Competitive Insights Into Ad Creatives and Placements

An Introduction to App Annie's Marketing Intelligence

App Annie

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Introduction

- Mobile is clearly the first screen, as time spent in apps grew by more than 60% from 2014 to 2015 and as the installed base of mobile devices is expected to surpass three billion by the end of 2016. According to our research, we estimate that mobile in-app advertising spend reached $87 billion globally in 2015. This unprecedented scale brings tremendous opportunities for in-app advertising as businesses continue shifting their advertising strategy toward mobile.

- Looking at the demand side, in-app advertising has become an incredibly competitive market with scores of app publishers vying for valuable users. In this environment, understanding creative and advertiser trends across networks has become crucial to inform budget allocation and maximize return on investment.

- On the supply side, advertising has increasingly become a key source of revenue and its relevance will only grow going forward. *Marketing Intelligence* gives app publishers the tools required to understand advertiser spend patterns and to develop stronger monetization strategies.

Optimize your app store presence and gain unparalleled visibility into your competitors' user acquisition campaigns with *Marketing Intelligence.*

Choosing the Right Network

App Annie's *Marketing Intelligence* gives insight and visibility into advertisers across several of the top ad networks. Exploring each ad network's advertiser composition on a weekly basis gives a sense of the current — yet dynamic — competitive landscape and can ultimately help aid publishers' decisions on where and how to advertise.

Making yourself seen is key, and while a number of advertising giants hold significant volume share across a number of ad networks, such as MZ (previously known as Machine Zone) and Pocket Gems, finding the next advertising network should be a strategy that requires continual competitive assessment. Looking at the table below, one can also see

how each network varies across top advertisers by share of ad impressions and their categories and type of creatives. For instance, Vungle's top five advertisers are all games, with a high variety of video campaigns. With this information, publishers can spend more intelligently by knowing where their competitors already have a presence. This allows them to more strategically decide which ad networks to place their ads on depending where their competitors are advertising.

Ad Networks' Advertiser Composition
iPhone, US, June 19–25, 2016

Ad Network	Top 5 Advertisers by Share of Ad Impressions	Categories of Top 5 Advertisers by Share of Ad Impressions	Type of Creatives of Top 5 Advertisers by Share of Ad Impressions
AdColony		5 Games	All Video
UnityAds		5 Games	All Video
Vungle		5 Games	All Video
Supersonic		4 out of 5 Games	Majority Videos
Chartboost		4 out of 5 Games	Majority Images
AdMob		3 out of 5 Games	Half Video, Half Images
inMobi		3 out of 5 Games	All Images

During this time, the top five advertisers on AdColony, UnityAds and Vungle were all video ads for games.

Advertiser Case Studies

The mobile in-app advertising space is evolving at a rapid pace — with meaningful changes in spend and creative evolving from week to week — where some advertisers invest in long-term advertising and others in short-term surges. It's difficult to keep tabs on trends going on in the marketplace without having a clear view of the competitive space. By monitoring competition in real time, publishers will maximize their success by having the tools necessary to evolve and optimize the key components of their advertising strategy, including ad allocation and creative optimization. To effectively build a user base in the midst of the dynamic app space, it's essential for publishers to continuously mold their in-app advertising strategy for user acquisition.

SHOWTIME Surges Up the US Ads Ranking Chart

Top Advertisers by Share of Network Ad Impressions
iPhone, AdMob, US, June 26–July 2, 2016

Rank	App	Rank Change vs. June 19–25, 2016
1	SHOWTIME	▲ 2
2	Live.me	▼ 1
3	Mobile Strike	▲ 2
4	WordWhizzle	▲ 5
5	Cookie Jam	▲ 2
6	Audible	▲ 6
7	Woot	▲ 7
8	Cutie Riot	▼ 6
9	Hungry Babies Mania	▲ 79
10	BN Dating	▲ 7

SHOWTIME jumped to take the #1 rank for highest share of AdMob's iPhone ad impressions during this time in the US.

Similar to *HBO NOW's* previous *Game of Thrones* campaigns, *SHOWTIME's* ad surge coincided with the introduction of a video spot highlighting two new original series that premiered June 26: the Season four premiere of *Ray Donovan* and the series premiere of *Roadies*.

We also saw a meaningful surge in *SHOWTIME's* iPhone download rankings in the US during this period, which suggests that *SHOWTIME* has been successfully generating interest in its original series' season premieres.

