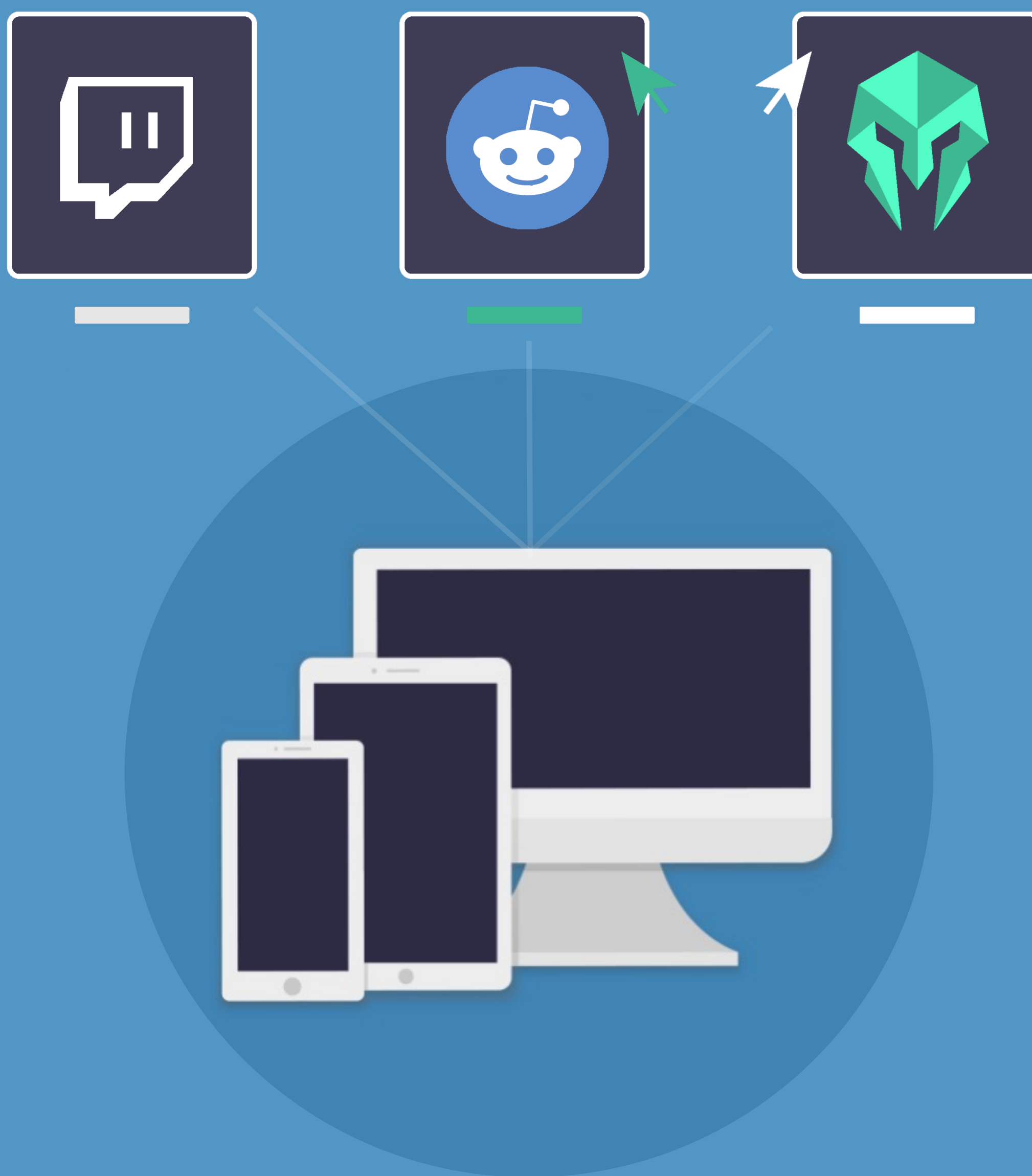


H1 Industry Report  
June, 2020

# The Top Performing Ad Networks of 2020

FOR PC AND CONSOLE GAMES



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# About Gamesight

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Gamesight is the marketing platform for PC & console games. Gamesight empowers publishers to build strong communities, engage the right influencers, and effectively measure marketing performance. Gamesight works with some of the top gaming brands in the world like Warner Brothers, Microsoft, Wizards of the Coast, and SEGA.

Gamesight was founded in 2015 in Seattle, Washington. The dedicated team is funded by the top VCs in Seattle and is currently hiring for multiple positions.

To learn more visit [www.gamesight.io](http://www.gamesight.io) or follow us on Twitter [@gamesight](https://twitter.com/gamesight). If you have a passion for gaming, games marketing, and data visit [www.gamesight.io/jobs](http://www.gamesight.io/jobs)

# Methodology

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The goal of our research was to uncover which ad networks offered the highest value to PC game publishers. To determine value, we used two crucial factors to grade performance:

**Prevalence** - network frequency and volume run through the network

**Performance** - click-through and conversion rates and quality of players delivered

**Retention** - how well the individual network maintained playership over time

To measure these traits, we examined the frequency of individual ad networks across the platform, what networks grossed the highest engagement, and at what rates they converted players.

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## Non-programmatic data collection:

All data unrelated to campaign performance was collected from publicly available sources, or in response to specific inquiries. We endeavored to use as many primary sources (game websites, publisher press releases, official statements, etc.) as possible. However, in many cases, we pulled from credible journalistic sources to fill in gaps.

We have cited all our sources in our endnotes section. If you are a developer or publisher of a game in this report and would like to provide us with corrections or updated data, please reach out to [info@gamesight.io](mailto:info@gamesight.io).

