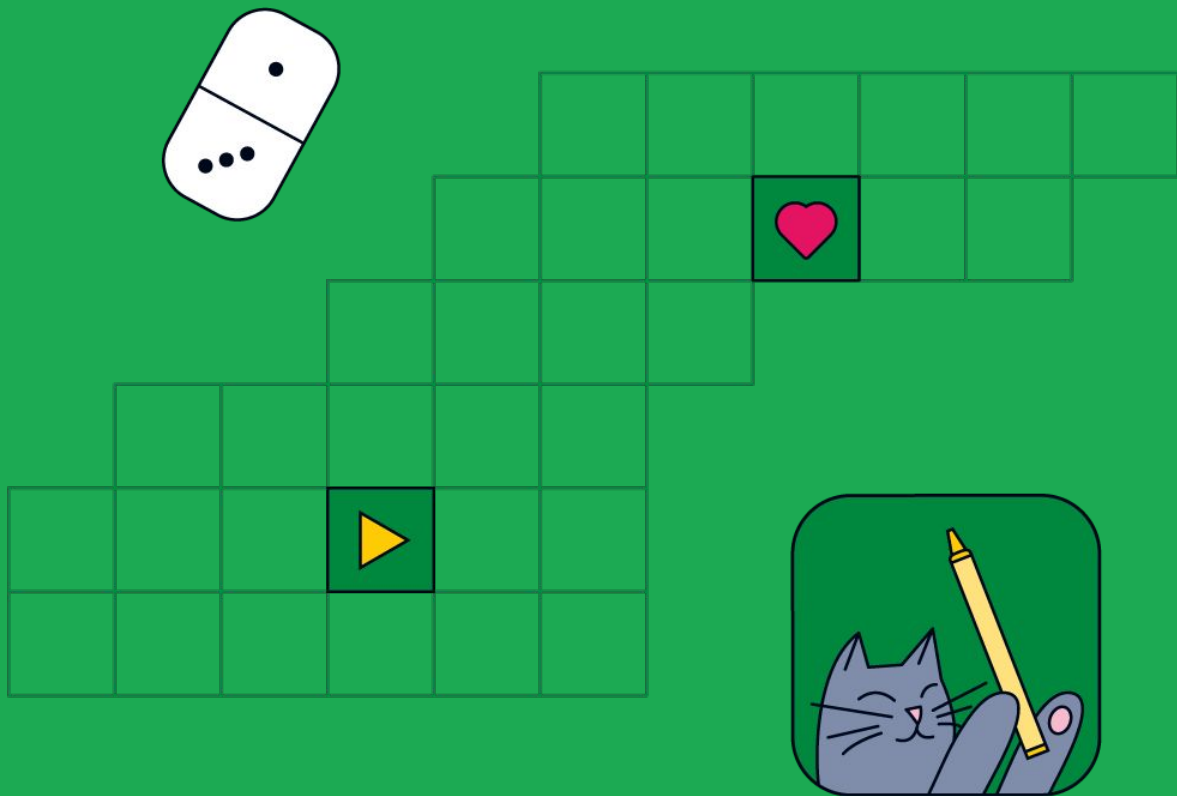
Gaming Benchmarks & Tips

Gaming CPI by Ad Format
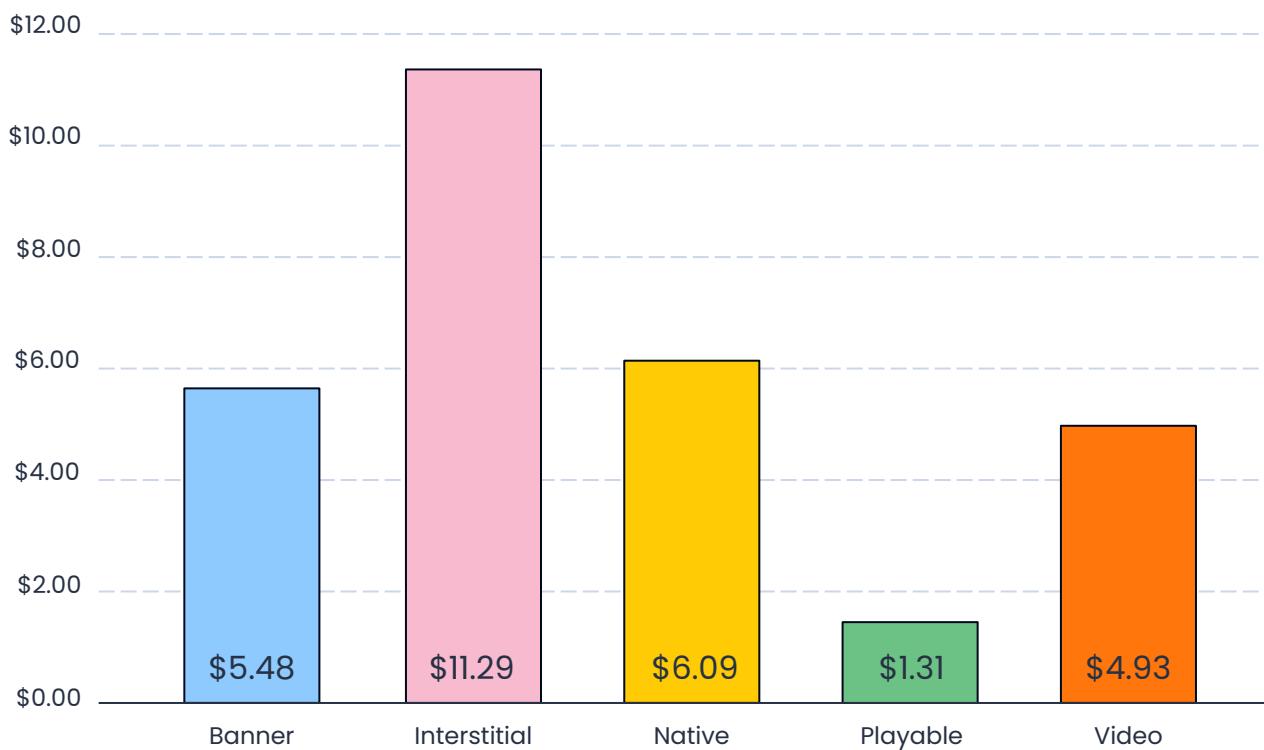
	Banner	Interstitial	Native	Playable	Video
CPI	$5.48	$11.29	$6.09	$1.31	$4.93

◇ With an average CPI of $1.31, playable ads are by far the most cost-effective option for driving installs for gaming apps. This is unsurprising since they offer attractive opportunities for audiences to try before they commit.

◇ Videos are great for showing off user experience, and at $4.93, they offer the next best price per install.

◇ Banner and native ads have similar costs at $5.48 and $6.09, respectively. Interstitial ads are the priciest option at $11.29.

Gaming CPI by Ad Format, Android vs. iOS

Legend: ☐ Gaming on Android ☐ Gaming on iOS

Format	Gaming on Android	Gaming on iOS
Banner	$2.21	$9.49
Interstitial	$8.97	$16.01
Native	$5.46	$6.90
Playable	$0.73	$6.17
Video	$2.48	$9.38
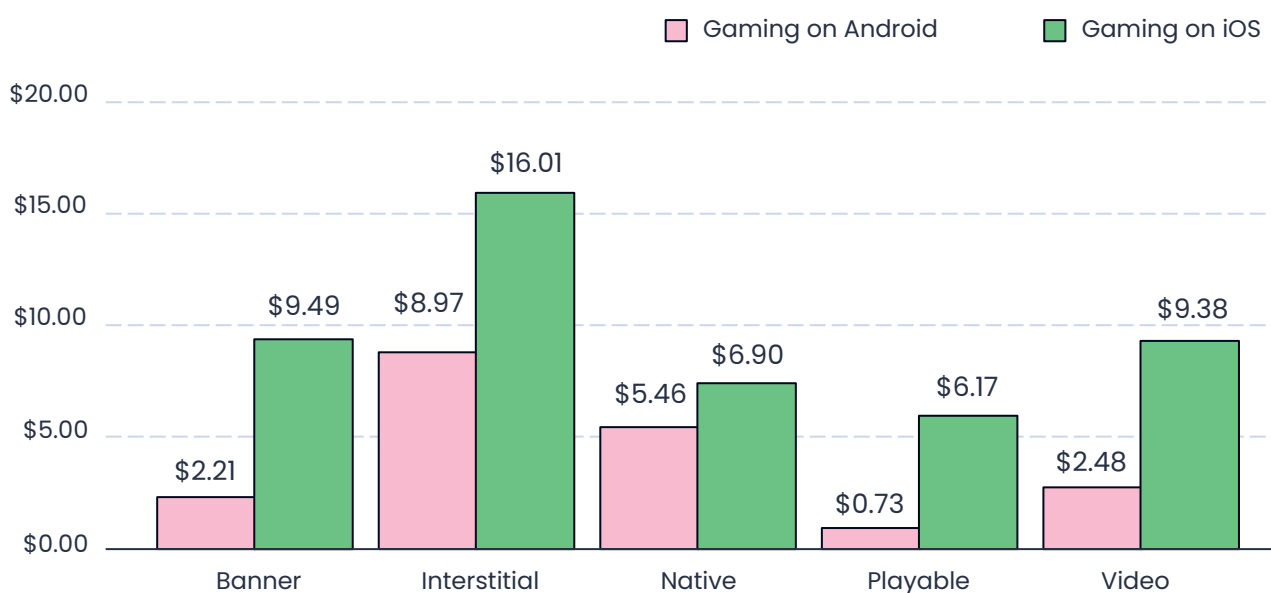
◆ Consistent with the past two years, costs are higher on iOS than on Android across all ad formats. But when comparing costs, it's important to remember that spending on platforms post-install will vary.

◆ The contrast is especially stark for video, banner, and playable ads. Playables cost nearly 9x per install on iOS as they do on Android ($6.17 compared to $0.73).

◆ CPI for native ads are closer across platforms ($5.46 on Android compared to $6.90 on iOS).