By monitoring competitor apps, publishers can identify events that trigger advertising boosts. Publishers can use this to optimize their own UA spend by investing in a concurrent campaign, either on their competitor's ad network to gain the mindshare of that audience or on their competitors' lower volume partners. This is especially important
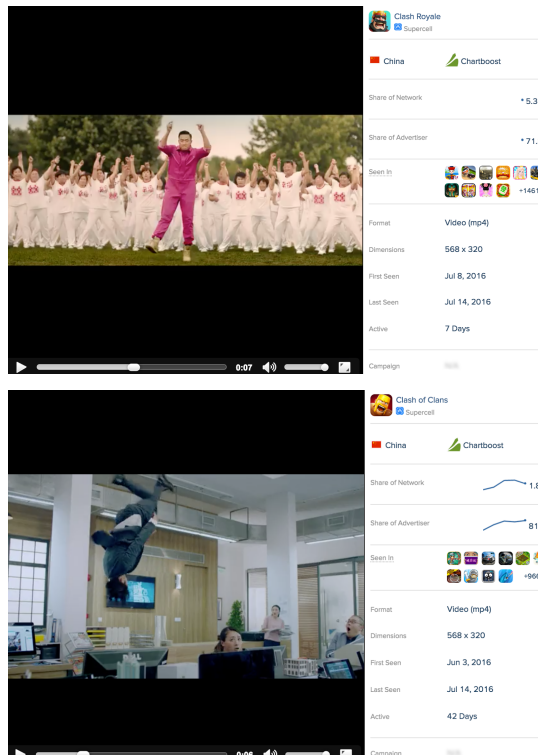
in the media and entertainment industry, where original content is a catalyst for generating interest. For example, for video content providers, the start of a new season is an important time for them to engage with their customers. By launching an in-app advertising strategy to catch customers [where they are spending more of their time](#), they can not only drive new installs, but also remind existing customers of new content.

Supercell Steps It up in China

Top Advertisers by Share of Network Ad Impressions
iPhone, Chartboost, China, July 3–9, 2016

Rank	App	Rank Change vs. June 26–July 2, 2016
1	Junior Monkey King	⬆ (did not rank)
2	Clash for Dawn 2	–
3	Clash Royale	▲ 5
4	Slots Free Casino House of Fun	–
5	Junior Three Kingdoms	▼ 4
6	Legend of Xi Fei	▲ 1
7	Three Swordmen 2	▼ 2
8	Clash of Clans	▲ 1
9	Pirates WAR: Heroes at the Sea	▲ 12
10	Magic Rush: Heroes	▲ 1

⬆ Indicates app did not rank in the top 100 for June 26–July 2, 2016

[Supercell](#) made a splash on China's iPhone Chartboost inventory with two games ranking in the top 10 by ad impressions in the first week of July: *Clash Royale* and *Clash of Clans*. From an impressions perspective, Supercell is investing more in its newer game, *Clash Royale*, but isn't forgetting about *Clash of Clans*.

Simultaneous to the ad surge, *Clash Royale's* download ranking for iPhone Games in China steadily climbed and cracked [the top 10](#). Not surprisingly, this coincided with the release of a new video ad creative across over 1,000 apps. The attention-grabbing creative was specifically localized for China and involves a dance off, ending with a quick view of gameplay. This is not a new strategy for Supercell — we have seen similar quirky video ads for *Clash of Clans*. When considering an expansion strategy into a new market, it's optimal to customize ads. Broad translations are not as impactful as localizing content for individual markets. This can not only help acquire new users, but also increase engagement with existing ones.

Taichi Panda: Heroes Climbs Android Charts in France

Top Advertisers by Share of Network Ad Impressions
Android Phone, Chartboost, France, June 19–25, 2016

Rank	App	Rank Change vs. June 5–11, 2016
1	Last Empire–War Z	–
2	Taichi Panda: Heroes	🌲
3	Cooking Fever	–
4	YAHTZEE® With Buddies – Dice!	▲ 2
5	Soul Hunters	–
6	Heroes Tactics: War & Strategy	▼ 2
7	Block! Hexa Puzzle	–
8	Juice Jam	🌲
9	Jungle Animal Hair Salon	▲ 19
10	Sweet Baby Girl Cleanup 4	▲ 29

🌲 Indicates app did not rank in the top 100 for June 5–11, 2016

For this week, [*Taichi Panda: Heroes*](#) jumped onto the top ad impressions charts with a #2 rank on Android phone's Chartboost inventory in France.

The game was launched at the end of April and immediately ranked among the [top 100 most downloaded Google Play games](#) in France for the first two weeks. However, it briefly

dropped out of the top 300 and then re-entered at the same time that ad volume increased.

As we pointed out in our [App Adoption Cycle](#) report, maturity cycles for mobile games have been shrinking dramatically in recent years. In an environment where mobile games reach an early peak, short-term user acquisition campaigns can be a useful tool to revitalize adoption, usage and monetization.