## Key Definitions

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**Ad Network** - A company that connects advertisers to websites that want to host ads. The key function of an ad network is to aggregate ad supply from publishers and match it with an advertiser's demand.

**Impressions** - The point at which an ad is viewed once by a visitor or displayed once on a web page. The number of impressions of a particular advertisement is determined by the number of times the particular page is loaded and viewed.

**Clicks** - The number of times a user has engaged with an advertisement after having it appear in their web browser.

**Conversion** - The act of converting a customer who browses your site to a paying customer.

**Retention** - The rate at which users continue to return to and engage with the product advertised.

**Search Ads** - Relevant advertisements that return following input to a search engine in a web browser.

**Display Ads** - Display ads (also known as banner ads) are designed images that appear at the top of a webpage or are intertwined throughout the content.

**Social Ads** - Ads designed specifically to run on social media platforms. Often, they resemble organic content.

**F2P** - Acronym for "free-to-play." Games that are free to play but monetized through in-game purchases.

**Premium** - Games that are sold for a fixed amount upfront, typically \$60.



# Overview

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Gamesight is the marketing platform for both PC and console games. Our software empowers publishers to build active communities, engage the right influencers, and effectively measure marketing performance. The most common question we receive from customers is: “What is the most effective marketing channel?”

Everyone is continuously searching for the best methods to optimize ad spend, and this analysis aims to answer those questions in broad strokes. This report offers an in-depth look at the most popular advertising networks for PC and console gaming, ranking them using data gathered from the Gamesight engine.

## Key Takeaways:

1. **Gamer-oriented advertising networks continue to perform exceptionally well compared to mainstream advertising channels.** Systems like CPM Star, PWN Games, and Network N – which are explicitly designed for games – capitalize on understanding their audience. Taking time to be attentive and understand your customer pays off. **Together, these networks yielded an average conversion rate of 3.8 percent.**
2. **Social media advertisements are dependably successful in converting gamers into players, specifically Twitch and Reddit.** With the highest average retention, Reddit continues a top choice for marketers. Online gaming and its communities are highly accessible via the internet, making it a no-brainer for businesses to advertise to them on their most-visited social networks.
3. **Working with content creators on Twitch, YouTube, Mixer, Facebook Live, or even TikTok and Instagram can be a vital part of a successful marketing campaign.** However, it is important to find influencers that will represent your brand accurately, with an audience who is the best match for your game. Hiring “the biggest” will not always net the best results. Instead, identify creators who fit within your genre, build a relationship with them, and clearly communicate your needs and expectations.
4. **There is no perfect formula.** Marketing will look different for every game, and to ensure the best results, companies must continuously experiment with their strategies. Titles vary in popularity and budget, and determining what works best for an individual community comes with repetition. Tweaking your approach based on your data and your community’s feedback will often yield the best results.

# The Top Networks



**ad2games**



*Note: The following networks are displayed in no particular order*

# Top 5 Analysis

The top 5 networks were selected using a combination of both prevalence and performance and their success across various titles. They are:



Google Ads



CPM Star



Reddit



PWN Games



Twitch



# Google Ads

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# Best Overall Performer

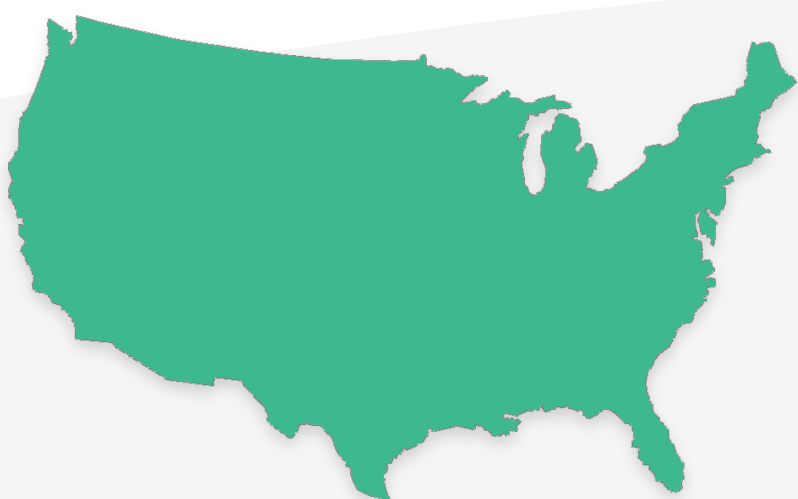
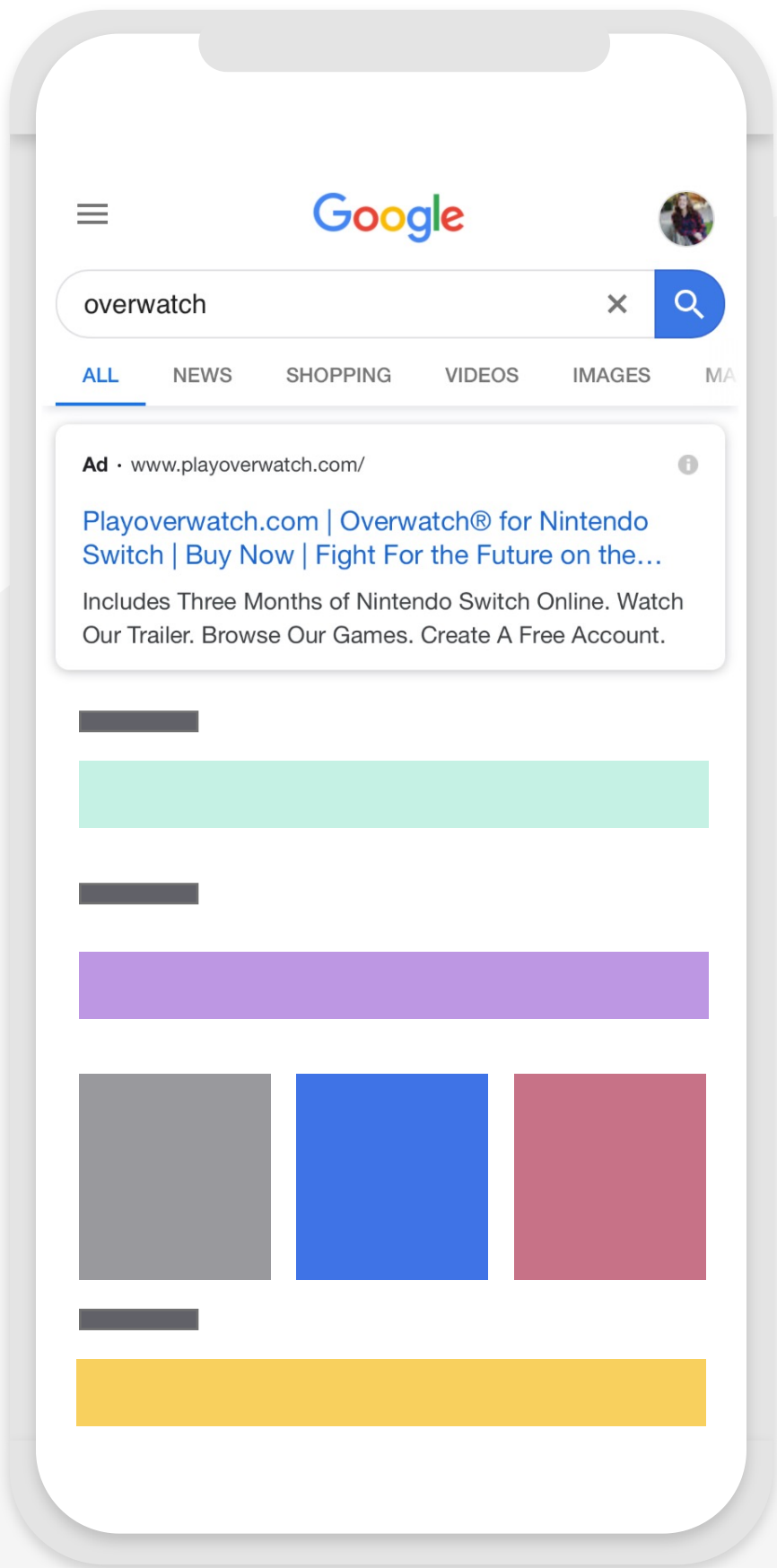
Google Ads provided the most consistent advertising experience and averaged the highest conversion and retention rates across networks.

