

# 2025 Mobile Ad Creative Index

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## UGC A Key Differentiator for Top Apps

Top consumer apps increase share of spend on UGC by 11% YoY.

## Count on Interactive Ads With a Twist

Top apps spend more on interactive—but it's the innovations on familiar concepts that drive results.

## Tap into player motivations for better Metaplay ads

Metaplay ads are all the rage—and tapping into user motivation can improve their ROI.

# Introduction

A lot can change in just a few years. As we began reflecting on the latest trends in mobile ad creative, we saw a clear underlying theme. While none of the creative concepts that excite us today are specific to AI, many would not have achieved their scale and impact without what the new technology can do. AI tools and processes are now part of everyday use for our creative team, accelerating innovation cycles and transforming ad creative production, testing, and optimization.

While AI holds abundant long-term promise, we know that in this business, it's not about faraway visions—it's about finding where mobile advertisers can allocate spend now and see an outsized impact. That's why this year, we focus on six creative concepts that are performing and reaching scale for our top-spending games and apps and are being embraced by other advertisers on the ascent. Along the way, we contextualize the turn-key role of AI in unlocking their achievements.

From doubling down on interactive ads to new approaches to UGC to customized ad experiences that respond to user behavior, top apps and games are redefining the boundaries—and the baseline—of what ad experiences can look and feel like. In their story, AI tools are powerful amplifiers that deliver insights, scale, and efficiency.

“Today’s creative landscape is shaped by a single, powerful truth: attention is the commodity, and brands, games, and influencers are all vying for it. The results are not always subtle. But great mobile ad experiences can earn attention by aligning context with behavior. As ad formats become richer and AI expands our ability to personalize and adapt creatives at scale, we’re able to unlock new insights into user behavior and motivation. We see users spend meaningful stretches with the right content, sometimes 60 to 90 seconds when the ad feels personal or prompts meaningful participation. This isn’t just a better way to advertise—it’s a better way to tell stories and the most exciting brief we’ve had in years.”

Yann Zeller

Chief of Staff Creative, Liftoff

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## Methodology

This report is based on:

1.1B

Installs

4.7T

Impressions

263B

Clicks

Measurements are based on impressions, installs, and ad spend data from Liftoff, collected over 54 months, from January 2023 to May 31, 2025.

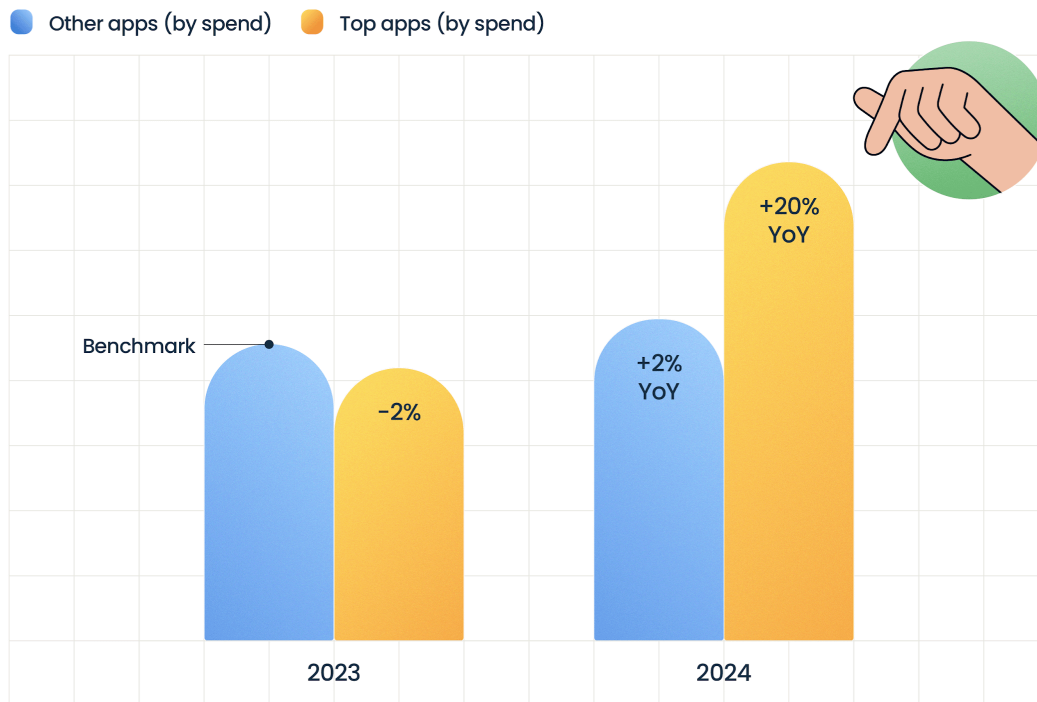
Top spending apps are defined as Liftoff spenders over a defined threshold in the given period.

# 1. Consumer Apps Go Interactive With Fresh Twists

As the consumer app market expands, the competition for user attention is also heating up. Sensor Tower data shows that consumers are spending more time in apps, and what's more, their time is becoming more valuable through improved monetization. IAP revenue for apps skyrocketed during the past 10 years, scaling from \$3.5 billion in 2014 to more than \$69 billion in 2024.

To attract and retain this valuable attention, app advertisers are turning to interactive ads for consistent, reliable engagement. Year-over-year (YoY), we've seen a significant boost in share of spend on interactive ads for consumer apps.