Gaming Day 7 ROAS
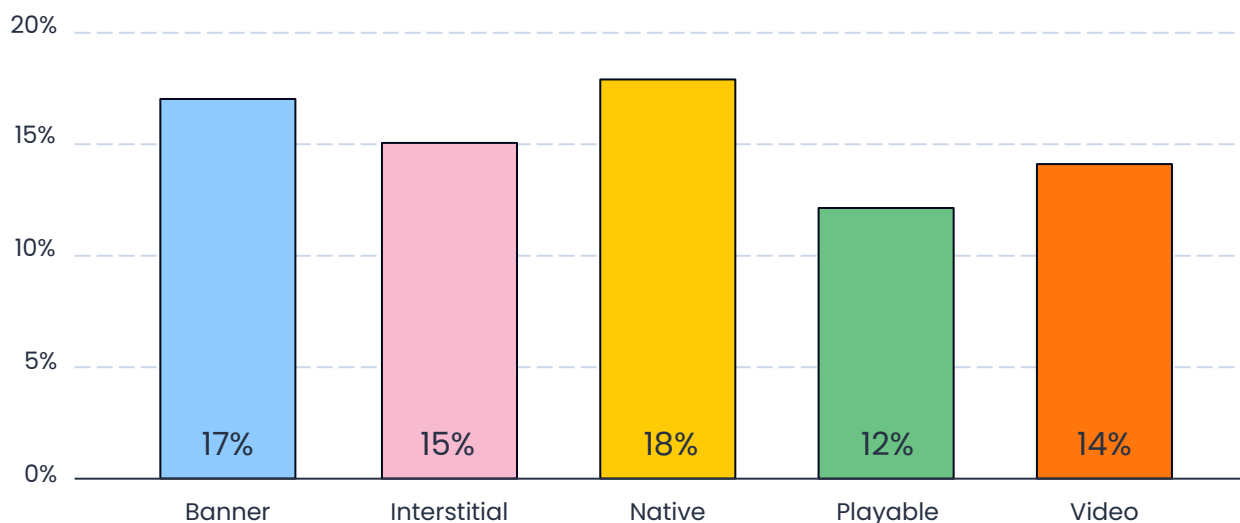
Return on ad spend (ROAS) is a key metric for determining the success of a gaming campaign. We compared Day 7 ROAS across five ad formats and found:

◆ Native ads offer the best D7 ROAS at 18%. Banner ads follow closely at 17%.

◆ While playables are the most cost-effective at driving installs, they offer comparatively lower D7 ROAS at 12%.

◆ Video and interstitial ads offer similar ROAS rates at 14% and 15%, respectively.

Pro Tip

Midcore players want accurate renderings of in-game art styles.

☝ It's tempting to use stylized illustrations to draw attention. But they do not perform as well as actual gameplay assets. Art styles that misrepresent actual user experience are a turnoff.

✌ Players want to know what to expect when they download the game. Using the in-game art style in the ad will attract higher-value users who are more likely to engage.

🖐 When designing interstitial ads, try to show variation. In our experience, users are drawn to the level-up and customization elements of the game.
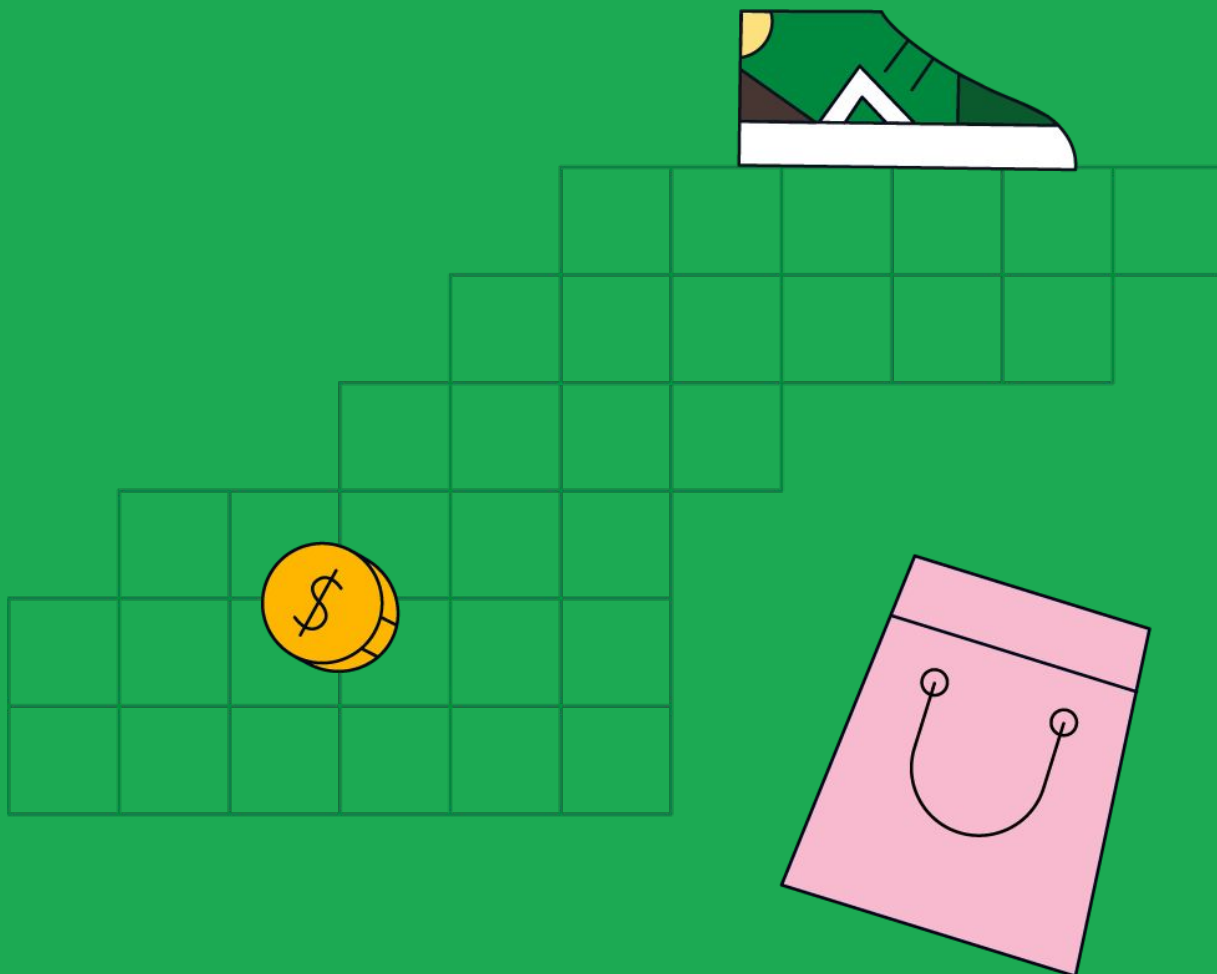
Non-Gaming Benchmarks & Tips

E-commerce CPI by Ad Format

Legend: E-Commerce | Android | iOS

Format	E-Commerce	Android	iOS
Banner	$1.87	$1.65	$2.83
Interstitial	$3.83	$3.74	$4.23
Native	$2.31	$2.25	$2.70
Playable	$4.15	$3.70	$7.93
Video	$3.82	$3.40	$5.66
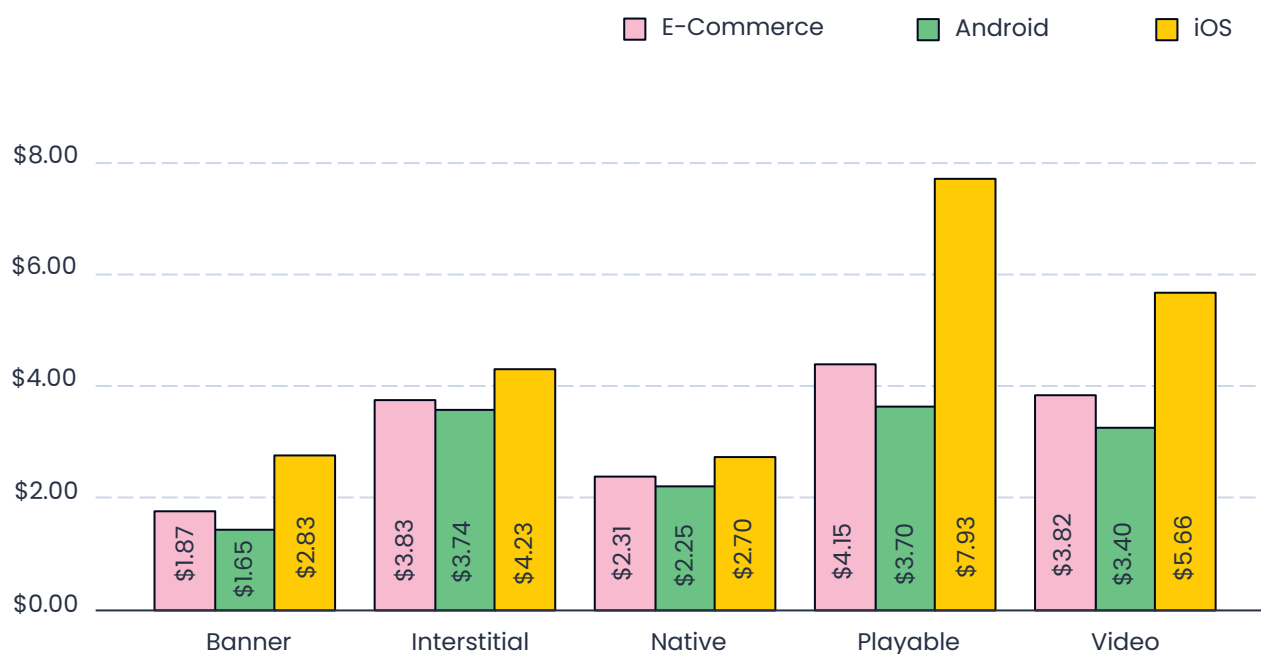
◇ Banner ads offer the best deal per install on Android at $1.65, followed by native ads at $2.25.

◇ Interstitial ads have similar costs for both iOS and Android at $4.23 and $3.74, respectively.

◇ Playables see the biggest difference between platforms. CPI average $3.70 on Android and $7.93 on iOS.