Creative Trends

While it is important to determine which network aligns best with each campaign, publishers also need to design creative that best matches their goals. The creative gallery in *Marketing Intelligence* allows advertisers to understand their competitors' strategies and target markets. Gaining access to competitors' creative assets allows publishers to understand specific campaign strategies including targeting customer segments, key design elements and ad format selection (e.g., video vs. static) to consider for their next UA campaign. It is crucial to keep track of the mobile advertising space not only due to its dynamic nature, but also due to the wide variety of mobile advertising campaigns both within and across verticals.

Creative Trends by Vertical

Regardless of the app's vertical, keeping an eye on creative matters. Within *Marketing Intelligence*, the creative gallery allows one to explore and keep track of trends in each vertical. Understanding the differences between long-running vs. short-term or dynamic creatives can help an app differentiate and stay one step ahead of competition. Additionally, publishers can look in the past for insight into what has worked for others and incorporate best practices moving forward.

Video streaming is an interesting case study here. *SHOWTIME* has been running ads highlighting its original content library that includes hit shows like *Homeland* and *Dexter*. On the other hand, *HBO NOW*'s recent ad differs from the industry trend in that it puts very little emphasis on original content. Instead, it focuses on attributes such as the price compared to a traditional TV package and the availability of a one-month trial.
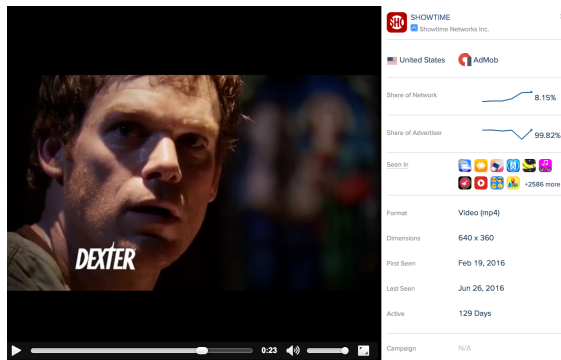
SHOWTIME's *ad focuses on original series like* Dexter.
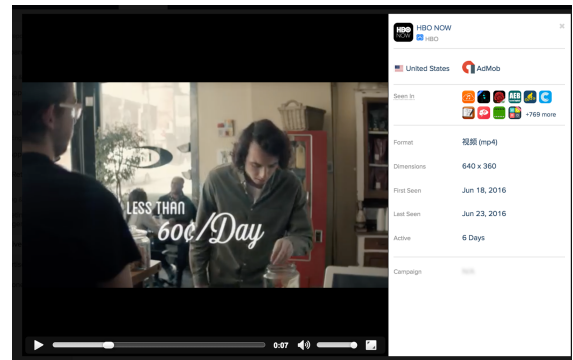
HBO NOW *communicates the streaming service's price advantage compared to traditional TV.*

Shopping is a vertical that tends to favor creative advertising campaigns. Cartwheel by Target has recently released video ad campaigns which strive to grab viewers attention through initial entertainment, ending the ad with a brief view of the *Cartwheel by Target* app interface. This differs from ads of other shopping apps, which typically showcase available products or app features that enhance the shopping experience. For example, Amazon's recent video ad focuses on product search and in-store shopping features.
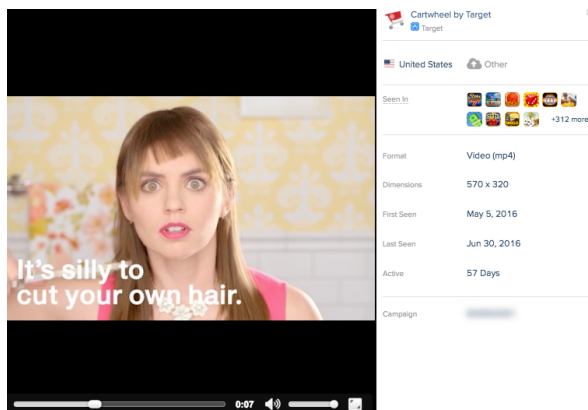
Cartwheel by Target's *ad seeks to grab viewers' attention.*
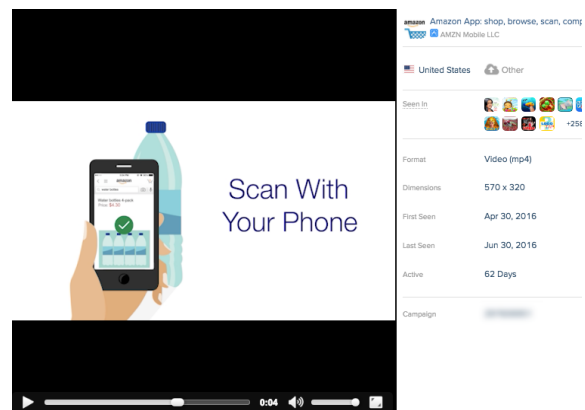
Amazon *communicates the usability of the app's features.*