## Share of spend on interactive ads by year



*\*Graph compares share of spend on interactive ads for top-spending and non-top-spending advertisers between January 2023 and December 2024.*

Just two years ago, top spenders allocated marginally less of their ad spend on interactive ads than all other apps. This changed dramatically in 2024. While the share of spend on interactive ads grew only 2% YoY for the rest of the field, the share of spend for top apps grew an incredible 20%..

## New Takes on Familiar Concepts

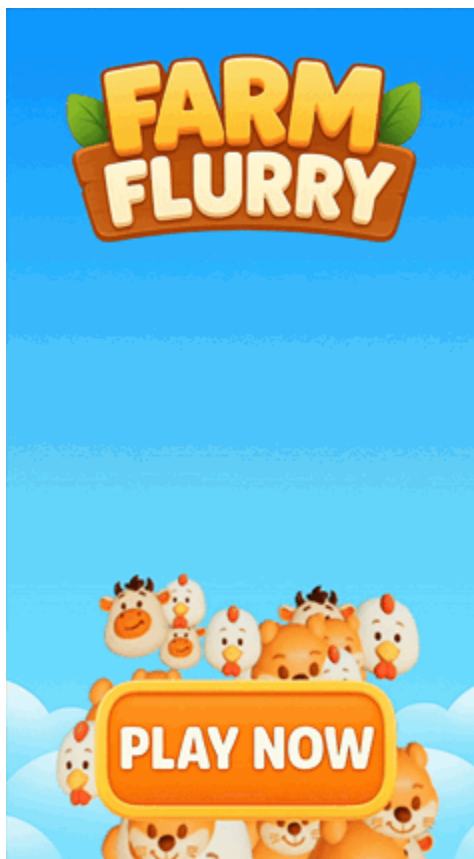
As interactive ads become more ubiquitous, ad fatigue can also set in, dampening engagement. Evergreen interactive concepts like social scrollers, carousels, and scratch-offs have long been reliable performers, but the familiarity of their UI means they can easily get lost in the shuffle.

Instead of designing from scratch, top advertisers are innovating on winning concepts to stay ahead. Adding a 3D design to the carousel, for example, can spark users' curiosity and combat ad fatigue.



Alternatively, adding a video to a high-performing social scroller with static assets can immediately boost engagement by giving users more dynamic content to respond to.

Here's where AI can make an impact. As gen AI tools move closer to fully autonomous asset creation, ample opportunities exist to experiment with supercharging your best-performing assets. Instead of building from scratch, use them to enhance and scale.



Over the past year, we've seen AI tools improve interactive ads at scale by taking assets from 2D to 3D or adding gentle motion to a static asset. The result is an attention-grabbing upgrade to a previously flat visual. With AI, you can quickly

iterate on a concept and A/B test against perennial winners, making it easier to scale.

## 2. Crypto Apps and Sports Betting Apps Capitalize on FOMO With Dynamic Content

In the past few years, sports betting and crypto-trading have gone from niche activities to widespread hobbies that are here to stay. As these apps continue to go from strength to strength, their ads have become masterclasses in tapping into a key motivation behind conversions—the fear of missing out (FOMO).

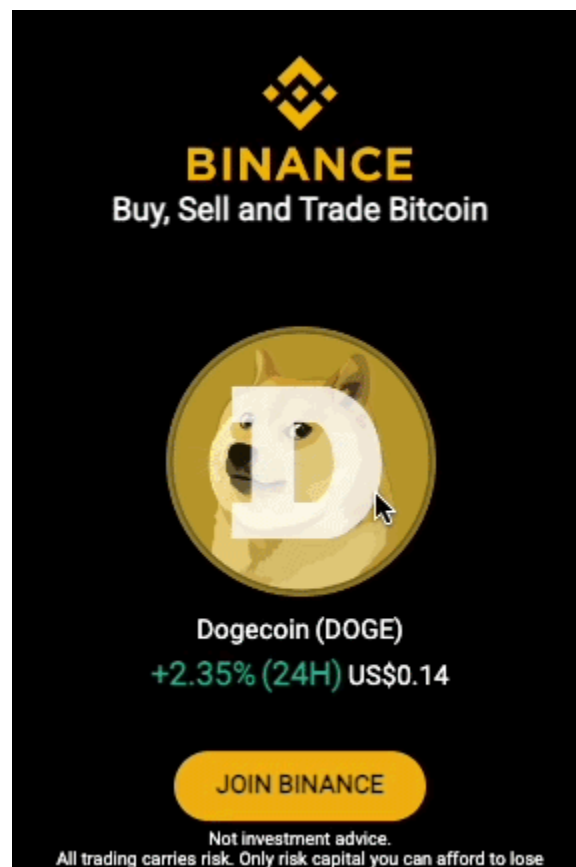
Ads that showcase limited-time opportunities, such as special odds or prices during popular sports events or a market dip, are powerful motivators for first-time installs or engagement. Most importantly, they pave the way to repeated, habitual interactions that maximize ROAS and LTV.

The rewards are high for getting it right. Fortunately, there are many levers sports betting and crypto apps can pull to make sure their dynamic content reaches the right target audience. Here are a few that work:

- Supplement the latest odds with eye-catching CTAs like “Bet Now.” This can instantly boost results. We’ve seen a 93% installs-per-mille (IPM) uplift on average for banner ads.
- If new users are hesitating, adding a bonus or reward to dynamic content can trigger a conversion.
- As we’ve said above, keep it interactive. Adding an interactive element like a scratcher can increase engagement.
- When necessary, make the most of non-full-screen ads. Supplement higher-cost interstitial ads with banners to deliver the most impact in a short period.