Valuable for reaching a wide range of players, Google Ads was the **most-used network** among PC Games. Google Ads, previously known as AdWords, is one of the world’s most popular search and display network. The all-encompassing platform maintains three major network types: the Google Search Network, the Google Display Network, and the YouTube Network. All fall under the aegis of Google, and all are useful for game advertising.

Search ads appear in the results of a search page or on a Google partner website. These advertisements are predominantly textual and labeled “ad” accordingly. Additionally, both image and video advertisements may also appear in the search results.

On the contrary, display ads are **targeted** campaigns meant to attract a specific audience. In gaming, these advertisements may be used to re-engage players or attract new audiences. These ads are designed to be eye-catching and appealing.

Finally, by using the **YouTube Network**, companies can attach their products directly to content before, after, or during a YouTube video.



United States

Top Geographical Performance



Volume Score



4.6%

Average conversion rate



Retention Score



In both desktop and mobile browsers, search engines will return advertisements relevant to the user’s input.



# CPM Star

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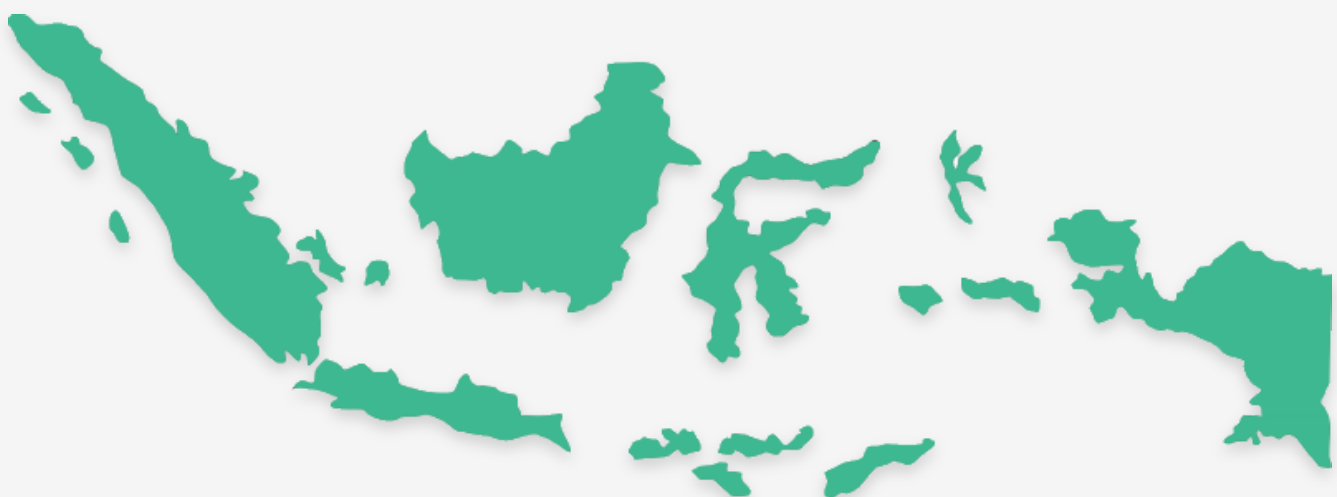