Campaign Strategies

Marketing Intelligence has the ability to collect a wide range of in-app ads, allowing full visibility into competitor's UA strategy. In general, campaign creative strategies typically fall into one of the three broad categories: mass market appeal with neutral creatives, mass market appeal with segmented creatives and creatives targeted at core segments.

Mass Market Appeal With Neutral Creatives

There are several different ways to craft a neutral creative that appeals to a broad audience. This messaging can be driven by product, brand or celebrity.

Product-Driven

Creative images or videos that fall under this category are geared to explain how the advertised app's functionality or gameplay works.
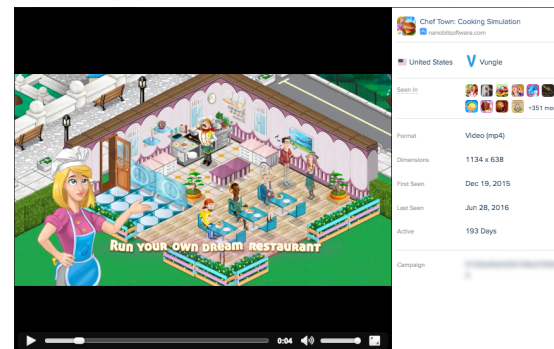
Brand-Driven

These creatives are designed with the assumption that ad viewers are already familiar with the functionality of the app. Instead, the goal of the ad is to enhance brand recall.

Celebrity-Driven

These creatives are very similar to product-focused creatives, except that they rely on celebrity endorsements to attract consumer attention and generate awareness. MZ's _Game of War – Fire Age_ and subsequently _Mobile Strike_ have used this strategy to great effect.
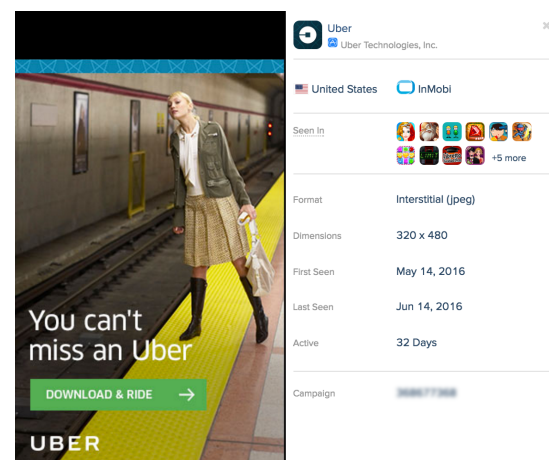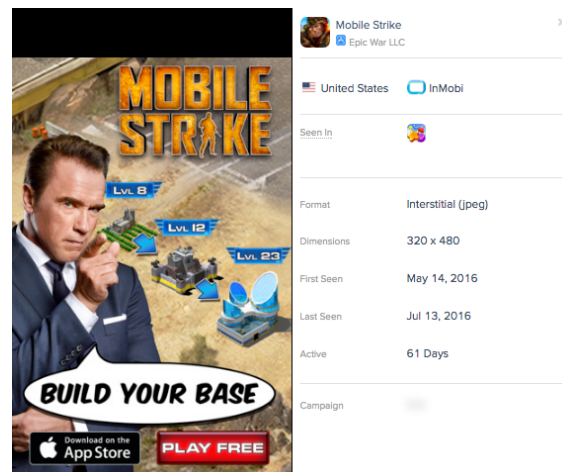

Mass Market Appeal With Segmented Creatives

In this category, the advertiser's ultimate goal is to gain mass market appeal but it is accomplished through segmenting the creatives to various groups. Creatives can be segmented by a variety of categories, including region, proximity, gender and interests. For example, _Instagram_ runs multiple ad styles, each highlighting a different product proposition, to speak to the varying priorities of its user segments.

