Cint

Game on: Tracking the value of in-game advertising

How in-game advertising is transforming media measurement

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Introduction

What was once a niche hobby is now seriously big business.

It may have taken around half a century to get there, but the video game industry has positioned itself as the biggest money maker in entertainment, with global gaming revenue towering over box office takings for films.

That shift from minority interest to major concern hasn't just impacted gamers.

The seemingly unstoppable rise of video games is also garnering increasing attention from brands and marketers seeking to reach audiences in immersive, interactive environments.

Despite the potential huge audience share, a 2024 report found that only 5% of ad spend is currently funneled toward video games.

By placing image, video, and audio ads inside video games, in-game advertising (IGA) offers brands a way to connect with audiences during active, immersive moments.

This report examines how gamers and advertisers alike are adapting to shifts in both industries.

Combining research conducted through Cint Snap — a way to survey individuals and understand opinions quickly — and insights provided by Kathryn Failon, Senior Director of Data and Measurement at Cint, and Elissa Trottman, Cint's Team Lead, DSM Project Success, it explores just how important video games are to cross-platform measurement in 2025 and beyond.

The state of play

**Examining the rise of in-game advertising.**

IGA is nearly as old as gaming itself, with British publication Edge dating it back to 1978, when US developer Creative Computing Software included an in-game ad for their next title in Adventureland, a text-based adventure game.

As video games have become more sophisticated, so have IGA opportunities. While there are numerous ways to introduce games into your cross-platform campaign strategy, some of the most common methods include:

Interstitial ads: Full-screen ad placements that temporarily take over the game interface, typically shown at natural breaks—like level completions or pause screens.

Non-interruptive digital billboard ads: Brands and agencies can integrate their campaign into video game environments through the digital replication of the traditional Out-of-Home experience.

Opt-in video ads: These voluntary video ads provide in-game incentives to players who choose to engage, tapping into the universal appeal of rewards.
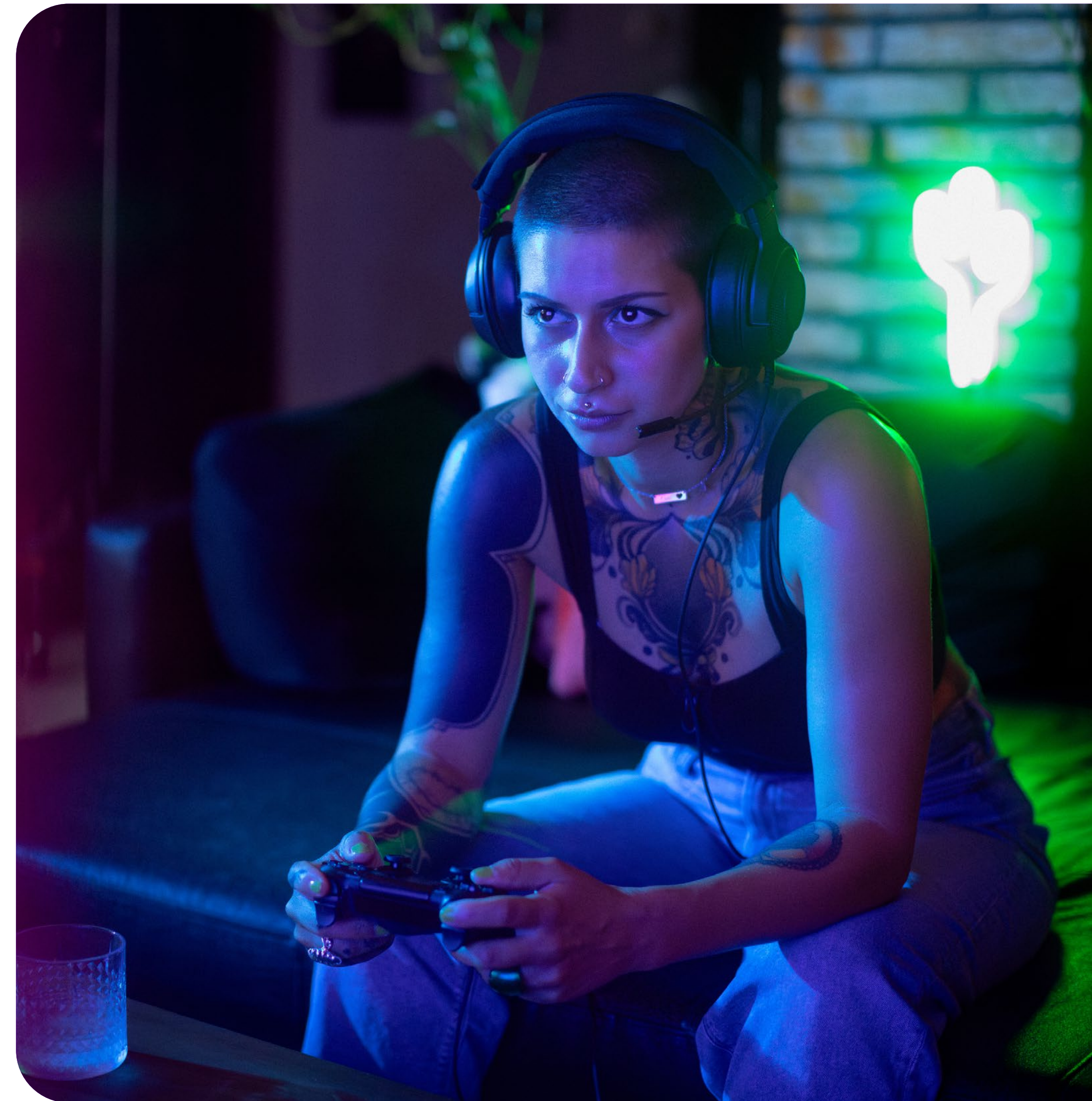
In-game advertising presents brands with an additional channel to engage with consumers, having the potential to enhance both brand visibility and favorability, while equipping marketers with the data points that allow them to understand cross-platform campaign performance.