# Widest Reach

CPM Star was utilized to reach gamers across more regions than any other network

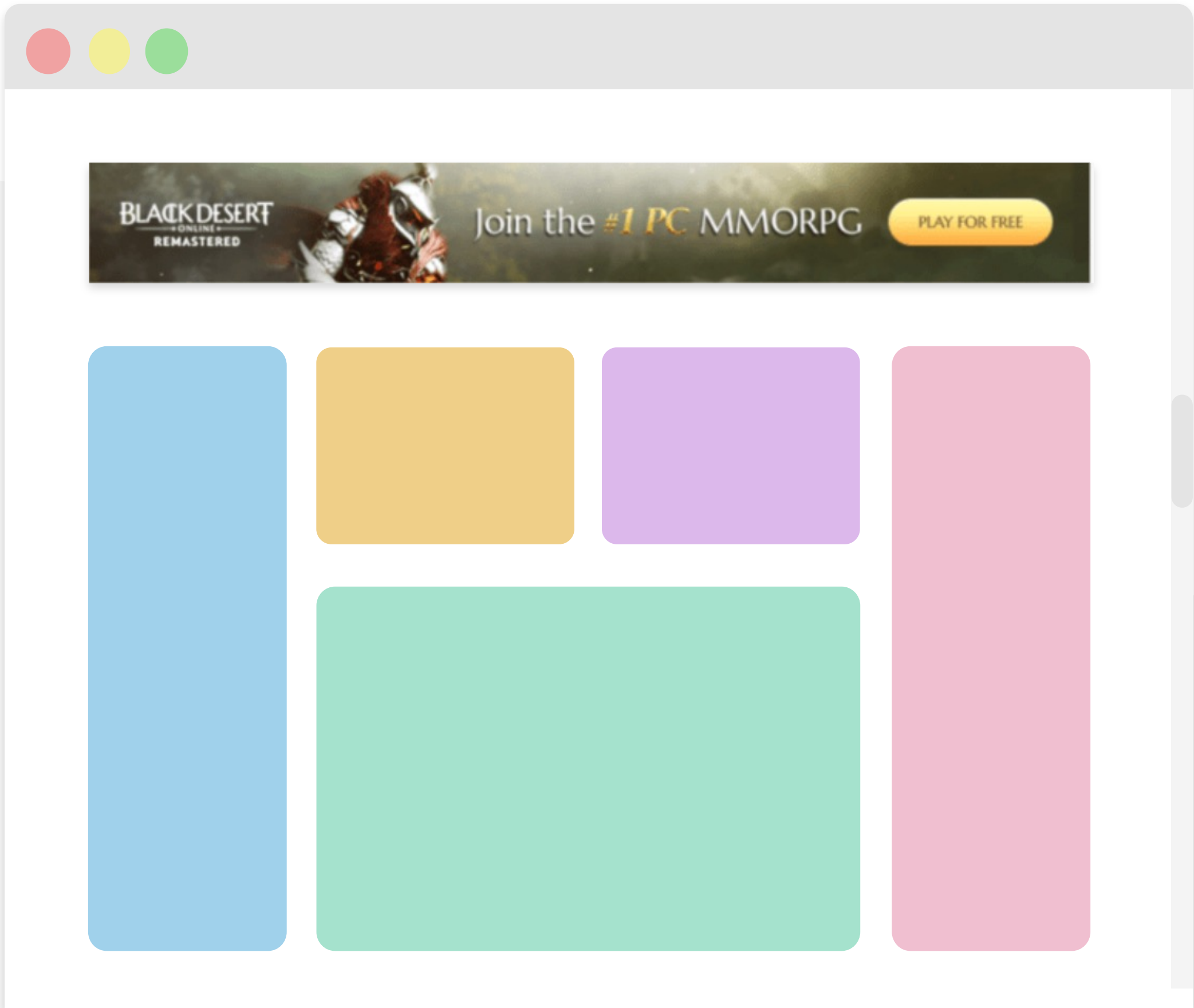
Working with and for video game advertisers, publishers, and developers, CPM Star is one of the largest advertising networks solely dedicated to the games space. CPM Star specializes in dynamic and captivating advertisements specifically targeting gamers.

Having partnered with the likes of Nintendo and Activision, CPM Star designs ads capable of making an impact. The network offers seven variations of ad types for their customers, including branded prerolls, dynamic site skins, and editorial pieces on related websites.



Indonesia

Top Unique Reach



This is a common example of a display or banner ad that would appear surrounding content in a web browser.