## Case Study: Binance

Crypto trading giant Binance, for example, saw gains from dynamic ads that showed coveted currencies going up in price. Audiences were enticed by time-sensitive growth and enjoyed the simulated excitement of watching assets go up in value.



Liftoff Creative team built on the momentum by creating versatile banner ads featuring bar loaders and coin carousels.

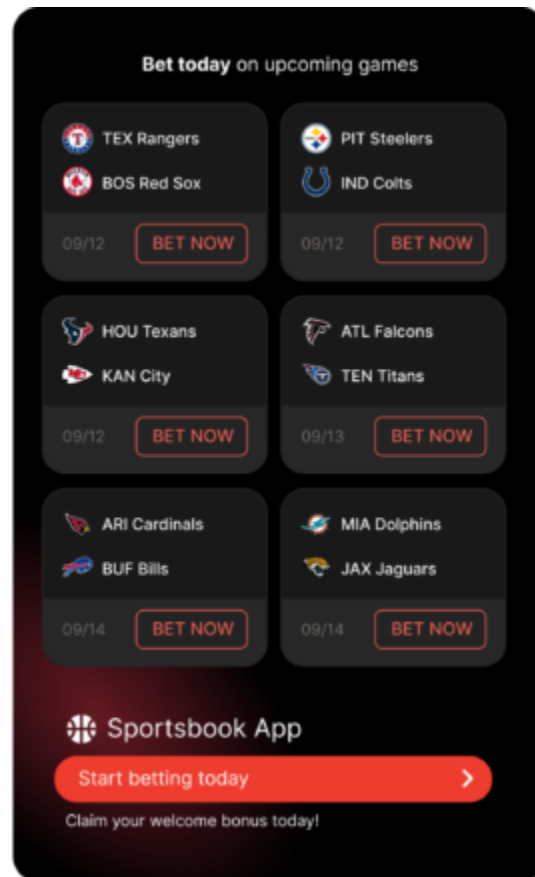


The new ads displayed well-known trending cryptocurrency coins such as Ethereum and Dogecoin. The new designs quickly increased new user installs.

→ [Read the full case study](#)



## Spotlight: Product Ads for Sports Betting



Designed for companies that want to display dynamic content, Liftoff's Product Ads allow advertisers to deliver a unique experience by category, geo, and audience segments, and leverage deep links to direct users to specific product pages.

These ads dynamically generate creatives showcasing schedules, betting odds, or specific matchups and even combine near-live odds with schedules to drive immediate betting action. Sports betting apps can display tailored Game Day Creatives for specific geos and audiences.

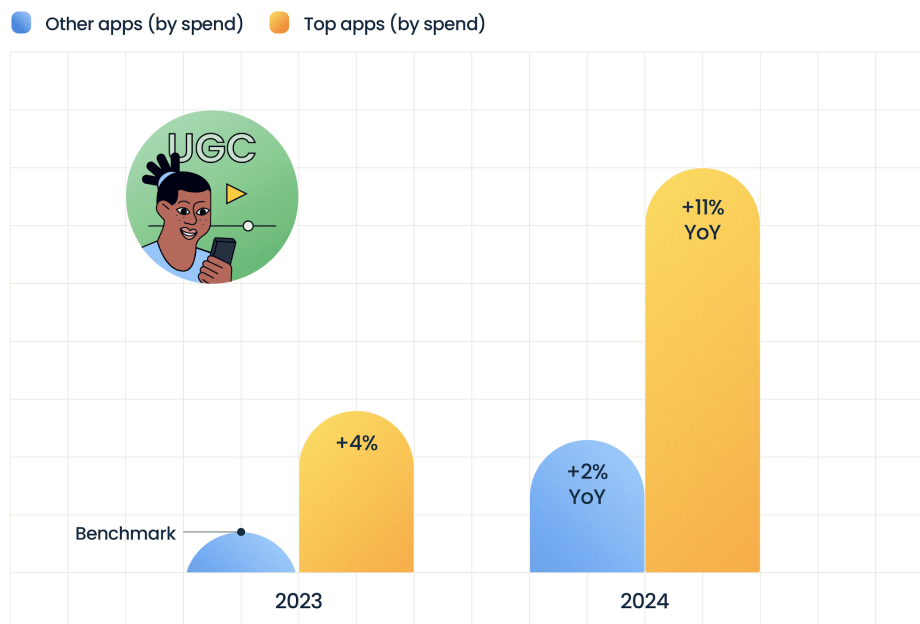
### 3. UGCs A Key Differentiator for Top Consumer Apps

Celebrity endorsements used to be a go-to tactic for brands looking to grow their presence. But now, user-generated content (UGC) can attract a following with the same—sometimes even more—success. For apps across utility, e-commerce, social, sports betting, and many non-gaming verticals, integrating UGC is rapidly becoming the essential strategy for winning over new audiences.

Over the past year, Liftoff app advertisers using UGC-style video ads increased their conversion rate from impression to install by an average of 152%.

It's easy to see why UGC works—content creators engage an existing audience and lend an air of authenticity to brand messaging, boosting conversion metrics across the board.