"Gamers, often stereotyped as being antisocial men locked away in their basements, are in reality an active and niche audience, consisting of both women and men, participating in highly interactive and oftentimes social experiences," says Kathryn Failon, explaining why brands are increasingly looking to target gamers with their campaigns.

"As attention fragments across the media landscape, the growing availability of in-game advertising units and environments has led to an increased presence of brands in these spaces as they seek to get in front of more engaged consumers."

"Operationally, the way we measure and recruit sample for in-game advertising doesn't really differ from other platforms or channels," says Elissa Trotman, Team Lead, DSM Customer Success. "What matters is how we are receiving the impressions and what we are approved to place our tag on which is true of any platform or channel."

The benefits of in-game advertising

What's in it for advertisers and brands?

"The gaming landscape is broad and inclusive of a wide range of demographics that varies across devices and titles," Failon says. "For brands looking to go beyond generating awareness and wanting to connect with diverse players in their online worlds, buying in-game ads is a strategy worth considering."

IGA is a relatively new frontier for advertisers, so it is worth considering if the measurement approach for IGA opportunities differs from more established and traditional forms of campaign analysis.

"In addition to being held to their own impression counting guidelines per the IAB, most if not all in-game environments, much like social media walled gardens, are cookieless and do not support measurement solutions requiring tagging or a pixel," says Failon.

69%

of respondents said they play video games on their mobile devices.

38%

of respondents stated that desktop or laptops are their primary platform for playing games.

How should brands and agencies think about benchmarking in-game ad performance relative to more established digital formats like display or video?

Failion describes it as an apples and oranges comparison, with each advertising format needing differentiated metrics for success and to be viewed as complimentary parts of a cross-platform campaign.

"For instance, in-game ads are meant to be non-intrusive and oftentimes are not even clickable since the impact of interrupting the gaming experience could lead to negative brand perception. There could be value in retargeting users who have seen an in-game ad on a different channel where the call to action is more conversion based."

Press start to play

Unpacking how gamers get their fix.

Video gaming is a deeply ingrained part of daily life for many consumers.

To better understand current player habits and platform preferences, we surveyed a group of 300 US-based respondents. The results offer a clear picture of how and where people are playing today.

Just under half of those surveyed **(49%)** said they played video games every single day. Additionally, **22%** of respondents pick up a controller several times a week, and further **11%** find themselves playing games several times over the course of a month. **18%** never play video games.

In terms of where respondents play games, mobile devices were way out in front: **69%** of people polled turn to their phone when they want to spend time with a game. Desktop or laptop computers are the primary platform for **38%** of respondents, while nearly a third **(32%)** gravitate toward TV-tethered video game consoles. **15%** of those questioned primarily play on handheld consoles.

When it comes to the ongoing 'console wars' — a three-way battle slugged out in 2025 between Microsoft, Nintendo, and Sony — our poll suggests that Sony has Microsoft beat, with the Playstation 5 being the preferred console of choice for **31%** of respondents.

49%

of respondents said they played video games every single day.

Are in-game ads actually effective?