E-commerce CPA, ITA by Ad Format
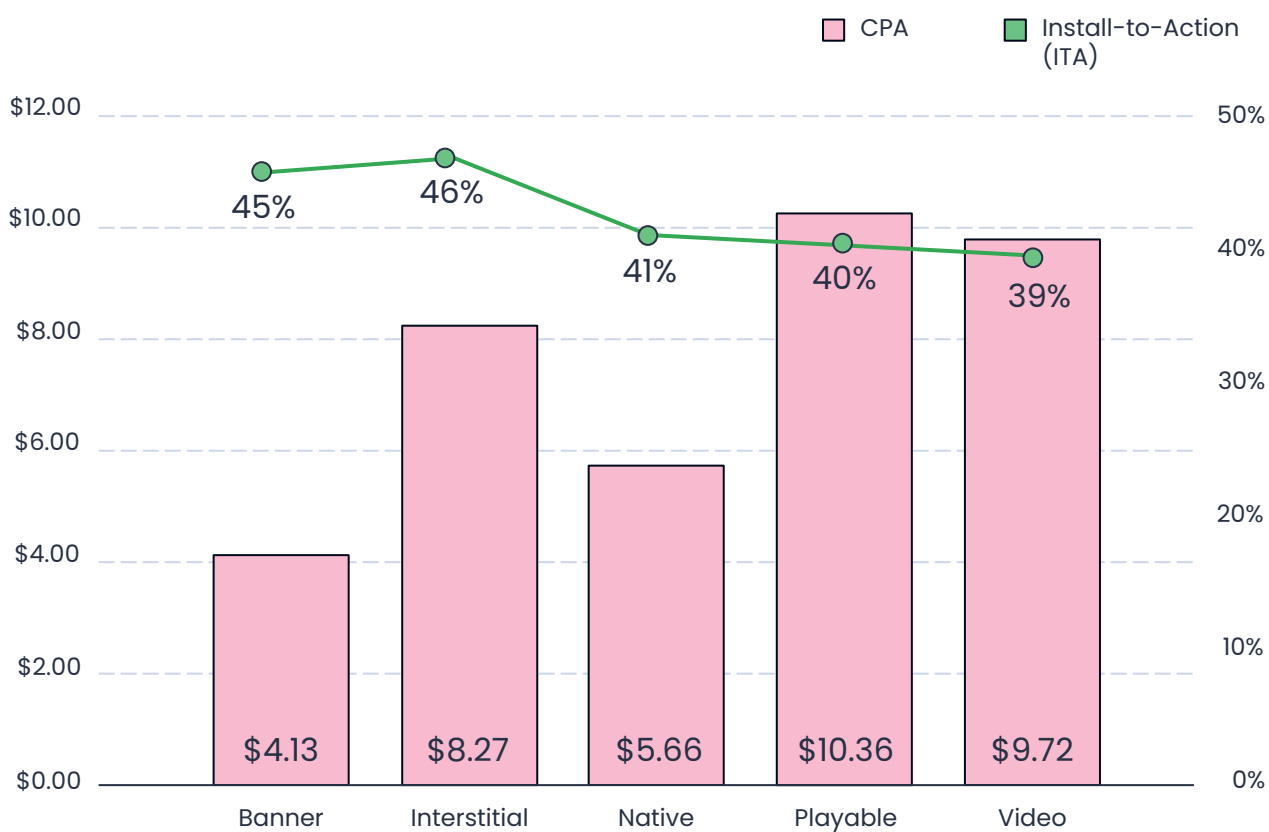
◆ Banner ads offer the best CPA at $4.13 per purchase and the second-highest install-to-action (ITA) rates at 45%.

◆ Playable and video ads have similar CPAs at around $10 per purchase.

◆ ITA hovered around 40-45% for all five formats, with interstitials notching the highest ITA at 46%.

Pro Tip
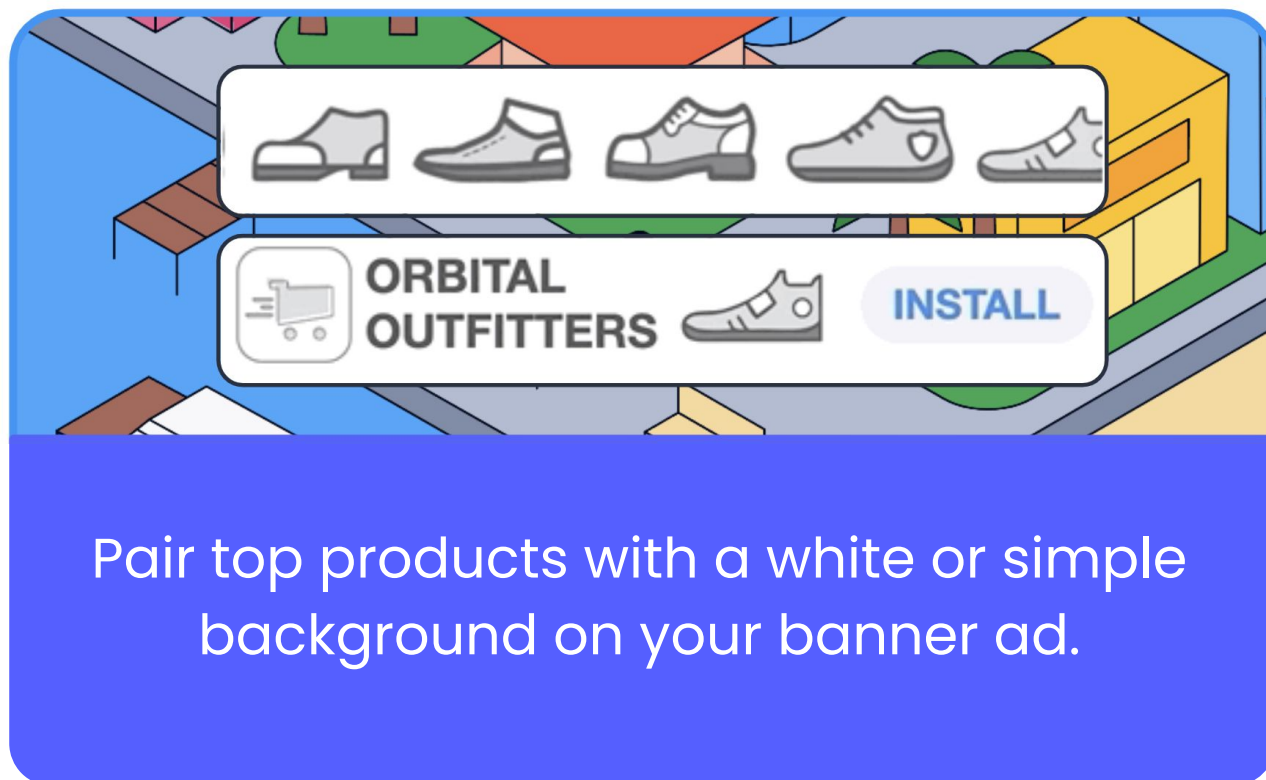
Pair top products with a white or simple background on your banner ad.

In e-commerce ads, your goal is to draw the eye directly to the product. Highlight your products with minimal text and a clean design. Mimic UI that's familiar—the App Store for example. This is more likely to draw clicks.

Try to steer clear of anything too busy. We found that colorful, highly-branded banners are easily ignored as ads. Lifestyle images can also be difficult to interpret in the limited space.

Finance CPI by Ad Format

Legend: Overall (pink) — Android (green) — iOS (yellow)

Ad Format	Overall	Android	iOS
Banner	$2.27	$1.87	$5.22
Interstitial	$3.53	$2.94	$11.21
Native	$2.47	$2.07	$10.55
Video	$4.43	$3.33	$10.66
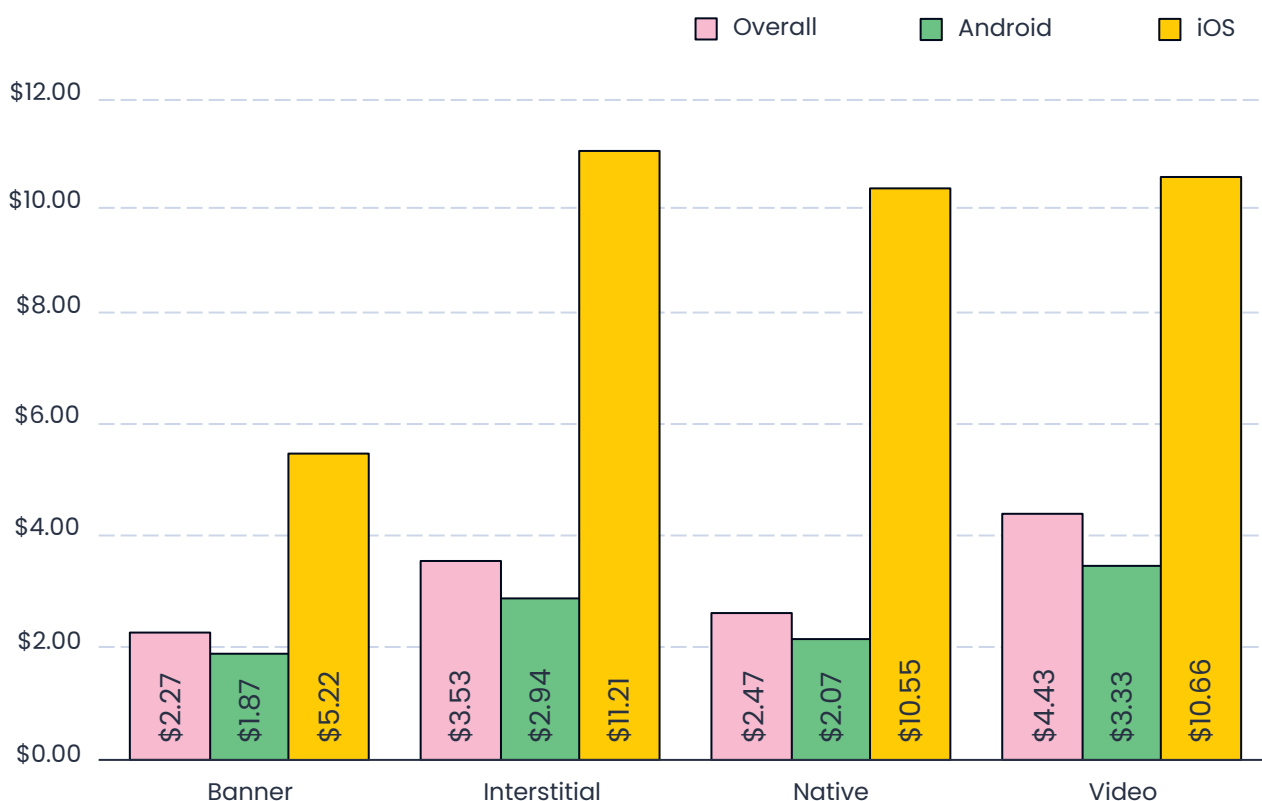
◆ When comparing overall costs, banner and native ads are the best options at $2.27 and $2.47, respectively.