#### Share of spend on UGC by year



In 2023, UGC's share of total spend for top apps was only 4% higher than the rest of the field. This difference scaled noticeably in 2024. UGC's share of spend for top apps increased 11% for top-spending apps and only 2% for other advertisers, an indicator that UGC is becoming a key differentiator in driving scale and ROI.

According to our data, while UGC spend increased for nearly all top consumer app verticals, social and utility apps scaled the most. Their share of UGC spend grew by almost 30% between 2023 and 2024.

## Designing Impactful UGC Ads in 2025

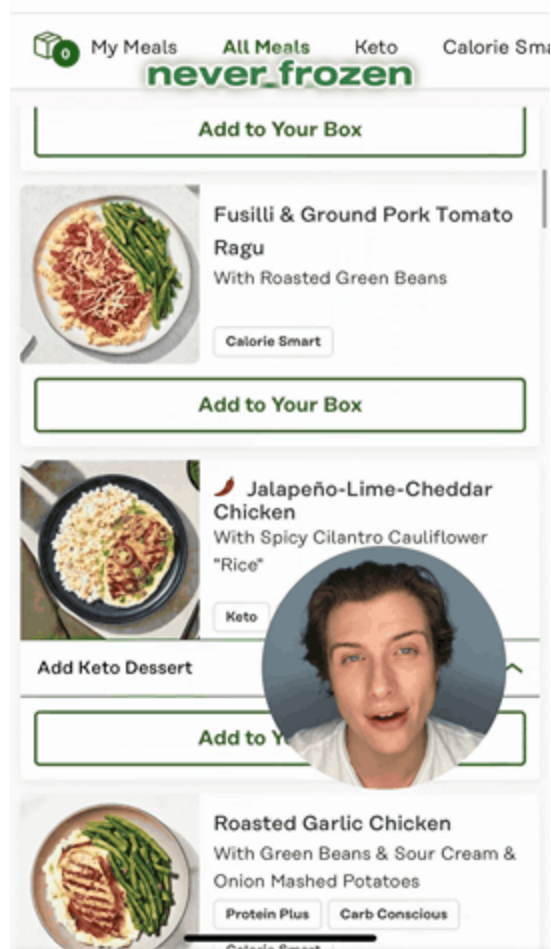
So, how do you ensure that your UGC strategy is competitive and you get the best returns for your efforts? Some decisions begin long before you create your first ad. The key to making UGC content impactful is working with the right creator. Look for a partner with a quantifiable demographic overlap and interests with your audience.

We've also found that starting with tried-and-true concepts can help you benchmark your ad performance and accelerate testing. Here are a few winning concepts for top consumer apps in their vertical:

1. We recommend an app walkthrough for all app verticals. No matter what your app is, prospective customers want to see that your UX/UI design is clean and easy to navigate. Showing off your app UI can also be a way to onboard users before they install, making their first experience of your app as smooth as possible.



2. For crypto and sports betting apps, we recommend trying a two-person skit. You can communicate your top features and differentiators in a relatable way. Make sure to hit your top value props in the script, whether it's betting during the game, the variety of sports you can access, or just how easy your app is to use. To maximize impact, try *combining it with an app walkthrough*.



3. For e-commerce apps, in addition to direct-to-camera app walkthroughs, we recommend a first-person point of view that shows how the app interacts in real life. For example, show a content creator ordering food for instant delivery or unboxing new accessories. Remember to test the products you showcase to get the most out of your top assets.

4. Lifestyle and first-person POVs work exceptionally well for social apps. Show how the app fits into everyday life. Since social apps already rely on UGC for content, they can leverage multiple creators and existing content to boost engagement. Stitching different creator content together can be a way to show variation on your platform.

Whatever your app, we can't stress this enough—the assets you show off matter. We've seen a 350% increase in scale (of ad spend) after combining winning creative templates with a top asset.

## Go Global With AI Localization

With Gen AI, it's possible to expand the reach of your top-performing UGC by localizing at scale for multiple countries.



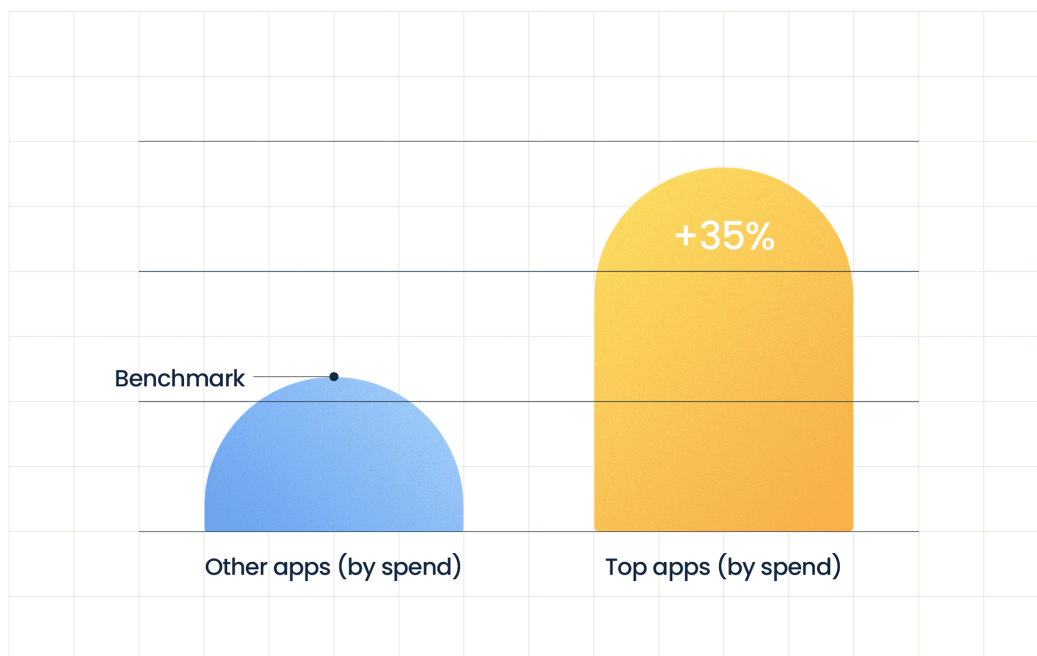
AI enables creative teams to localize ads for any geo with translation, dubbing, and lip syncing all in one edit. In new translations, you can preserve the actor's original voice, expanding the reach of the original asset.

