

The future of mobile gaming and what it means for marketers

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Gaming is commanding a growing share of consumer attention with little indication that this trend will be abating any time soon.



Mobile games generated revenue of more than US\$93bn globally in 2021, accounting for 52% of the international games market. Lockdowns imposed in 2020 and 2021 in response to the Covid-19 pandemic meant that most people were confined to their homes with more free time at their disposal. This drove many people around the world to gaming both as a form of entertainment and to connect with other like-minded individuals.

It is estimated that consumers of all ages are spending more than a trillion hours each year playing games with gaming becoming a core part of their social lives. This huge – and growing - market opens up a host of opportunities for marketers to leverage this virtual space and engage with their audiences in this new social channel.

One of the biggest challenges facing the mobile gaming industry currently is how to reach consumers irrespective of whether or not they have data. The majority of games range in size between 1GB and 3GB which is a large file to download onto a mobile phone, particularly if users are on a 3G or 4G connection. Even after installing the app, the user will still need to download graphic files.

This problem is solved with the ShareIt app, a file-sharing, gaming and content-streaming platform which aims to make digital content equally accessible to everyone. The app, which has 40 million monthly active users in sub-Saharan Africa and South Africa -, allows users to share games, content and files with their friends and family via peer-to-peer sharing which doesn't need the internet or mobile data.

ShareIt, which has become the airdrop of the Android system, is currently the fourth largest media publisher globally in volume. Worldwide, more than 10 million gaming apps are shared through ShareIt every day.

“The biggest focus for game developers in a post-pandemic world as people’s lives return to a semblance of normality is to keep the habit of playing games running as users spend more time on mobile. ShareIt helps game developers and publishers by continuously promoting and encouraging new things that users can do inside games to assist with user acquisition, user engagement/gameplay and even monetisation”, reveals Arunabh Madhur, the regional vice president and

head of business for EMEA at ShareIt.

“We focus a significant amount of effort on staying tuned to the gaming ecosystem in order to keep the app relevant and user-friendly. Currently, we are working with around 100 gaming publishers on global user growth efforts through our advertising solutions and targeting capabilities,” he says.

Although South Africa, which boasts one of the largest mobile markets globally, has reasonably good mobile digital infrastructure in place and scores highly in terms of network coverage, it falls short when it comes to speed and latency. ShareIt Country Director for South Africa, Chanel Hardman explains that the ShareIt platform solves this problem by allowing even large games and files to be seamlessly shared in seconds without the need for data.

“The rise of ‘app-sharing’ was initially driven by limited internet availability, a digital accessibility barrier that plagues emerging markets, including South Africa. However, even when internet availability is not an issue, the rapid speed with which even the largest games apps can be shared is a compelling proposition,” she says, adding that app sharing, particularly between family and friends, is on the rise.

She predicts that the next big disruptor in the mobile gaming will be for users to have their own avatars. “Users are able to better connect with games if they are able to immerse themselves within the game.”

For marketers, mobile gaming remains a largely untapped opportunity in terms of its scale and one that brands ignore at their peril.

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