◆ Video ads on iOS cost over 3x as much as they do on Android ($10.66 compared to $3.33 per install).

◆ Banner ads are the most cost-effective ad format on both iOS and Android (at $5.22 and $1.87, respectively).

Pro Tip

When creating video ads for finance apps, keep it simple and highlight the UI.
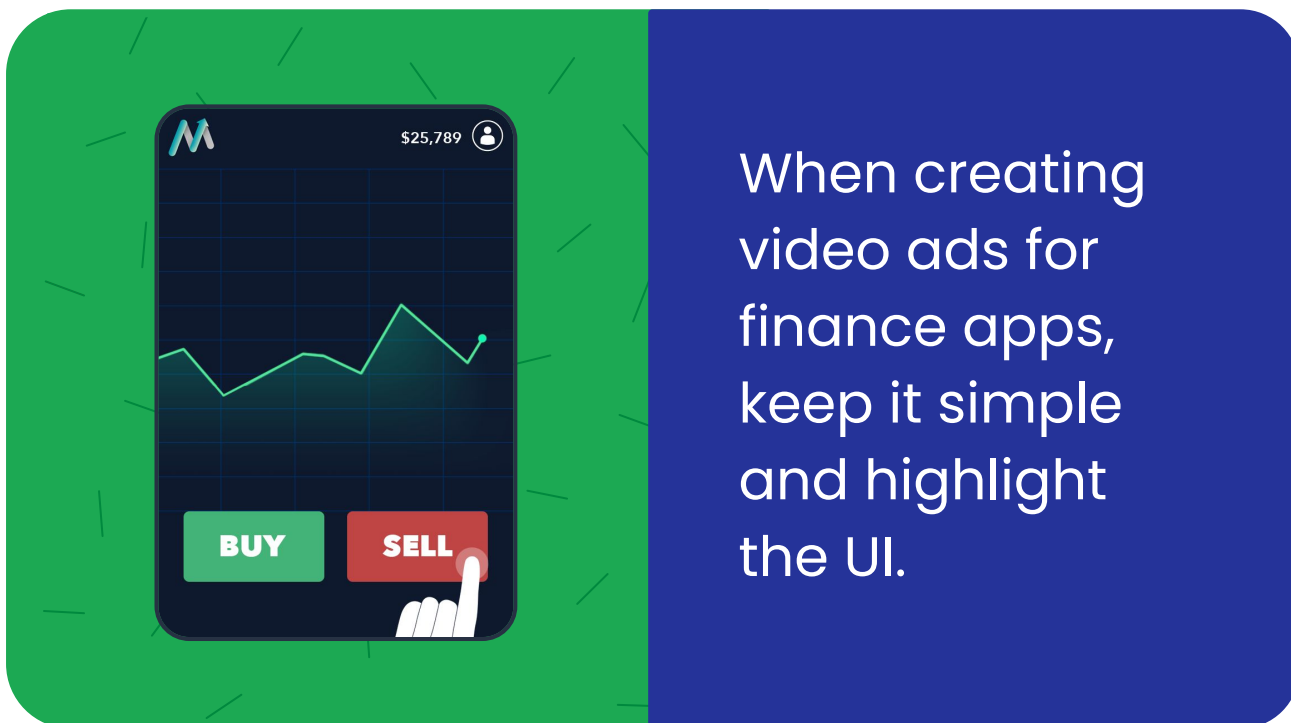
When showing finance apps, we want users to understand the purpose of the app at a glance. Try to avoid heavily story-based ads. Stories—even simple ones—can be confusing on first viewing.

Finance app users want to see an app that's easy to use and brings clear benefits. A successful video focuses on just one feature of the app. For example, an option to buy or sell that's easy to navigate. Show graphs or numbers that are easy to read and entice the viewer with potential gains.

Entertainment CPI by Ad Format

Legend: Overall, Android, iOS

Banner: $4.05 (Overall), $2.04 (Android), $10.13 (iOS)
Native: $3.05 (Overall), $1.88 (Android), $5.98 (iOS)
Video: $5.80 (Overall), $3.60 (Android), $10.13 (iOS)
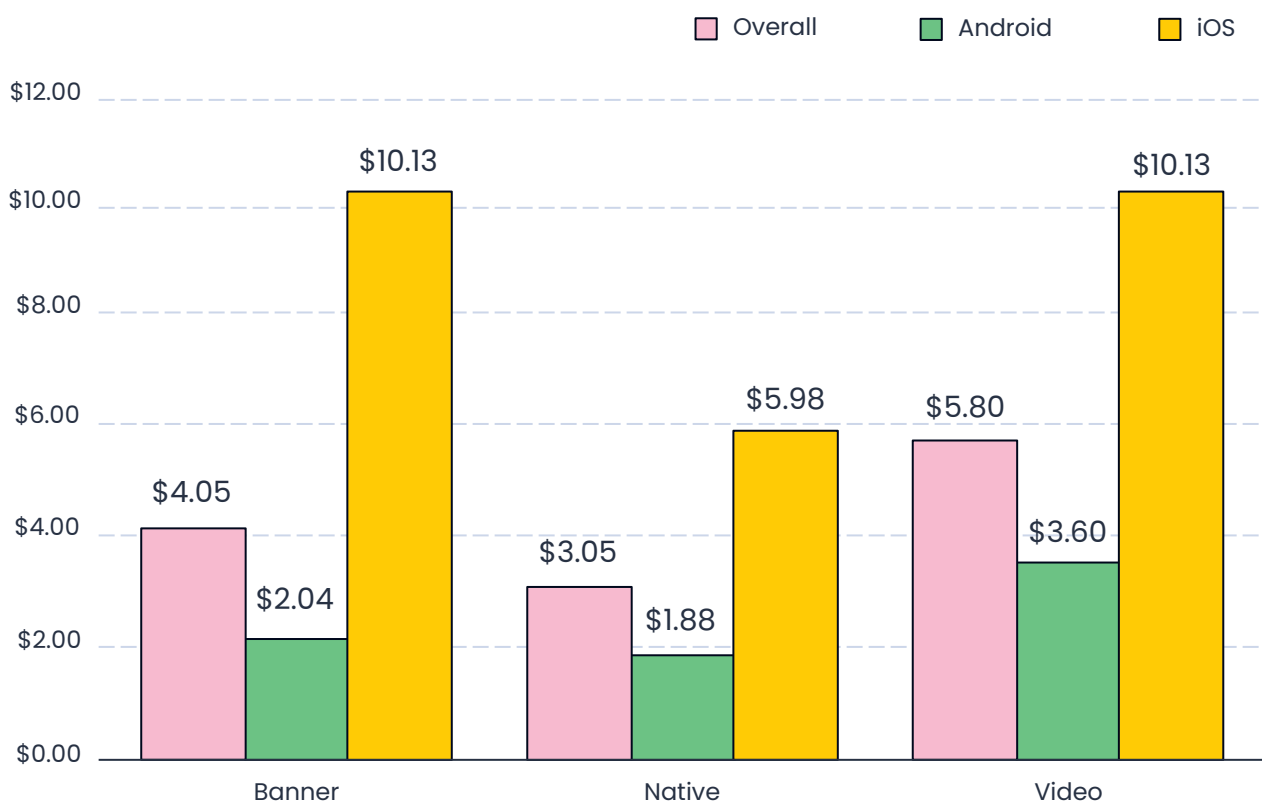
◆ For entertainment apps, native ads are the best option when it comes to cost. CPI are lower on both iOS and Android as well as overall.

◆ Banner and video ads cost the same per install on iOS at $10.13, but banner ads offer a better deal on Android at $2.04.

◆ Overall and on Android, video ads cost nearly twice as much per install as native ads.

Pro Tip

Create interstitial ads that show off how easy the app is to use—this will help users make a decision.
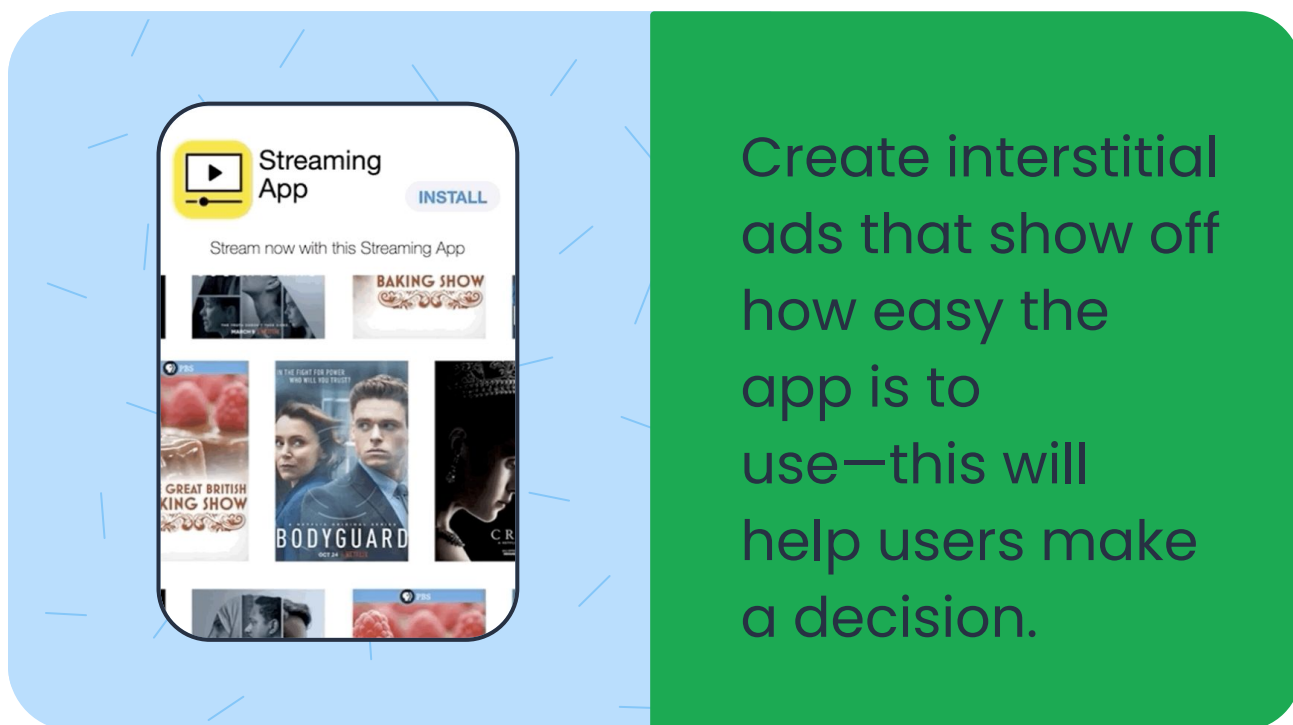
☝️ Unlike in social media marketing, photographs and lifestyle images do not work well as interstitial ads. Your audience wants to see UI in action. For example, if you're a streaming app, show what it looks like when a user is scrolling through titles in different genres. This casts a wider net in terms of user preference and makes your app seem easy to use.