## 4. Customized Playable Experiences for Deeper Engagement

In 2025, the focus for many mobile games is on sustainable growth through robust IAP economies. Game advertisers need cutting-edge ad creative to attract high-value players who spend habitually and spend big.

Once a costly investment, playable ads are now increasingly standard for gaming UA and the key to driving higher returns. They're also the key differentiator between top spending apps and the rest of the field:

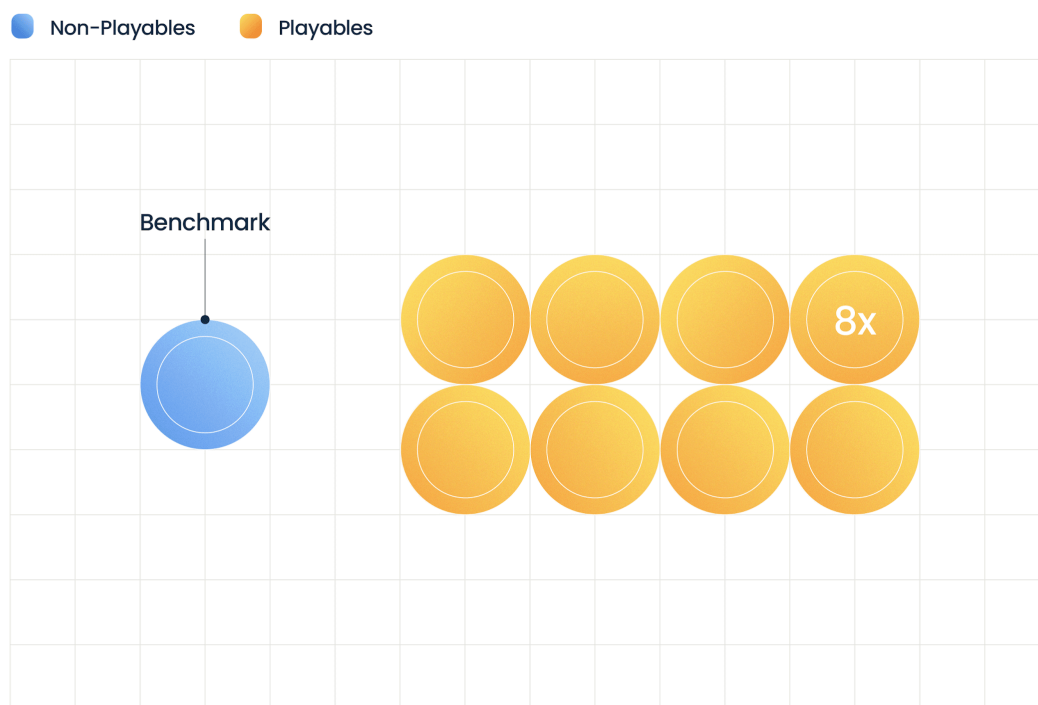
### Playables as share of total spend (2024)



Interestingly, however, the difference in impression-to-install rates indicates that they're still underused relative to the performance boost they can deliver, especially by non-top-spending advertisers.

For top spending games, playable ITIs are 8x that of non-playables.

