In-Game Guide

A Buyer's Guide to Navigating the In-Game Advertising Landscape

According to research from NPD Group, the average US gamer (all 225+ million of us) spent 16.5 hours every week playing in 2021, up from 14.8 hours in 2020 and 12.7 hours in 2019.

With such transformative growth in the space, marketers are eager to find and engage gamers in increasingly authentic and impactful ways. Enter in-game advertising - the perfect combination of DOOH and native advertising experiences, delivered inside the gaming environment. In fact, 93% of advertisers are planning to extend their buys to include in-game ads by 2025.

But like all emerging formats, in-game advertising is not without its nuances and growing pains. This guide is designed to help BidSwitch buyers navigate the evolving in-game space, understand the channel's unique value and creative distinctions, and identify suppliers for trading activation.

What is In-Game Advertising?

In-game advertising, or IGA, is a burgeoning form of digital advertising in which ad creative is displayed natively within video game environments across mobile devices, PCs, and gaming consoles. Creative types can be banners, logos, videos, and audio clips (to name a few) appearing in the game metaverse, or on virtual objects such as billboards, posters, football fields, cars, and TV screens. Typically, in-game ads appear during gameplay without interrupting the game.

The most popular types of IGA are statics ads, dynamic ads and gamevertising:

❱ **Static in-game ads** are essentially virtual billboards or logo placements which players will encounter naturally while exploring virtual worlds. Transacted primarily via direct deal, static in-game ads are currently the most dominant ad type in this space, representing over 45% of the market in 2021.

❱ **Dynamic in-game ads** are similar to static ads, except that they have the ability to change the content they display – similar to the animated DOOH creatives you might see in the real world. These can be served programmatically or via direct partner deals.

❱ **Gamevertising or advergaming** is a slightly different ballgame, because it represents games created with the sole purpose of promoting a product or brand. In a real sense, the entire video game is the ad – and this is nothing new. One of the earliest examples of advergaming was the game, Chex Quest for PC, released to promote a kids' cereal back in 1996.

What in-game advertising is not

In contrast to in-game advertising, in-app game advertising refers to a range of mobile ad types that interrupt game play and traditionally focus on user acquisition, targeting metrics such as ROAS, CPIs, and CPAs. These are the types of ads you might see while browsing the game menu, in-between plays or rounds, stuck to the bottom of the game screen, and so on. Whereas in-app game advertising is well suited for direct response campaigns, IGA is much more a brand-building media channel.