✌️ When showing your UX, avoid showing devices or any unnecessary details. Keep the design simple and clean. This will nudge your user toward a conversion.

Dating & Social CPI by Ad Format

	Banner	Interstitial	Native	Playable	Video
CPI	$0.66	$0.95	$0.44	$3.71	$0.97
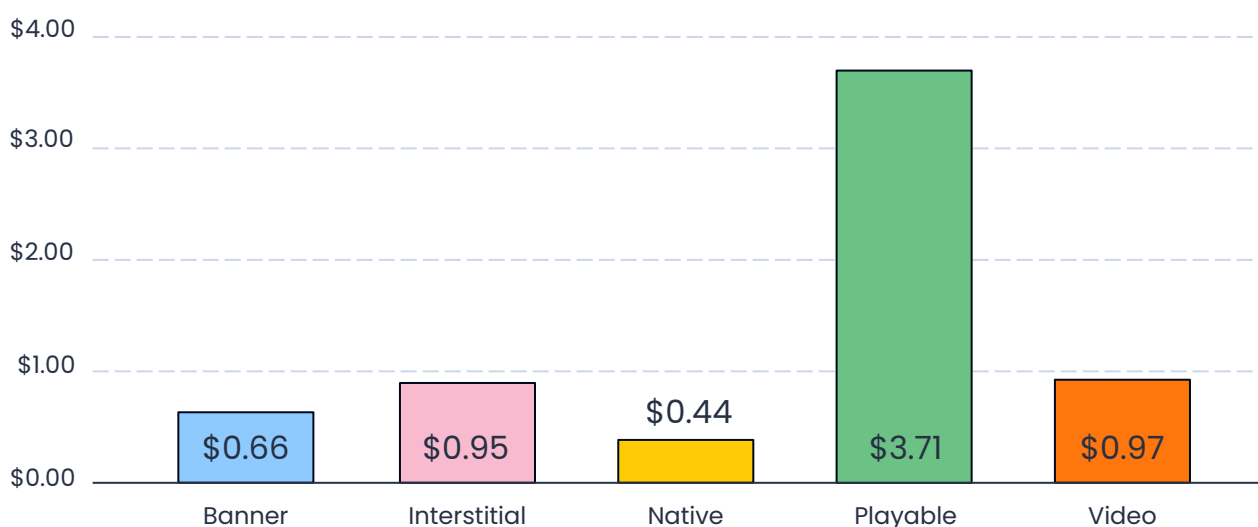
◈ For dating and social apps, native ads offer the best cost per install at $0.44. Playables are the priciest option at $3.71.

◈ Banner ads cost slightly more than native ads but still offer a great deal at $0.66.

◈ Interstitial and video ads cost about the same—both coming in at just under $1.

Dating & Social CPI by Ad Format, Android vs. iOS

Legend: ■ Dating & Social on Android ■ Dating & Social on iOS

Ad Format	Android	iOS
Banner	$0.51	$4.96
Interstitial	$0.80	$6.06
Native	$0.37	$4.76
Playable	$2.67	$6.65
Video	$0.82	$6.43
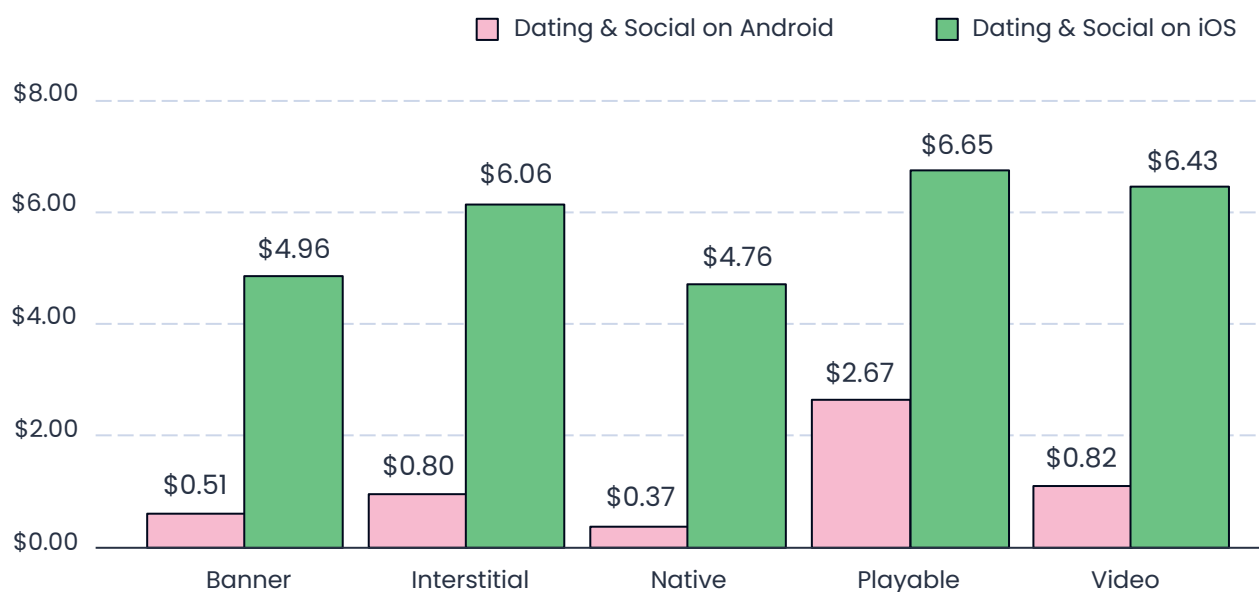
◆ For dating and social apps, the breakdown is clear. Installs on Android cost a lot less across all ad formats than installs on iOS.

◆ Native ads are the most cost-effective option on both platforms. Installs on Android cost over 10x less than on iOS.

◆ Playables are the priciest option on both platforms and cost over 2x as much on iOS than on Android.

◆ Interstitial, playable, and video ads cost have similar costs on iOS.

Dating & Social Day 7 ROAS by Ad Format

Banner	Interstitial	Native	Playable	Video
23%	44%	22%	18%	40%
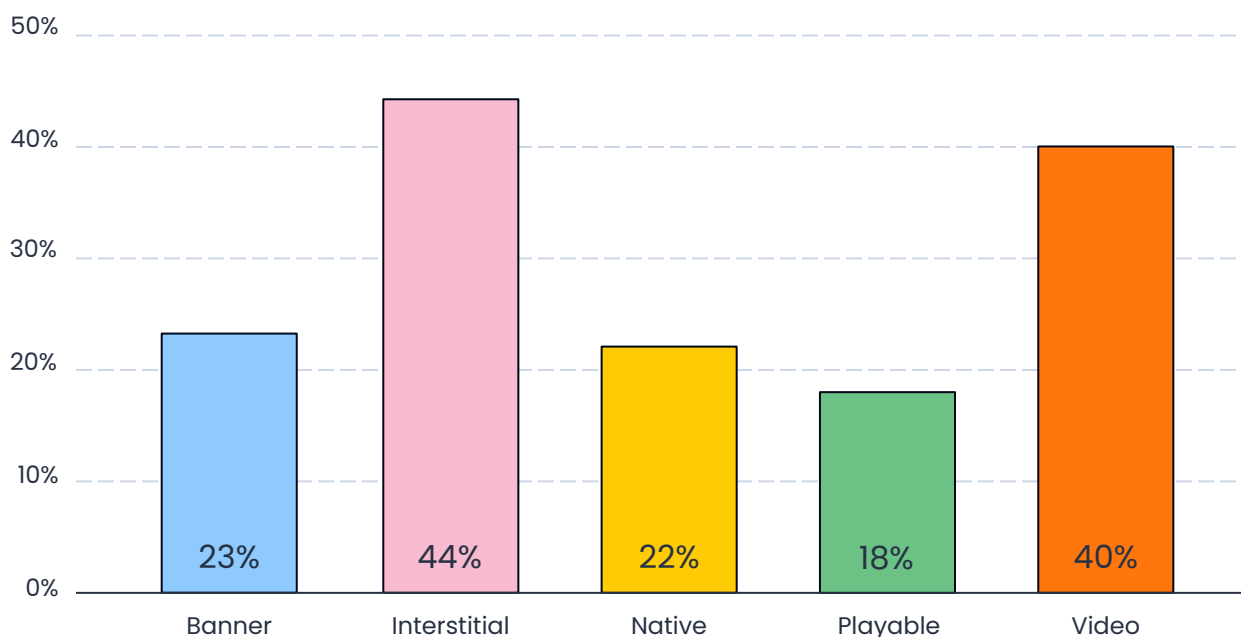
While costs per installs are important, dating and social apps look closely at revenue metrics like ROAS. Here's how D7 ROAS breaks down:

◆ Interstitial ads offer the best D7 ROAS rates at an impressive 44%.

◆ Video ads are close behind at 40%.

◆ While native ads offer the best bang for your buck when it comes to installs, it posts the 4th highest average D7 ROAS at 22%.