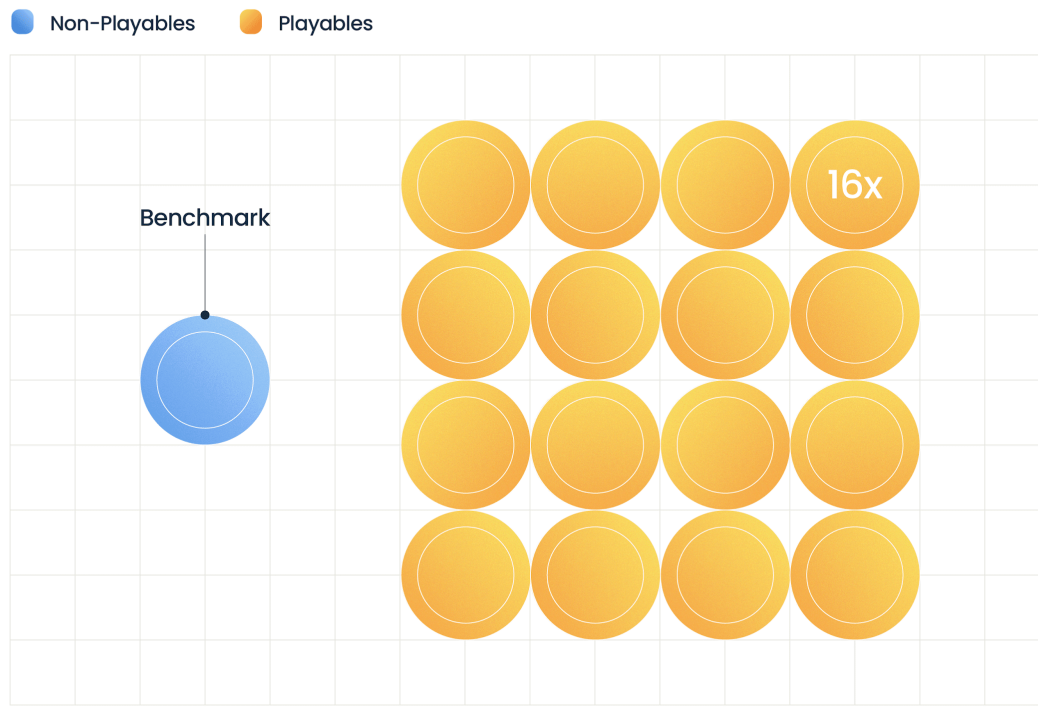
### Average ITI for top spend apps



The difference is more dramatic for other apps, where playables deliver average ITI rates that are 16x that of non-playable formats.



## Average ITI for other apps



While performance may vary depending on the game, we think it's worth experimenting with scaling playable spend. This tactic can be especially valuable for games that have room to scale and are looking to grow their brand.

Customization for Better Playables

As ad loads increase and playables compete for attention, advertisers that can offer something new will see valuable gains in performance. With gen AI tools, it's easier than ever to innovate in the standard video-to-playable format. We recommend producing and testing variations on top assets and recombining existing assets in alternative sequences. You will be able to create longer, more customized ad experiences.

At Liftoff, we've leveraged efficiency gains to develop new ad experiences (Liftoff Exclusive Ads) that mix and match best-performing creatives to assemble unique ad experiences tailored for maximum impact.

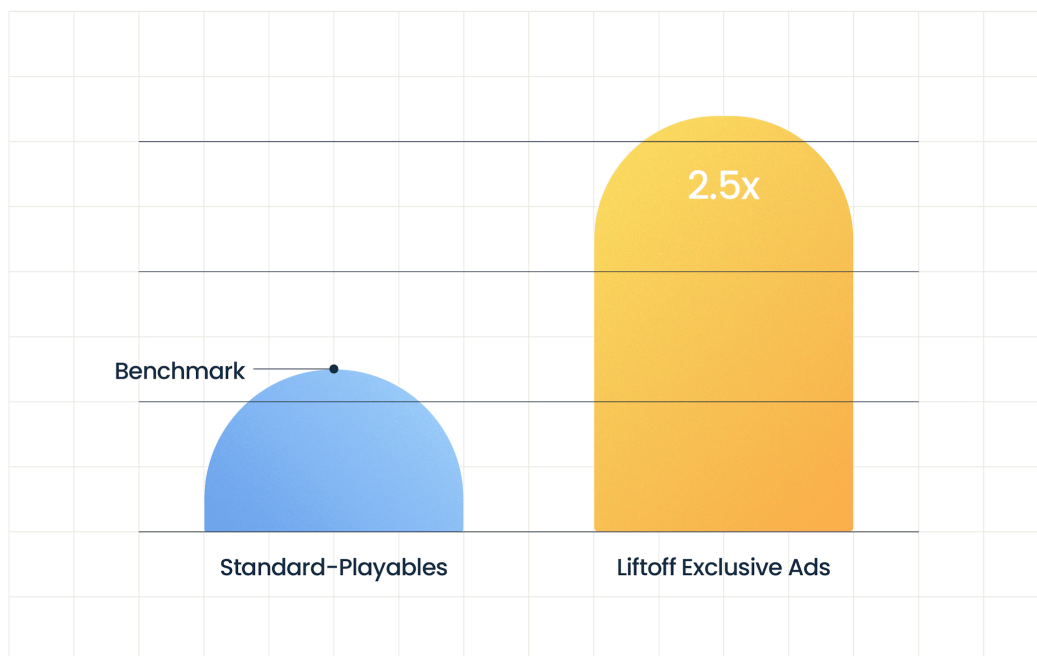


*An example of a playable first ad that changes the usual engagement arc*

We've developed high-performing ad experiences in two winning formats:

- Alternative content ads display a different video or playable when a user doesn't quickly interact, increasing the likelihood of engagement
- Interactive first ads reverse the typical arc of video to playable, boosting engagement by displaying a playable upfront.

### **Playables as share of total spend (2024)**



Over the past 6 months, Liff Exclusive Ads posted average ITIs that are 2.5x that of standard playables.