4.6%

Average conversion rate



Volume Score



Retention Score



# Reddit

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Reddit



# Best Retention Rate

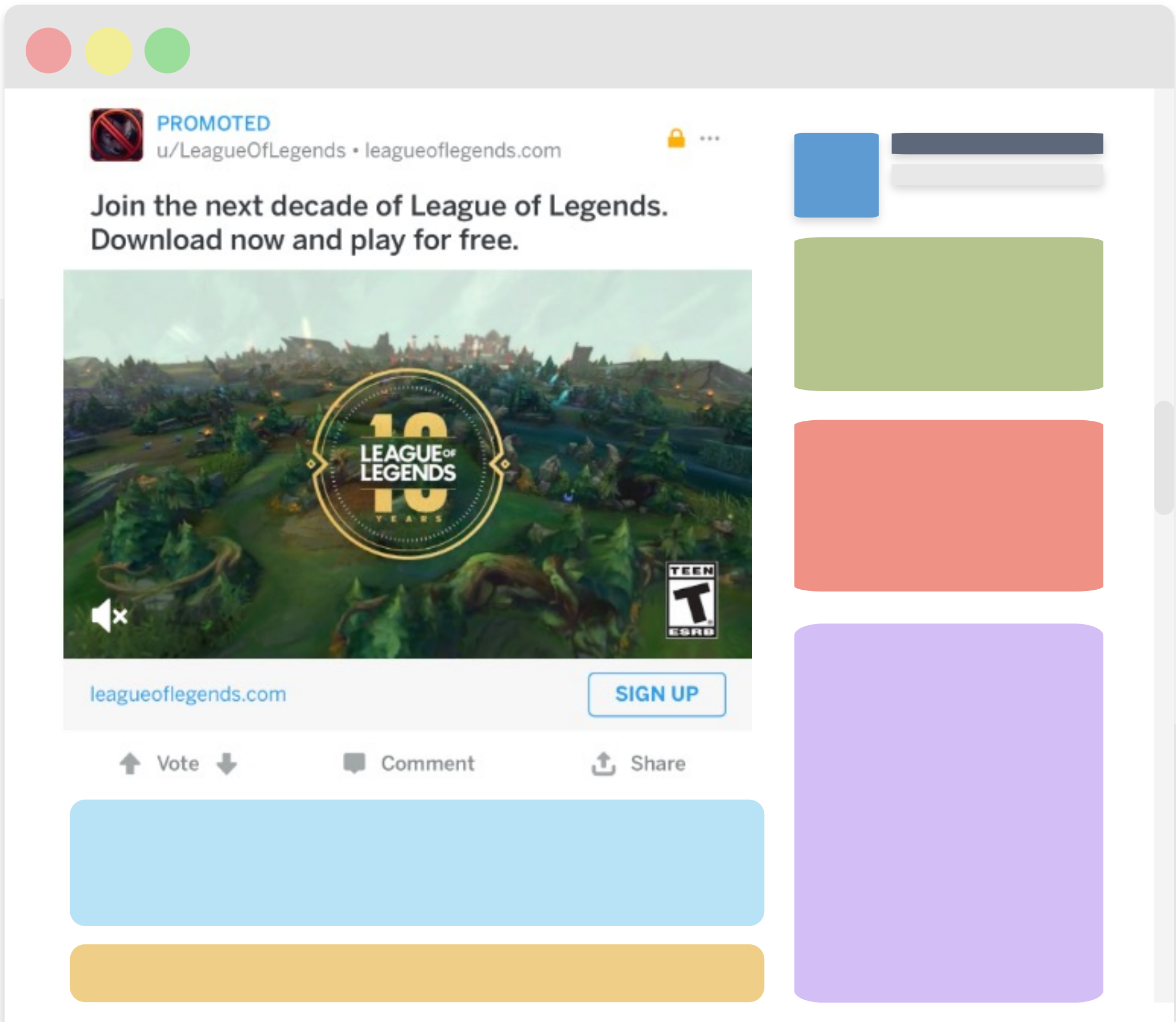
Reddit had the highest average retention across networks

Because it attracts some of the most influential communities on the internet, advertising on Reddit, a popular discussion platform, is becoming one of the most marketable advertising platforms in the gaming industry. Like Twitter, users can engage with content as if it were organic. They can upvote, comment, and share advertisements throughout the platform.



Canada

## Top Geographical Performance



Promoted content on Reddit which integrates into the timeline much like Twitter and Facebook.