Pro Tip

Lob.me
Old fashioned romance lives here

INSTALL

Meet people around you

Set your app apart. Make sure to highlight features such as "matching" or "nearby."
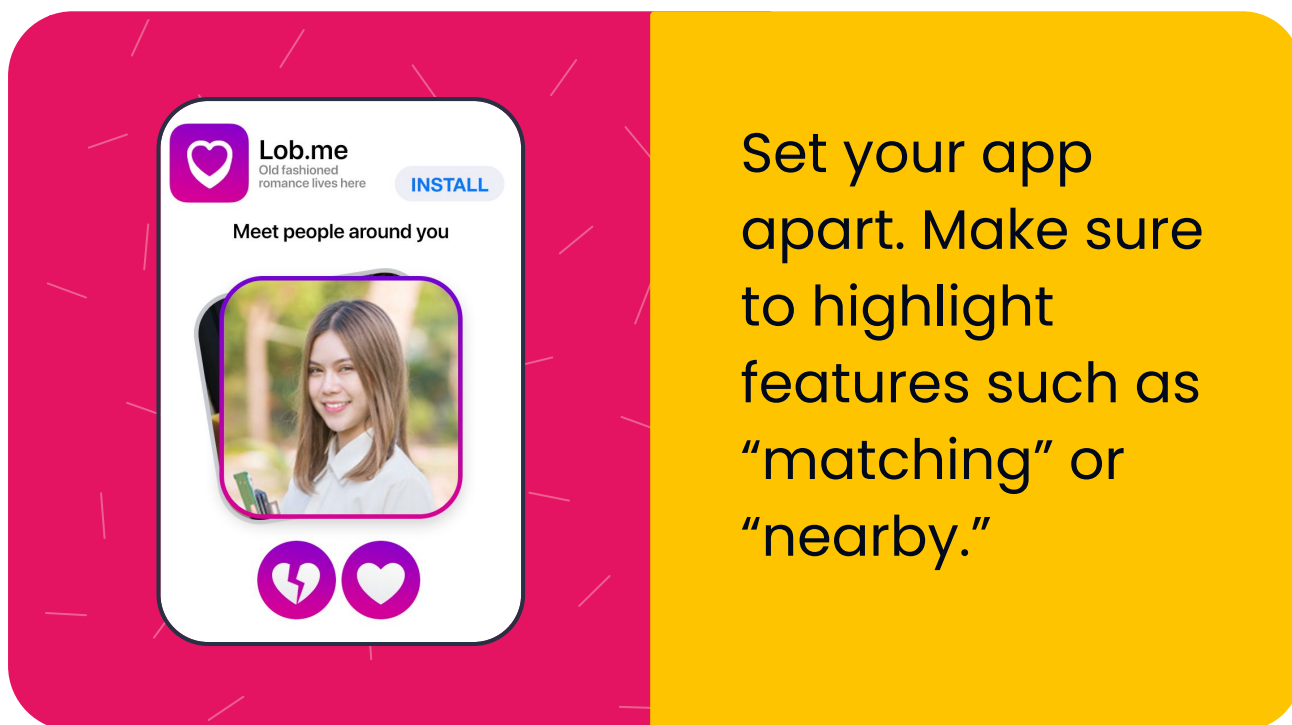
Dating app users are wary of professionally crafted profiles. Stock photography may drag down performance—daters are drawn to authenticity. Grab user attention with attractive, amateur-looking photos that could belong to real profiles.

Users also want apps that are enticing and easy to use. Ads that quickly communicate your app's features at a glance perform better than branded ads. Lead with eye-catching UI features such as a "new match" or "matches nearby."

Trends in Creative

→ Supercharge performance with multi-page ad experiences

→ Take playables beyond gaming

→ Tap into what really motivates gamers

→ For video ads, longer is better

→ Spotlight authenticity with user-generated content
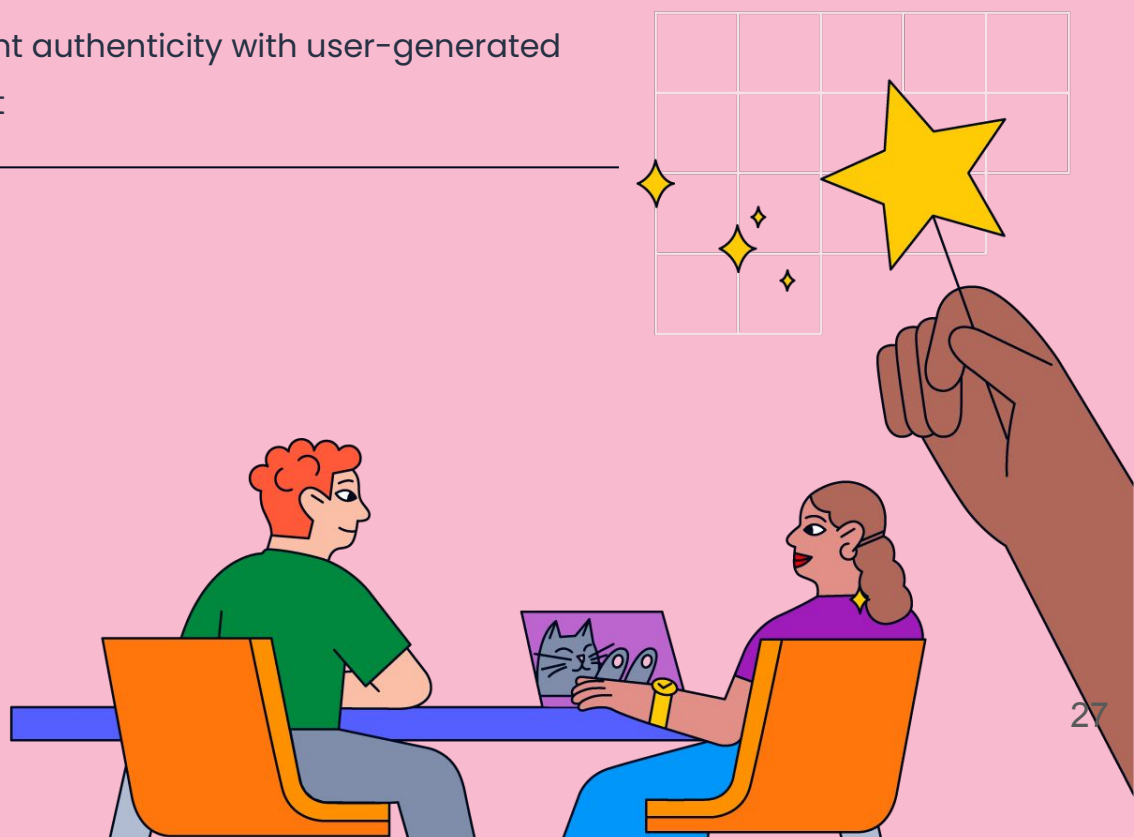
1. Supercharge Performance With Multi-Page Ad Experiences

How do you drive engagement? Business-as-usual gaming ads often combine a video with a playable. We found that adding a third component—a static card with an option to install—can supercharge engagement. Instead of relying on a CTA at the end of the ad, this multi-page ad format gives users two chances to install. Users are taken to a static card after both the video and the playable.

| VIDEO | PLAYABLE | PLAYABLE ENDCARD |
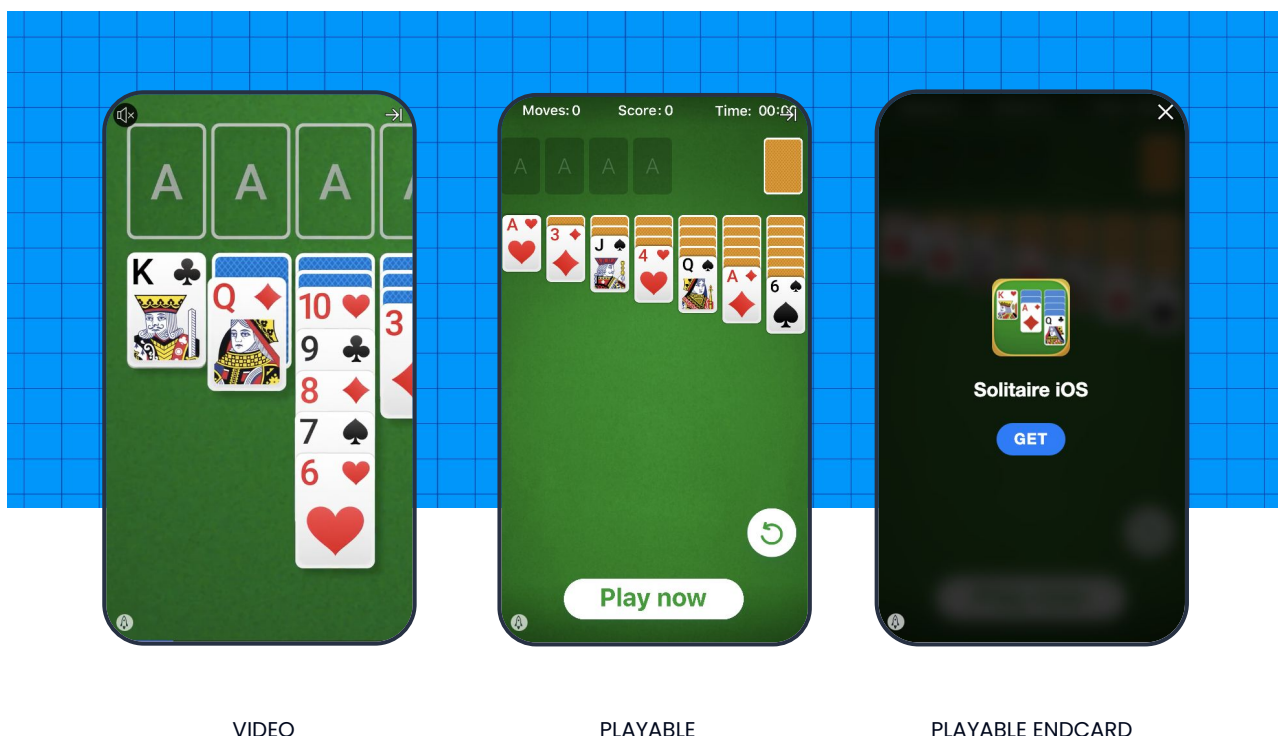
We recommend using this format with rewarded or interstitial ads. For MobilityWare's Solitaire, we combined a winning video with a brief playable snippet of the game. Users are directed to a static end card after the video and after the playable to install Solitaire on iOS.

On Liftoff Direct, we have seen a 20% lift on average in installs per mille (IPM) from multi-page ad experiences.

→ **Learn more about engaging high-quality audiences with Liftoff Direct.**

To get the most from the multi-page ad format, put user experience first.

→ **When creating the endcard, less is more.** Keep user experience simple. The endcard should have nothing more than the app's image and an install button. Users will learn about your value prop and your in-app UI from the video and playable components.

→ **Use transitions to create a frictionless experience.** Introducing a static endcard to your ad should not disrupt the audience experience. If the transition from the video or playable to a static endcard appears too abrupt, bridge the gap. On iOS for example, we've found that combining mockups of the app store with a static endcard can improve engagement. Mockups of the app store are familiar to the user. They create a seamless transition from the ad experience to installing the app directly on a mobile device.