*Curious to learn more about Liff Exclusive Ads? Connect with us.*

## How long can you go?

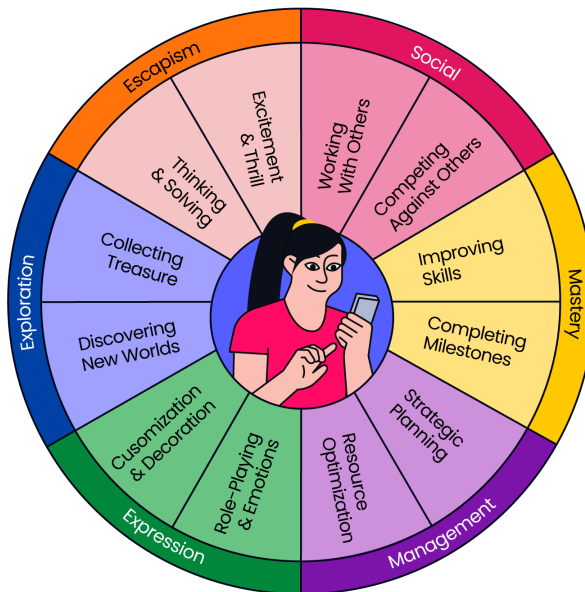
When it comes to video, length matters. But the exact runtime depends on the app or game:

- When it comes to attention, shorter isn't always better. Users are willing to watch longer videos if they're relevant
  - Gaming Video length trends towards interactive and long video durations (45s to 1 minute)
  - For non-gaming, short videos are more effective (around 30s), but this may change as interactive formats become more popular
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## 5. Player Motivations for Better Metaplay Ads

Tapping into player motivations is essential for user acquisition and retention, but it's an approach that's still just scratching the surface of what it can do. In this, gen AI can be a game-changer. More advertisers are using AI tools to tailor ads to what motivates gamers to play. But to do this right, you need the right data and insights. Metaplay ads are one example of how the right insights, combined with AI tools, can help you target with precision.

More top games supplement core gameplay with metaplay (gameplay that diverges from core gameplay and is designed to attract casual players).

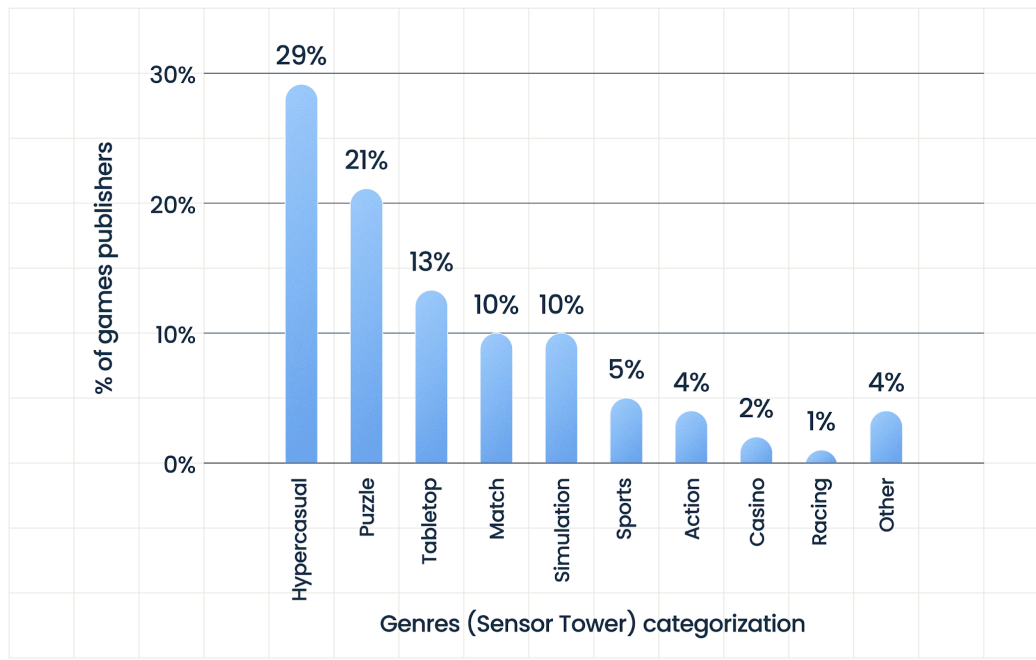


As metaplay ads become more popular, advertisers have an opportunity to capture valuable players by running creative that motivates where they already are—in the publisher app where the ad runs. To do this, however, you need the right approach.

### Build Targeted Creative by Tapping Into Publisher Game Motivations

Game developers know that like works for like, but while that's a strong starting point, it's not enough to drive the scale and ROI most top games need. According to our data, the majority of casual game installs—and a significant portion of midcore game installs—come from ads shown in hypercasual and puzzle games. This means getting metaplay ads absolutely right is crucial.

## Where casual game installs come from, by game publisher genre



The tricky thing is, hypercasual games are a big category. But having a tool like GameRefinery can help you analyze which specific publishers are sourcing the most installs for your app. This way, you can directly tap into what motivates the actual audience for your ad, not the speculative audience for your game.

For example, if Candy Crush Saga is a top source of new users for you, you know that a significant percentage of your audience is likely motivated by “thinking and solving.” Ad creative that speaks to weighing options and finding solutions can be a winning format.

### Project Makeover

Project Makeover asks users to select tools to reach a solution

## Games Snapshot - What is the top Source app



### Candy Crush Saga King

#### Gender

Male **30%**

Female **70%**

#### Age

16-24 **10%**

25-44 **52%**

45+ **38%**

#### Player Archetypes

Thinker **47%**

Skill Master **16%**

Competitive **14%**

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[ 2 Examples]

At this point, with the right insights, it also becomes much easier to apply gen AI tools to customize your ad creative for the right audience.

