

Playable Ads: The Next Big Thing for Mobile Advertising?

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"Time is money" has never had more meaning than it does today. The "attention economy" has become another challenge for advertisers—particularly on **mobile devices** where users have lower tolerances for attention-grabbing ads. But short attention spans may have met their match in playable ads, which embed games or puzzles into ad units.

"What we're finding is that nobody reads anymore. Everyone wants compelling experiences handed to them on a silver platter," said Michelle Edelman, executive vice president and chief strategy officer at integrated marketing agency Peter Mayer.

Playable ads do just that by allowing users to actively engage with a branded experience or demo a **gaming app** before downloading it instead of passively watching a video.

Early data suggests these methods work, with 28% of US agency professionals surveyed by Fyber citing 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



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

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Google's AdMob launched playable ads for their gaming partners last May, and Facebook launched them in August. In both cases, the ads were mostly used by game developers, but playable ads have potential for other industries.

"It's leveraging the fact that users like to play games," said Ari Brandt, executive vice president of strategic development at Verve. [*Editors Note: As of the publication of this article, Brandt is no longer at Verve.] "You're creating a world where they get to play games with your brand."

As an example, Brandt cited a simple word search that had users find words associated with car characteristics a brand was trying to communicate, such as "fast," "smooth" and "sleek."

Peter Mayer's Edelman described an ad unit that was pitched to a hospital that offered virtual visits to patients. "The ad units interactively quiz people about what's happening with them, using poll technology combined with a bot. Building these technologies together, we should be able to have an ad unit that winds up with a doctor visit."

Ads with multiple engagements create more performance indications, and can be tweaked by marketers as the results roll in. "Advertisers can see where a user taps, how long they engage, or if they are choosing one object over the other," said Anna Su, senior director of video production at Ad Colony.

The downsides: Playable ads are difficult to create and are not supported programmatically.

"It's still a bit of the Wild West. We're dealing with a lot of limitations and trying to make the creative and tech move forward together," Su said.