→ **Iterate to find the best combination of video, playable, and endcard.** As with any ad, the fundamentals still apply. The multi-page ad format offers users an added opportunity to engage, but the proof is in the testing. Try different combinations of assets until you find a winner—and iterate for performance improvements.

"The multi-page ad experience is a unique innovation on existing ad formats. It requires little effort on the part of advertisers but can create an outsized performance impact. We've seen the results across the board. Adopting the format offers an opportunity for advertisers to lower costs and scale more easily."

Patrick Keenan
EMEA Growth Lead, Liftoff

2. Take Playables Beyond Gaming

Playables are a rich, interactive ad format that can boost engagement and increase installs. While they've been a staple for gaming apps, they are still underused in other app verticals that stand to benefit.

But this is changing. Finance, dating, and e-commerce apps are adding gamified elements to create customized ad experiences that encourage audience participation.
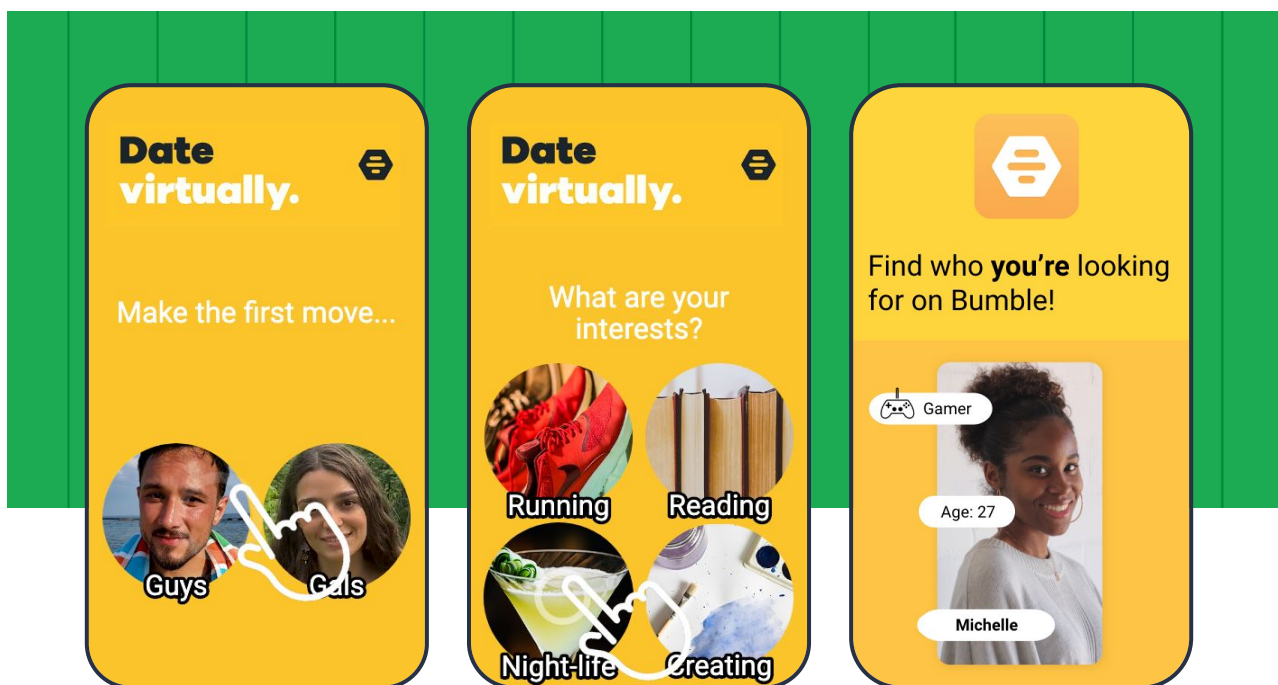
To create playables that outperform the pack, think about what entices an audience to engage with your app. In this Bumble ad, the audience can personalize their experience by selecting who they're looking for and what they enjoy. They not only interact with the ad but experience the thrill of a potential match.

By prompting the user to choose, a well-designed ad gathers insight into who the audience is and what attracts them.

Playables can make ads more personal and more impactful. Here are a few tried-and-true tips to make it work for your app:

→ **Iterate on proven winners.** If you're new to using playables, there's no reason to reinvent the wheel. Start by selecting your winning content—be it product images or videos or UGCs—and adapt it for a playable format by adding an interactive component.

→ **Gamify your winning content.** When adding an interactive element, think about how you might gamify a piece of existing branded content. Start with an enticing video, and let users engage and connect with it by earning a reward or customizing what they see.

→ **Keep assets intact to protect the brand.** With any app, brand integrity is essential, and manipulating branded assets—chopping up a video, for example—can hurt brand perception. Fortunately, most content can be adapted for an interactive experience with minimal changes. For example, if you have an irresistible piece of UGC—simply let it run and add a small, non-intrusive game to enhance engagement.

→ **Leverage playables to learn about your audience.** Playables—quizzes, polls, etc.—are great way to learn about who's watching your ad. For example, instead of showing an ad for one product, make it interactive by letting the user choose between two or three. This way, the audience can customize the ad experience, and the advertiser learns, through user engagement, about their audience.

"Remember that there are ways to test and learn within the ad experience. One of the overlooked benefits of playables is that you can collect data about your audience based on how they engage. This data can then be used to tailor ad experiences and optimize future ad campaigns."

Justin Nield
Associate Manager, Brand Creative, Liftoff

3. Tap Into What Really Motivates Gamers

To drive higher-value gamers at scale, dig into what moves them to try a game—and what keeps them there. Who is the audience? Do they enjoy exploring new worlds, learning a skill, testing new strategies, or simply beating their friends? Whether they're looking for casual Match-3 players or devoted RPG gamers, advertisers that align ads with player motivations can connect with audiences on a deeper level—and keep them coming back.
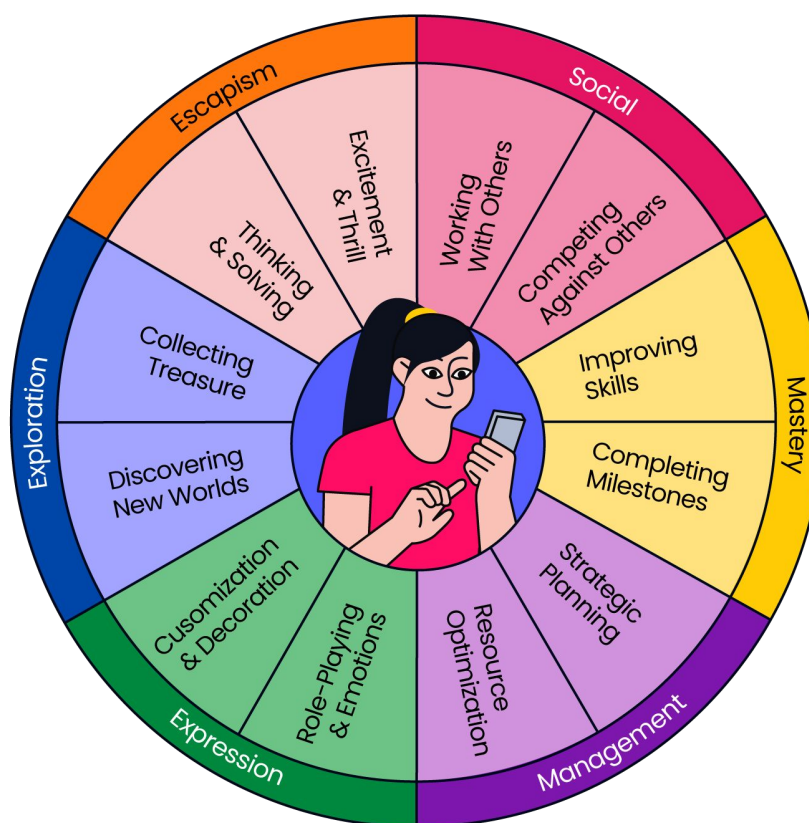
Get player motivation data and insights that help transform your campaigns and boost long-term gains.

→ **Learn more about player motivations from GameRefinery.**

Case Study: Competing With Others

Player motivations let you pinpoint who your audiences are and how to capture their attention. Here's a step-by-step guide of how we keyed into audiences who are fired up by a little competition and boosted performance for a Match-3 game.

STEP 1:

Using GameRefinery's gaming motivation framework, we found that the best performing Match-3 titles increased competitive elements in their games. They clearly appealed to players who want to compete with other people.

STEP 2:

To embrace competitive motivations, we experimented with creating a leaderboard—a visual representation of competing against others.

STEP 3:

We updated top-performing creatives of a popular Match-3 game with a leaderboard at the end. The resulting creatives posted higher numbers of impressions and outperformed other ads that highlight competitive elements.

		Score
1	Pawz_97	71205
2	Skull33	69887
3	John456	65102
4	You	36940

Play
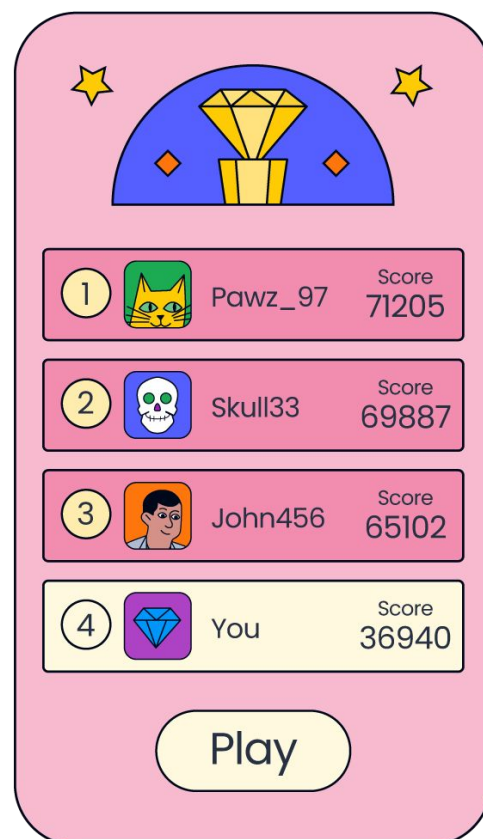
4. For Video Ads, Longer Is Better

Our attention spans may be short, but longer mobile video ads have been proven to be effective. Mobile user acquisition managers are adding longer videos (between 31-60 seconds) to their ad creative arsenal—and seeing material performance gains. Longer ads enable you to tell fuller stories and showcase what your app can really do.