But as always, remember that tapping into metaplay motivations is a balancing act. Pulling too far away from your core gameplay will mislead new audiences, prompting greater churn and lower average lifetime value (LTV).

When we adopted a strategy of expanding beyond core gameplay in creatives, we saw a 23% decrease in ad spend on “core gameplay only” creative YoY. Meanwhile,

ad spend on “meta play” creative that was considered both a good fit for the publisher and the advertiser increased by 93%.

“Many advertisers spend with a shotgun—but smart advertisers can spend with a sniper rifle. GameRefinery has motivational frameworks for all games. But the key to achieving the best revenue outcomes is to pare down the framework to efficiently target the most important user motivations.”

Christie Crable

Director of Global Sales, GameRefinery & AppRefinery

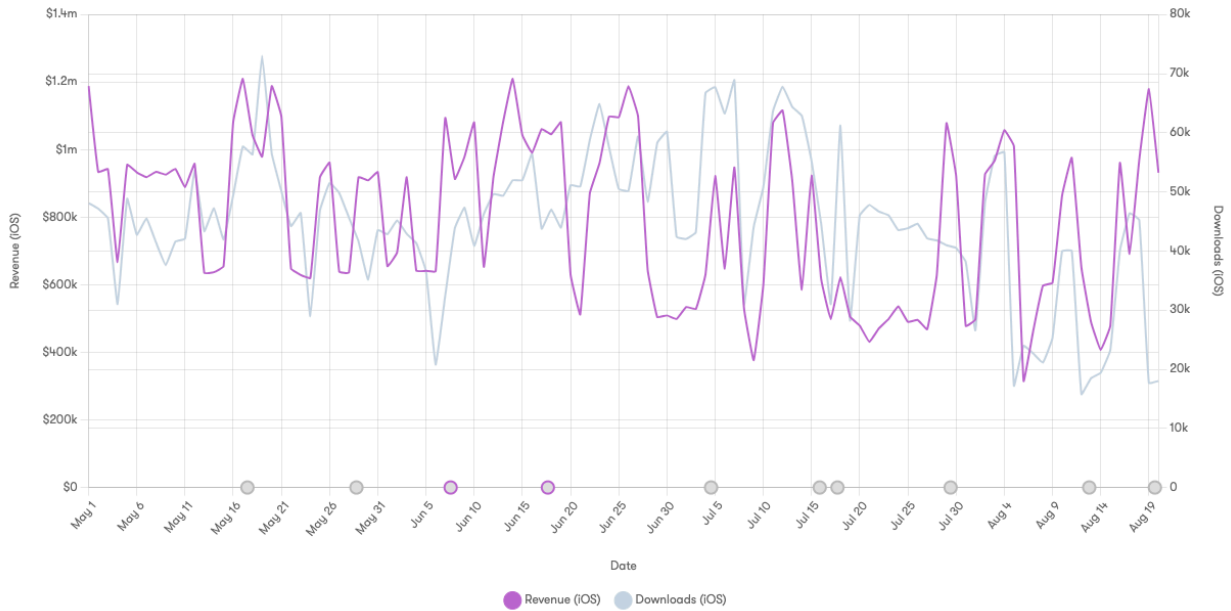
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## 6. Translating Successful LiveOps into a Successful Ad Strategy

Nearly all live event types for mobile games have seen higher adoption rates over the past two years, a sign of the increasingly essential role events play in engagement and monetization.

What’s interesting for us is that top apps regularly feature live events as part of their ad creative strategy. It’s a winning strategy—a limited-time event taps into gamer FOMO and can bring excitement and novelty to a familiar game.





*\*Significant performance impacts during partner events in MONOPOLY Go!*

To take just one crowning example, if we look at revenue and downloads for Monopoly Go! over a period of three months, we can see that peaks in installs and revenue correspond heavily with live events.

Although limited-time rewards and challenges can entice new audiences, we find that they're most impactful in RE (reengagement) campaigns. The simple reason is that users often can't access these types of events until they reach a certain level in the game.

We've also seen successful ad creative that leverages live events to tap into key motivations for players already in their network.



Often, idle users can be reactivated by showcasing new rewards in a way that speaks to them. For example, the Angry Birds ads appeal to motivations like “completing milestones.”



Lily's Garden opted for "collecting treasure" to draw in a reward-seeking audience.

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# Looking Ahead: Embracing Gen AI for Higher Impact and Greater Efficiency

Gen AI is already leading to breakthroughs, but it's still underleveraged relative to the value it can unlock. Right now, advertisers are seeing the greatest impact when they use AI to enhance top-performing assets. This is backed by our own findings [in our App Marketer Survey](#), where over 50% of marketers reference creative production or optimization as their top use case.

More exciting in the mid to long term are benefits like dynamic content generation and personalized ad pathways like Liftoff Exclusive Ads. [According to eMarketer](#), only 24.6% of ad professionals are leveraging tools this way, leaving value on the table. Less discussed also are the efficiency gains that happen behind the scenes. We've seen the introduction of Gen AI improve workflows and pave the way for smoother collaborations.

Looking ahead, the most impactful applications of Gen AI will likely come from how the technology helps connect the dots between data and innovation by delivering the right creative at the right time. As we see it, the future is seamless customization and more personalization that leads to an improved user experience and better outcomes for advertisers.

Want more insights from Liftoff Creative? Explore [our blog](#) or [contact us today](#).