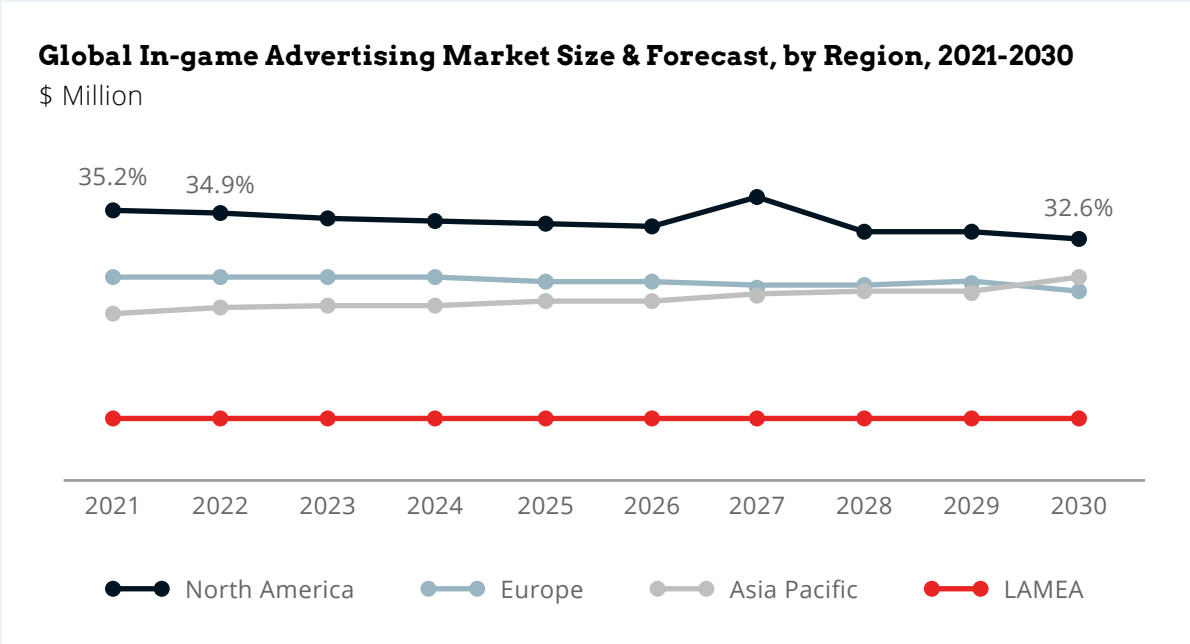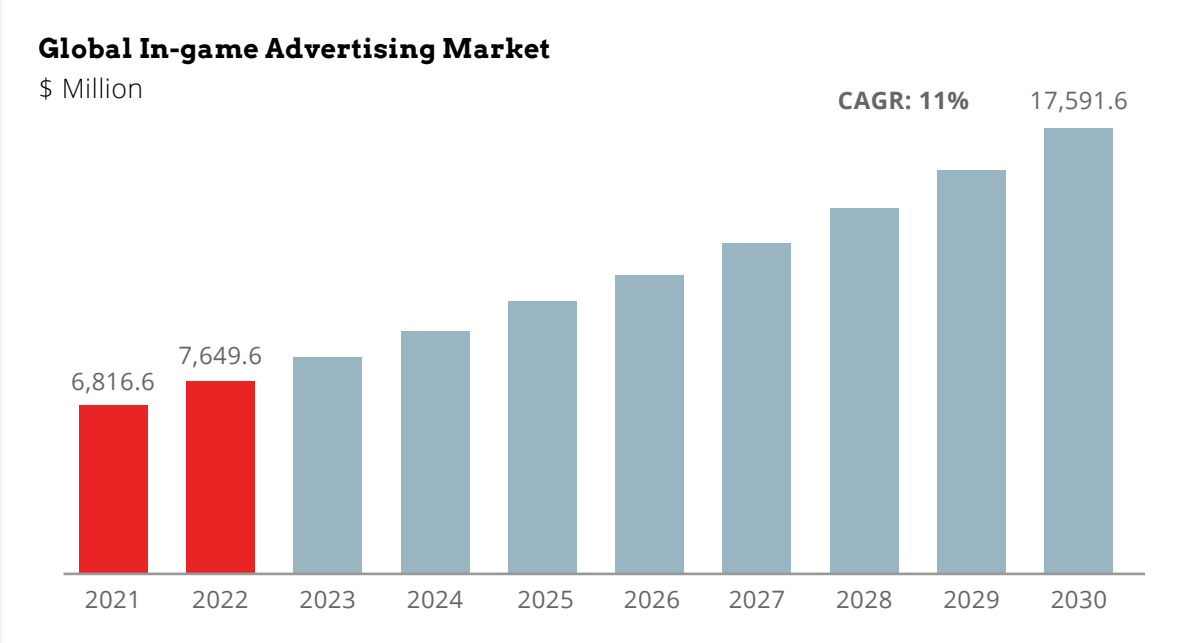**Common in-app game advertising creative formats include:**

▌ **Rewarded video ads:** A player can get game bonuses in exchange for watching a full-screen (usually unskippable) video ad between play rounds.

▌ **Interstitial ads:** A full-screen and clickable ad with a call-to-action button that appears between play rounds.

▌ **Display banners:** A static or dynamic banner ad that is usually glued to the top or the bottom of the game screen.

▌ **Playable ads:** A playable demo of a game may appear while playing another game.

Buying In-Game Advertising

▌ **Supply Discovery:** Due to the evolving nature of this channel (creative formats, RTB protocols, etc), there is currently no easy way to dig into or forecast in-game inventory. BidSwitch Account Managers, however, are familiar with the SSPs that offer this supply, and can put you in contact with them to assess supply, forecast avails, and create direct deals for trading.

▌ **Creative:** There are no industry standard creative types or sizes when buying IGA. For this reason, buyers will need to work directly with SSPs to create direct or programmatic deals based on specific creative, supply, or campaign needs.