3.8%

Average conversion rate



Volume Score



Retention Score

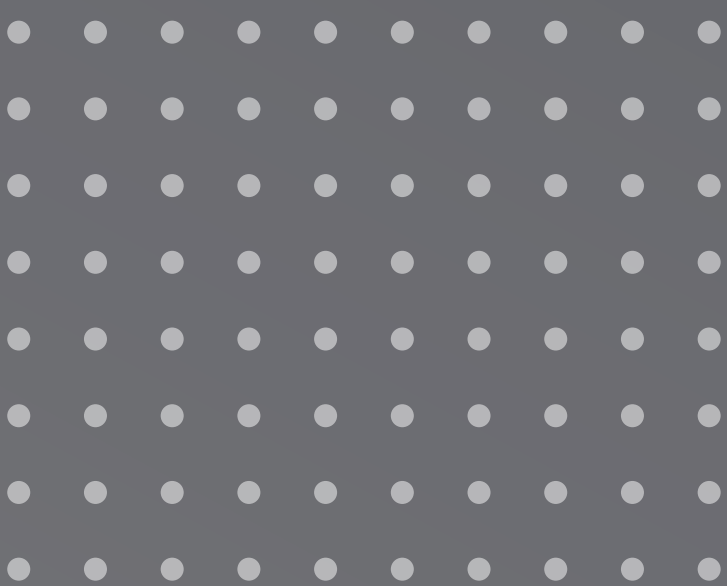




PWN  
G A M E S

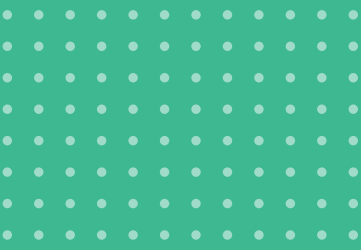
# PWN Games

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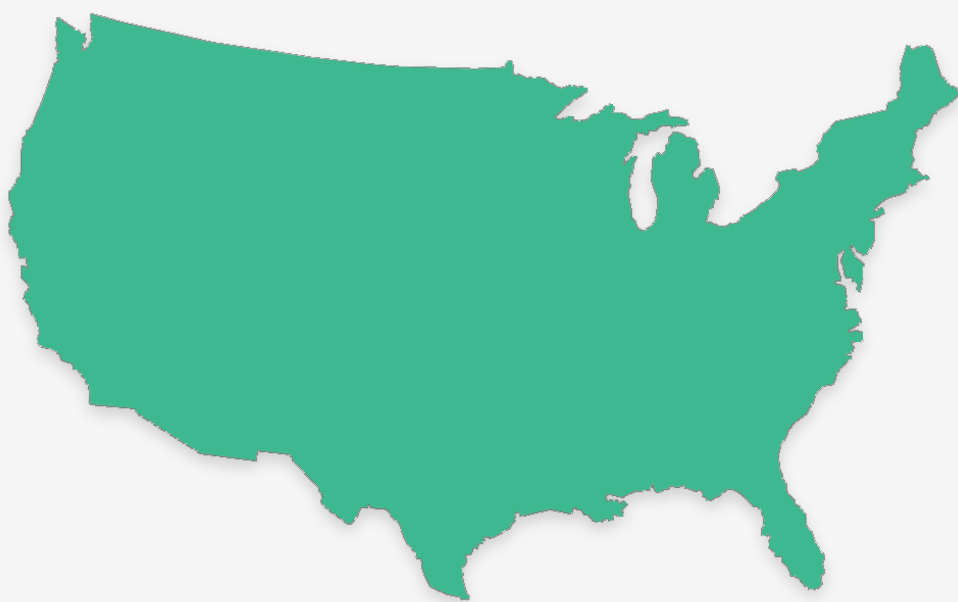
# Highly Optimal



PWN Games had the best click-to-conversion ratio

Based in Quebec, Canada, PWN Games is a digital advertising agency specializing in user-acquisition and optimization. Offering a range of solutions, from social, display, and native advertising, PWN designs their product specifically for gaming advertisers and publishers.

Working with the biggest brands worldwide, PWN Games yielded one of the highest conversion rates across networks.

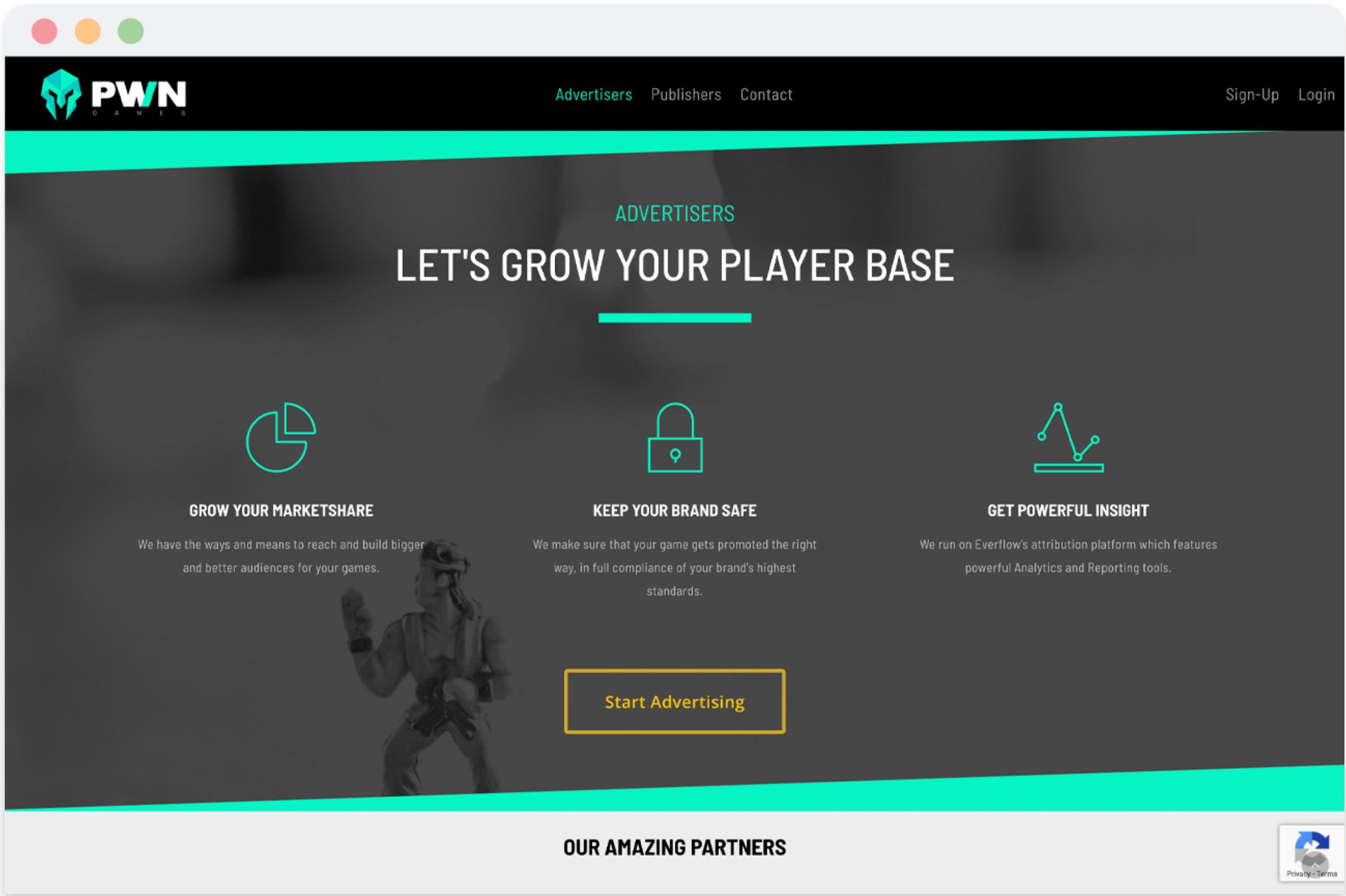


United States

## Top Geographical Performance

6.4%

Average conversion rate



PWN Games is a premium solution working with customers all across the globe.