Across Liftoff Accelerate and Direct, our customers are seeing an average of up to 50% higher conversions with longer videos compared to shorter ones.

Mixing and matching your existing video ads is a quick and easy way to create top-performing long-form video ads. You can showcase eye-catching features that leave the viewer curious about the app and eager to try it.

In this longer video ad for Homescapes, Playrix structured the ad around a simple concept—selecting levels. The ad features clips of two different levels from the hit puzzle game, with a brief visual transition between the clips. The video concludes with clips of the "level select" UI that ties the lengthier ad experience together.

Harness the power of longer videos. Here are a few tips for getting more from your video ads:

→ **Start with what you have.** If you've been focused on making short videos, start with your existing 15- and 30-second video ads. Instead of scraping your creative process, combine sections from multiple shorter video ads into one longer video ad. It's a budget-friendly and time-saving alternative to making longer video ads from scratch. Your creative team will thank you for it.

→ **Embrace the art of storytelling.** Don't be afraid to tell a story. Stories are at the heart of high-converting short mobile video ads. While there's only so much you can convey in under 30 seconds, with longer video ads, you'll have up to a minute. Deliver a well-rounded story. Go from a compelling hook or an inciting incident to a satisfying conclusion.

→ **Show off more of what your app does.** You can tell fuller stories with longer video ads and showcase more of your app's unique selling points. By highlighting more features, longer video ads can reach a broader audience than shorter ads. For example, a long-form video ad for a match-3 mobile game can show multiple game mechanics. Show off collecting mechanics that strike a chord with players looking for exploration gameplay, and combine that with a robust player-versus-player mode that appeals to social players.

"In a long-form video ad, an advertiser can demonstrate how deep their game is by showing off more than just one game mechanic. You show that the player can play this and that mechanic. It's a really big advantage that long-form videos offer."

Mark Such
IC Lead Motion, Liftoff

5. Spotlight Authenticity with User Generated Content

User-generated content (UGC)-style video ads typically feature organic content creators with large followings who are an ideal fit for the product. Videos involve creators addressing the camera or directly recommending a particular app to the viewer.

UGC-style video ads have the casual yet sincere feel of smartphone selfie videos popularized by TikTok, Instagram Reels, Snapchat, and other platforms. But instead of running the ads exclusively on social media platforms, find ways to repurpose them for programmatic in-app advertising campaigns.

Across different app verticals, UGC content appeal to users because they come across as authentic. Creators address the camera directly—they ask a question, pose a problem, or just share what they're all about.

→ **Learn more about leveraging UGC from Liftoff Influence.**

Need help building high-performing UGC-style content? Here's how we do it:

→ **Form a close bond.** UGC-style video ads shouldn't feel like an act. Users are less responsive to overly cheerful creators in a studio with professional lighting and fixed camera angles. The best UGC ads have the creator recording the ad on their mobile phone's selfie camera and talking directly into the lens—as if they are on a private video chat with a close friend or family member.

→ **Be the solution to a user's problem.** Although a story can be told in many different ways, we've found that a problem-solution story structure works best for UGC-style video ads. Present a problem and share how that problem makes you feel. Then, present the app as the solution. Tell the user how the app makes you feel and how it solved the problem you described. Lastly, end the ad with a call to action.

→ **Nail the opening.** A strong opener is critical to a UGC-style video ad with a problem-solution structure. Try to avoid an opener with fake energy like, "Hi! Oh my gosh! I have this great information for you." Instead, opt for an opener that builds on a close relationship with the user—"Hey, you guys. I don't know if I've brought this up with you, but I'm obsessed with this new app." Anecdotal hooks are another great way to start the ad. Try opening with something like, "People keep asking me, how do you de-stress after a long day?"

"Over years of working on UGC-style ads at Liftoff, I've learned that it is really important to focus on value propositions—how the person is going to feel when they play or use the app."
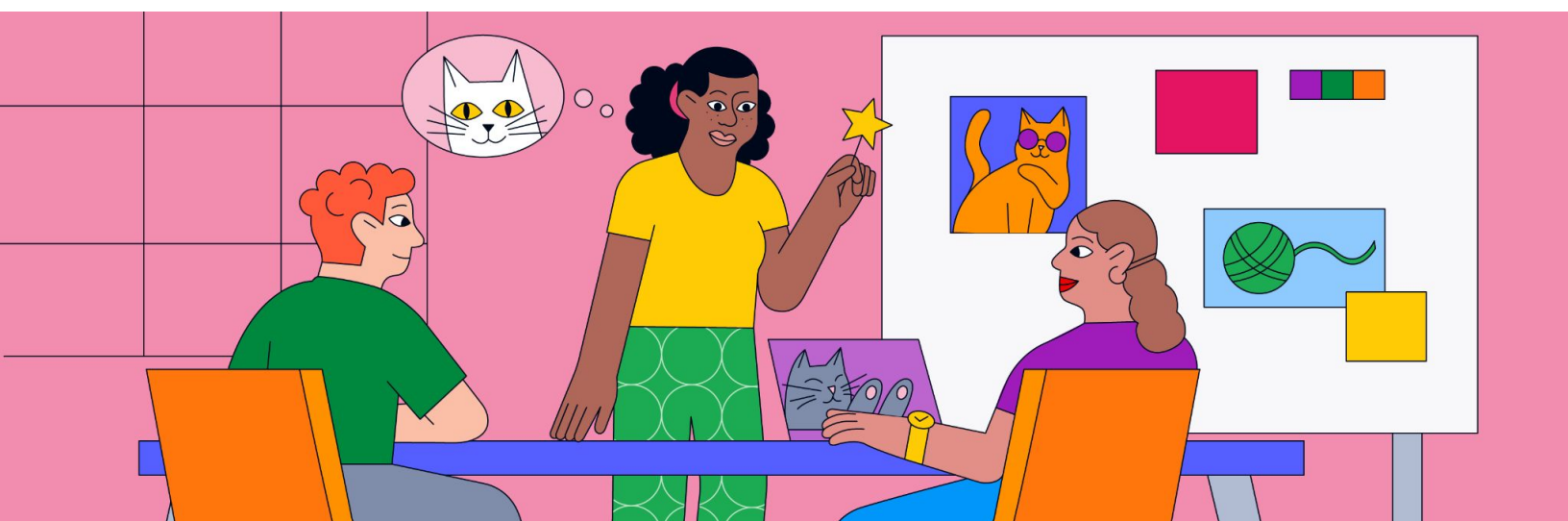
Nicole Danser
Head of Creative, Liftoff Influence

Who is Creative Studio?

Drive better results with winning ad creatives backed by rich data sets, industry expertise, and the latest creative technology.

## Deliver the Most Engaging Ad Experience

Liftoff Creative Studio helps you drive better results with more effective creative decisions fueled by rich data sets, industry expertise, and technology advancements.

Build an emotional connection with the right audience, get data-informed ads designed by experts, and stay ahead of the curve using industry-leading capabilities to deliver the most engaging ad experiences

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Who is GameRefinery?

Build better mobile games with intelligence from GameRefinery, the #1 trusted mobile game intelligence tool.
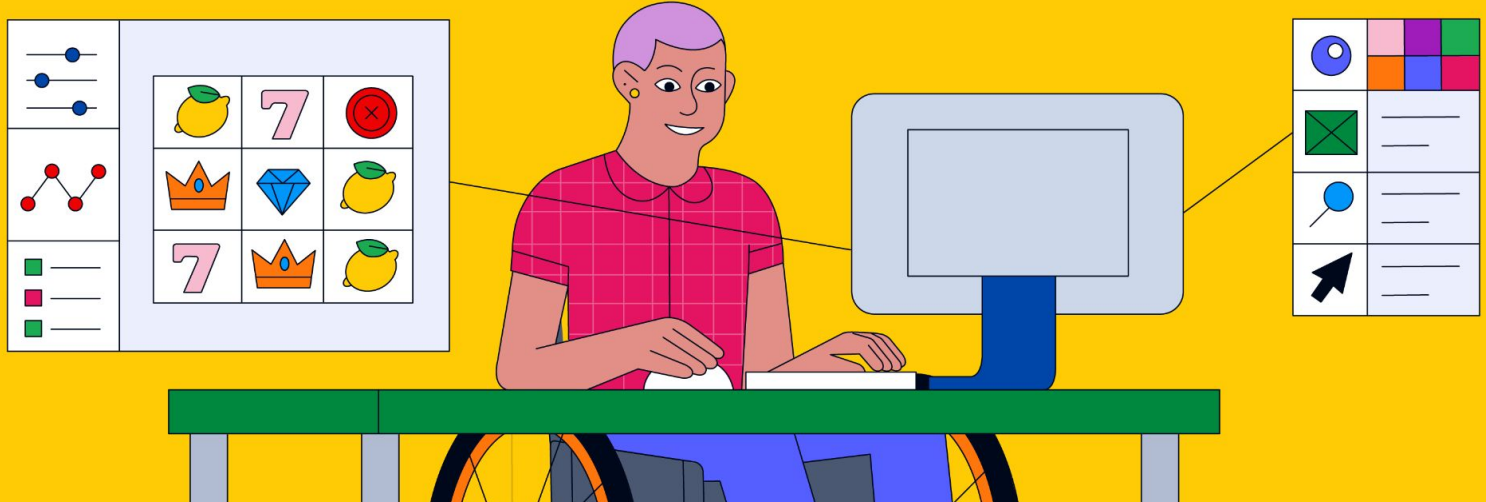
Intelligence to Build Better Games

GameRefinery speaks to game and product teams throughout the development process, from pre-production to LiveOps, to help them build better games. Leverage industry-leading market research, competitor intelligence, and player insights.

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Who is Liftoff?

Liftoff is the leading growth acceleration platform for the mobile industry, helping advertisers, publishers, game developers and DSPs scale revenue growth with solutions to market and monetize mobile apps. Liftoff's solutions, including Accelerate, Direct, Influence, Monetize, Intelligence, and Vungle Exchange, support over 6,600 mobile businesses across 74 countries in sectors such as gaming, social, finance, ecommerce, and entertainment. Founded in 2012 and headquartered in Redwood City, CA, Liftoff has a diverse, global presence.

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