▌ **Targeting:** With limited 1:1 addressability options, in-game ads rely on more traditional targeting tactics, like geo, daypart, language, platform, device, contextul category, and/or game genre. Some SSPs allow audience demo targeting through 3rd-party vendors. Connect with your BidSwitch account manager to learn more.

▌ **Brand Safety:** A majority of in-game advertising is placed alongside live play activity, which adds an element of unpredictability. Evaluating game verticals, channel self-declarations and game audiences helps to ensure positive brand perception until in-game technology and integration within the supply chain can catch up.

IGA by the numbers

The global in-game advertising market is expected to reach $17.6 billion by 2030, nearly 3x its 2021 haul. Unlike other media channels, like CTV and audio, global spend for in-game is expected to split fairly equally between North America, Europe, and APAC - mostly due to overindexing of gaming and smartphone adoption in Europe and APAC, compared to the US.

Global In-game Advertising Market
$ Million

CAGR: 11%

6,816.6   7,649.6   17,591.6

| 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 | 2025 | 2026 | 2027 | 2028 | 2029 | 2030 |

Global In-game Advertising Market Size & Forecast, by Region, 2021-2030
$ Million

35.2%   34.9%   32.6%

| 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 | 2025 | 2026 | 2027 | 2028 | 2029 | 2030 |

● North America   ● Europe   ● Asia Pacific   ● LAMEA

Partner with top IGA Suppliers in BidSwitch

anzu ADMIXER ADVERTISING TECHNOLOGIES BIDSTACK INMOBI

STRÖER LEMMA smartyads GAMOSHI

## The future of measurement in IGA

Measurement and attribution are the most frequently cited challenges for advertisers when buying in-game advertising. Brands see appeal in the high impact format, but it's difficult to attribute true value to the placements, especially as many are non-clickable.

To solve for this, the IAB, in partnership with the MRC, launched an initiative to support measurement standards for in-game ad placements. This will also look to assess measurement for emerging non standard / 3D formats.

The taskforce responsible for enforcing these new guidelines plans to examine the impact of programmatic on the in-game space in addition to overhauling outdated viewability standards for what is required to validate an ad as delivered. The revised standards will go through finalization, MRC certification, and implementation in mid to late 2022.

Get in the Game

Understanding where inventory is today, managing brand safety, navigating targeting capabilities and evolving measurement standards are just some of the hurdles required to traverse the in-game advertising space. BidSwitch Account managers are focused on the nuances of in-game advertising and are knowledgeable in what is achievable in this new and exciting space.

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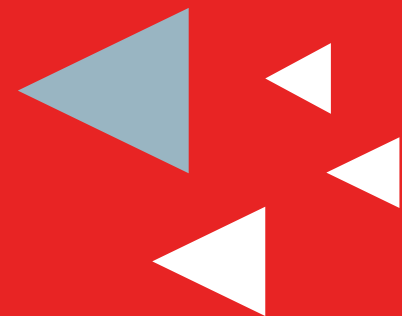
Buying in-game advertising: An FAQ

▶ Is IGA specific to mobile games?

In-game is largely an in-app format, though not necessarily a mobile one. Ads can appear in any game title on console, PC, and mobile platforms.

▶ Are IGA ads clickable? Do they work for in-app performance campaigns?

Typically IGA leverages non-clickable formats, intended more for branding campaigns. However, BidSwitch does work with some IGA Suppliers that do offer clickable formats for IGA. Please work through your Account Manager for more information.

▶ How is IGA different from in-app in terms of RTB spec?

Currently, the only key differentiator is the lack of ability to use Javascript in in-game environments. The IAB also released new measurement standards for IGA, which are expected to be implemented later in 2022.

▶ What are the trading volumes? Can I see avails in BidSwitch?

Unfortunately, IGA avails are not broken out separately in the bid request, so are not currently available in forecasting or reporting. To understand avails, please work directly with your BidSwitch Account Manager or Supply partner.

▶ Can I buy IGA via open exchange?

Technically, yes, if you target SSPs that support IGA. Because IGA signals are not yet passed in the bid request, it is difficult to separate in-game ads from other gaming ads. If your goal is to run an IGA-specific campaign, we recommend doing so via direct deals with IGA suppliers. Contact your BidSwitch account manager for more information.

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