Volume Score



Retention Score





# Twitch Ads

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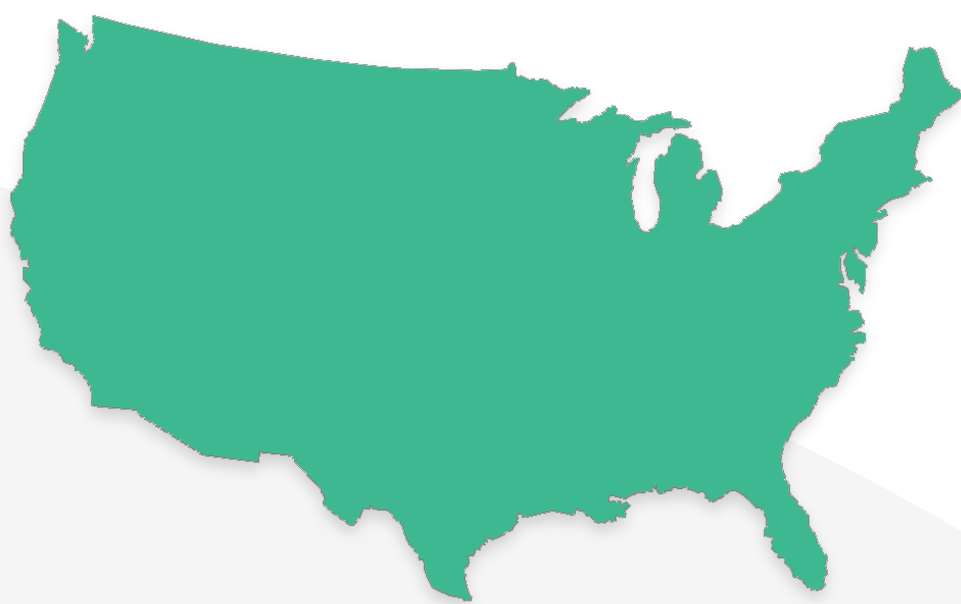
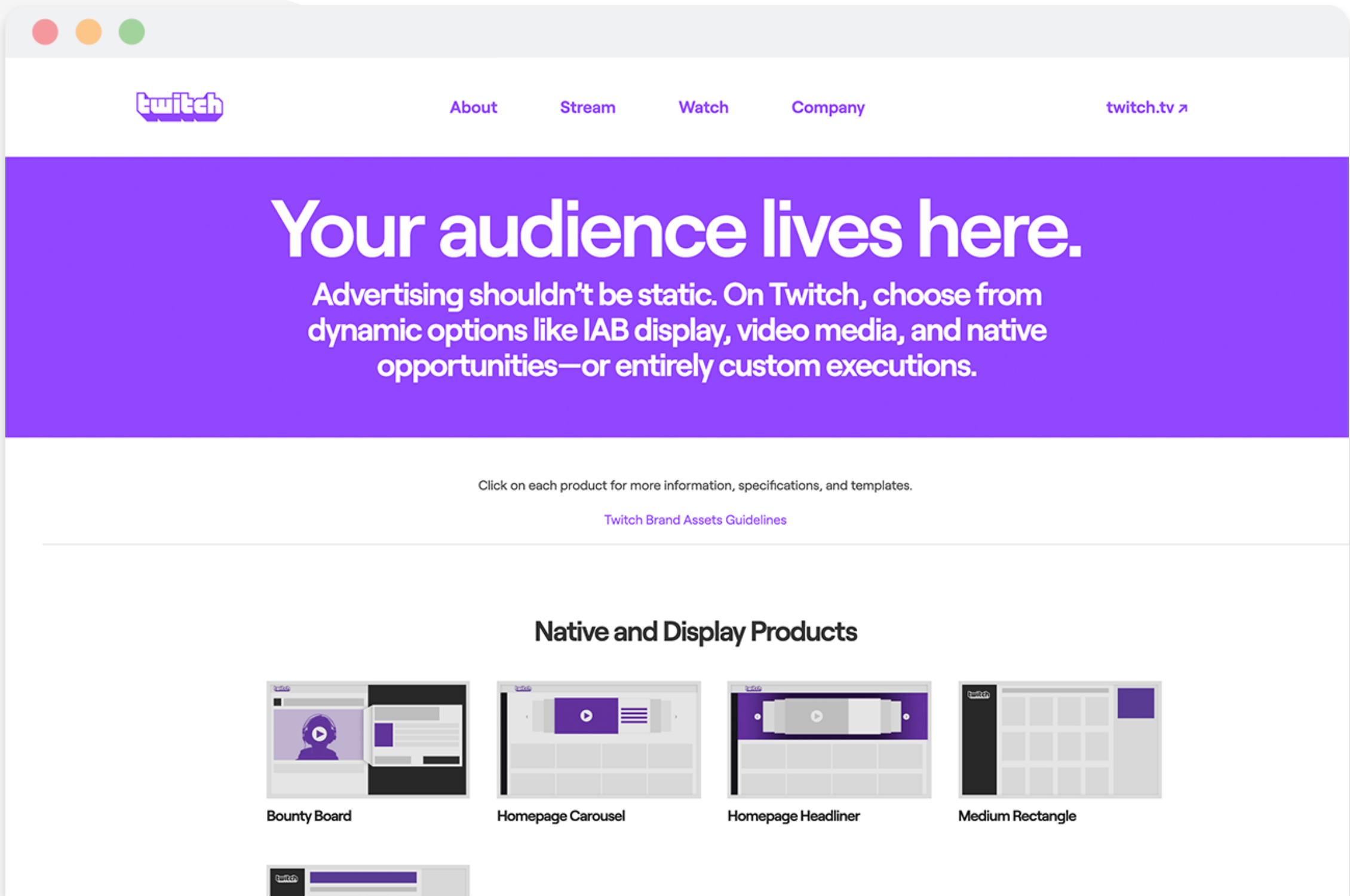


# Creative Approach

Twitch Ads capitalizes on the dynamic nature of its platform. Advertisers are encouraged to create eye-catching and creative ads for their audience

In the first quarter of 2020, Twitch amassed over 3 billion hours watched, making it **the most popular broadcast platform in the world**. Data shows over 7 million content creators streamed on Twitch in May, while users spent over 1.7 billion hours watching content. Advertisers using Twitch to promote their game have the unique ability to reach their core audience directly on its most-utilized social platform.