Social Focus

Photography Focus
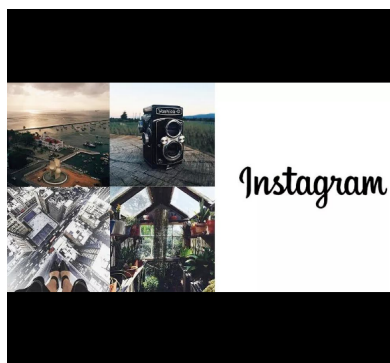
Artistic Focus

Creatives Targeted at Core Segments

Creatives in this category are targeted purely at the app advertiser's target market. This increases the likelihood of attracting their core segment compared with neutral

messaging. For example, according to _Audience Intelligence_, _Sing! Karaoke_'s Android phone user base skews more toward 13–24-year-old females as compared to other music apps. Accordingly, a majority of its ad campaigns feature young women.

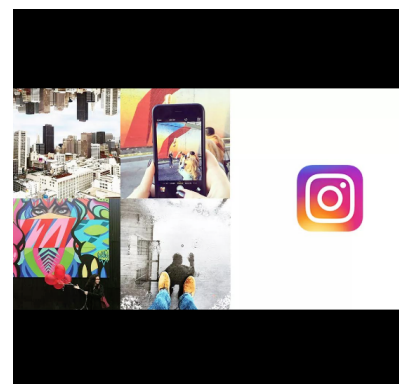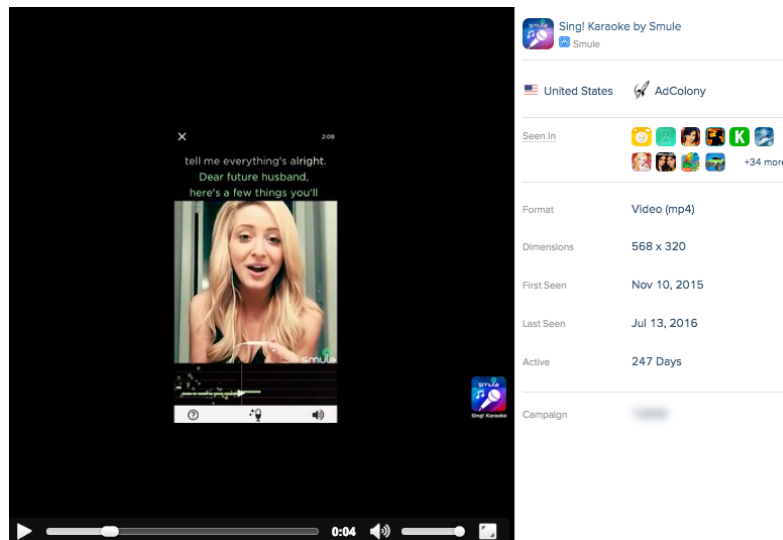## Recap of Competitive Insights Into Ad Creatives and Placements

- Ad networks' compositions and top advertisers can change on a weekly basis, prompting publishers to keep an active eye on where their competitors are advertising. This can be key to active strategy implementation on which ad networks to place their ads and which type of creative.

- Ad volume share trends help advertisers identify their competitors' long-term vs. short-term ad campaigns and tailor their own advertising strategies accordingly. A dual-sided opportunity arises: either invest in a concurrent campaign on a competitor's ad network to gain the mindshare of their audience or capitalize on the competitor's lower-volume partners.

- Advertiser volume trends from week to week provide the following insights:
  - _SHOWTIME_'s recent surge up the download rankings coincided with an increase in ad volume, just in time for the US premieres of original series _Ray Donovan_ and _Roadies_.

　　　　appannie.com/marketing-intelligence

- ○ Supercell made a splash on China's iPhone Chartboost network with two games ranking in the top 10 by ad impressions: *Clash Royale* and *Clash of Clans*. *Clash Royale*'s new attention-grabbing video ad with localized Chinese content helped boost download rankings in parallel to the increased ad volume.
  - ○ *Taichi Panda: Heroes*' ad campaign helped its noticeable download growth among Google Play games in France.
- Creative and advertiser trends are key inputs to inform a publisher's UA strategy. In particular, the creative gallery helps advertisers understand the advertising strategies and target markets of their competitors as well as assess what execution is effective.

📊 **The Technology Behind the Report**

The information contained in this report was compiled from *App Annie Intelligence*, the leading market data solution for the app economy. To see how our app store download, revenue, demographic and usage estimates can help guide your critical business decisions, take a tour or request a demo today.

About App Annie

App Annie delivers the most trusted app data and insights for your business to succeed in the global app economy. Over 500,000 registered members rely on App Annie to better understand the app market, their businesses and the opportunities around them. The company is headquartered in San Francisco with 450 employees across 15 global offices. App Annie has received $157 million in financing from investors such as e.Ventures, Greenspring Associates, Greycroft Partners, IDG Capital Partners, Institutional Venture Partners and Sequoia Capital. Learn more at www.appannie.com.

Report methodology and updates are available here.