

Web Users Welcome Brands To Social Games

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Players want discounts, loyalty program points as gaming rewards

Social gaming has become a mass phenomenon for Generation X and millennial adults, according to research from Saatchi & Saatchi and Ipsos OTX MediaCT.

eMarketer believes US social gaming revenues will pass \$1 billion this year, and a May 2011 survey of US internet users ages 18 to 44 found that half play social games every day.

Those daily players include 54% of men and 46% of women in the studied age group. Among tablet owners, two-thirds reported gaming each day; more than half of smartphone owners said the same.

Many players reported participating in the games to kill time, but many took their gaming habit to work with them, with 14% saying they played games like FarmVille and Bejeweled Blitz at work for at least an hour each day.

Fortunately for marketers, many players welcome brands into the environment where they spend so much time.

While internet users in this age group still prefer email updates as the best way to learn about new products, nearly two in five chose an online game as a preferred route to new product knowledge—a percentage well above that for traditional media advertising.

Most players are interested in social challenge features of the games they play, and that's one place where brands can enter the picture, the research found. Among respondents interested in completing social challenges, 57% found product discounts a "very compelling" incentive to complete them, while another 37% found them "somewhat compelling."

Loyalty program points were considered at least somewhat compelling by 88% of respondents. Challenges that could result in direct social action were also highly motivating, but status in the community was an insufficient reward for one-third of players, suggesting brands could spur interest by developing sponsorship opportunities in this area.

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