There are three main forms of advertising on Twitch: **native**, **display**, and **video advertisements**. These dynamic options embed themselves into the content stream, making them easily accessible to the user. Twitch is a space familiar with sponsored content, whether it be via influencer campaigns or pre and mid-roll advertisements.



United States

Top Geographical Performance

3.7%

Average conversion rate



Volume Score



Retention Score







# Free-to-Play versus Paid Titles

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Working with both free-to-play and paid titles, we understand that it is more common for a free game to see higher conversion rates via advertisements than a paid, \$60 one.

Accounting for these barriers to entry, we wanted to compare the marketing strategies of both free-to-play titles as well as premium games. How are companies allocating their budget? And what networks are converting the most players?

# Social

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# Social Ads



## Social Ads

Like display advertisements, social ads are integrated directly into the virtual timeline. Social advertisements encourage engagement and provide businesses an opportunity to promote their products to a unique subset of players. Potential customers can interact with social content as they would any other organic post, taking on a share of the game promotion themselves if they so choose.

For F2P titles, social ads were the number one way players discovered games. Proving to be an effective marketing strategy, advertising to your core demographic on the platforms they use most frequently has its benefits – especially for publishers working with a smaller budget.

Social media is the perfect space to generate buzz, connect with players, and receive feedback, particularly in the online gaming community. Because of this, networks such as Reddit and Twitter Ads saw a considerable amount of success in converting audience members to players when using promoted

### NOTABLE SOCIAL NETWORKS





# Search

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# Search Ads



## Search Ads

Paid search advertising is a method of placing advertisements on a webpage with search engine results.

Search advertisements rely on keywords to return relevant ads as based on input. Keywords allow marketers to narrow their audience and provide prospective players with the best information possible to inform their buying decisions.

Most popular with search engines like Google Ads, businesses can target players within specific locations and demographics. Each time an ad appears on a results page and a user clicks it, the company pays a small fee per engagement.

### NOTABLE SEARCH NETWORKS





# Influencer

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# Influencer



## Influencer Marketing

Influencer marketing was the third-most-popular form of advertising. Now more than ever, gamers are discovering new games through influencers. This method may not cohere with each title, but the benefits of sharing a new release via live-streaming can be crucial in driving decision-making in customers.

In only six months, Twitch has climbed the rankings as the fifth-most effective ad network. Recognizing the power of influencer marketing when advertising a new game as companies are relying on content creators more than ever.

The most prominent example of this was the launch of the *VALORANT* beta in April 2020. Riot Games unveiled the product with little promotion; rather, they had the world's biggest content creators simultaneously broadcast the game on launch, granting limited access to the game to viewers of select streams. *VALORANT* became the most-watched title on Twitch, accruing over 30 million hours of viewership in one day.

Viewers gravitate towards streamers for a variety of reasons. Whether it be their skill-level, sense of humor, or their insight, community members feel connected to their favorite streamers. When it comes to marketing, live-streaming allows audience members to be exposed to a new title without having to make a purchase. Rather, viewers have the ability to tune into a live-stream, ask questions, and preview a game from the perspective of someone they trust. Influencer marketing creates an authentic impression, encouraging the viewer to make decisions based on their own experience.



# Display

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# Display Ad



## Display Ads

Display ads are the most widely used form of advertising and are a highly effective method for marketing new products and remarketing to past customers. Display ads come in many forms as they seamlessly adapt to numerous platforms and webpages. In our analysis, display advertisements were responsible for the highest percentage of player conversions for both free-to-play and premium titles.

### NOTABLE DISPLAY NETWORKS



# Conclusion

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Data shows that the two most prominent network types are display and social advertisements. With nearly 70 percent of conversions coming from social ads for F2P titles and 70 percent of conversions for paid titles coming from display ads, we find two very different approaches to marketing for games.

Social media marketing for free-to-play titles may prove useful as the gaming community has consistently shown an interest in discussing new releases, trying new games, and sharing their individual successes on social platforms. For marketers looking to spark interest in an up-and-coming title, targeting social channels is a logical first step in building a brand, engaging with fans, and generating conversation around their game.

In contrast, marketing teams for paid titles employed search advertisements more frequently. Not only were these advertisements displayed at a larger volume, they also accounted for 70 percent of the conversions for premium games.

Combined, social and display advertisements were just as effective across both F2P and paid games. While data was not able to provide a perfect formula for efficiently selling a game, there is a clear distinction on the types of ads that are the most effective. For titles working with a smaller budget, emphasis on social, search, and display ads proves to be the most beneficial.



# End Notes

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- 1     <https://wehype.it/>
- 2     <https://ads.google.com/home/>
- 3     [ads.reddit.com](https://ads.reddit.com)
- 4     <https://www.cpmstar.com/>
- 5     <https://pwngames.com/>
- 6     <https://twitchadvertising.tv/>
- 7     <https://www.facebook.com/business/ads>
- 8     <https://blindferret.com/>
- 9     <https://en.cultureg.eu/>
- 10    <https://www.ad2games.com/>
- 11    <https://ad4game.com/>
- 12    <https://exmox.com/>