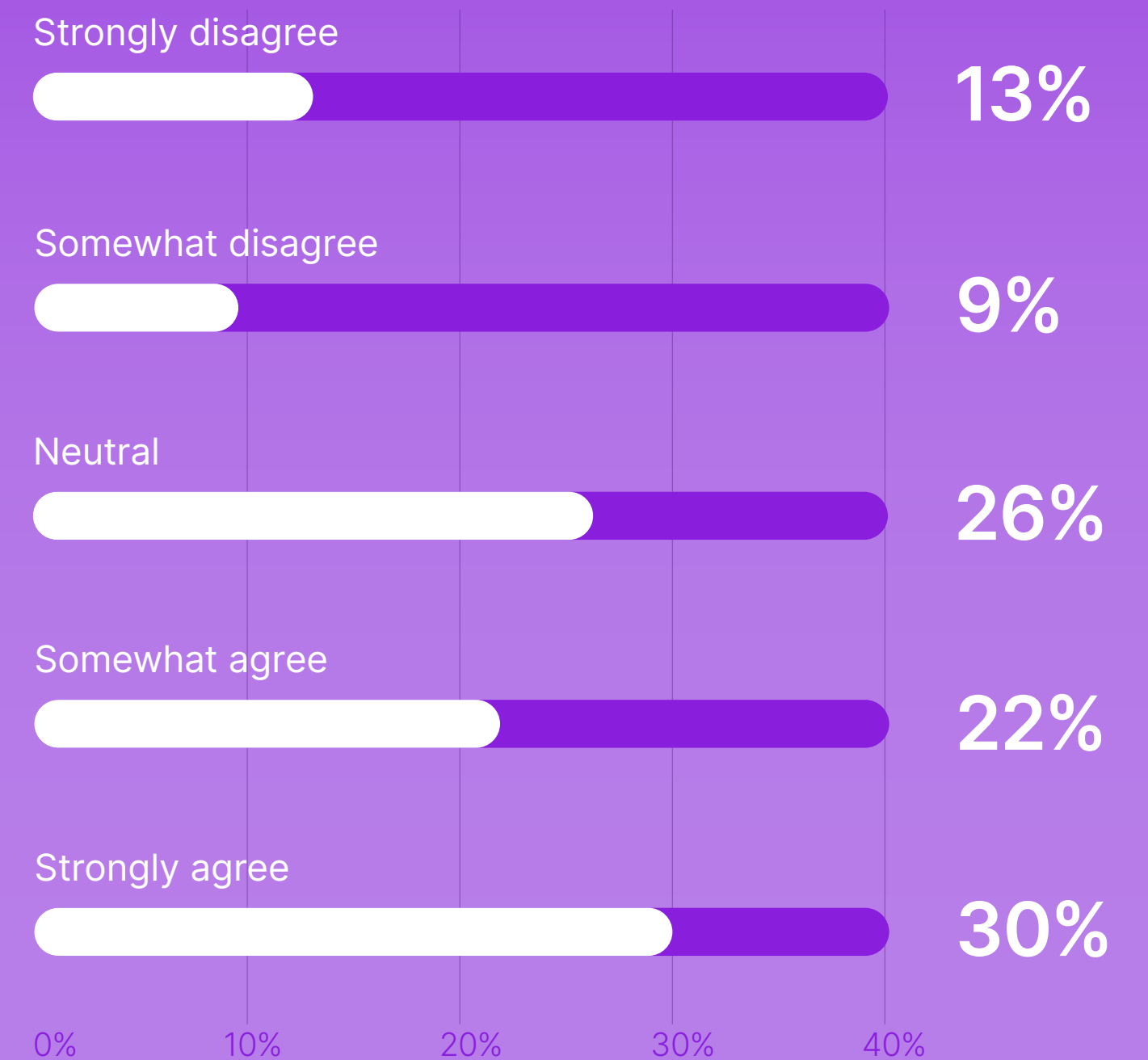**Surveying consumer opinions on IGAs.**

Now that we've explored what in-game advertising consists of, and how it can be beneficial to brands, our attention turns to what respondents actually make of ad-integration into gameplay.

Survey-takers were asked how much they agreed with the following statement: **In-game advertising enhances my overall gaming experience when done correctly.**

Just over half **(52%)** reported that strongly or somewhat agreed that a judiciously placed ad does enhance their experience, indicating that ads done well are worth doing for brands looking to capture the attention of consumers who have an active relationship with video games.

Ad sentiment

Do in-game adverts enhance my overall gaming experience when done correctly?

Strongly disagree

13%

Somewhat disagree

9%

Neutral

26%

Somewhat agree

22%

Strongly agree

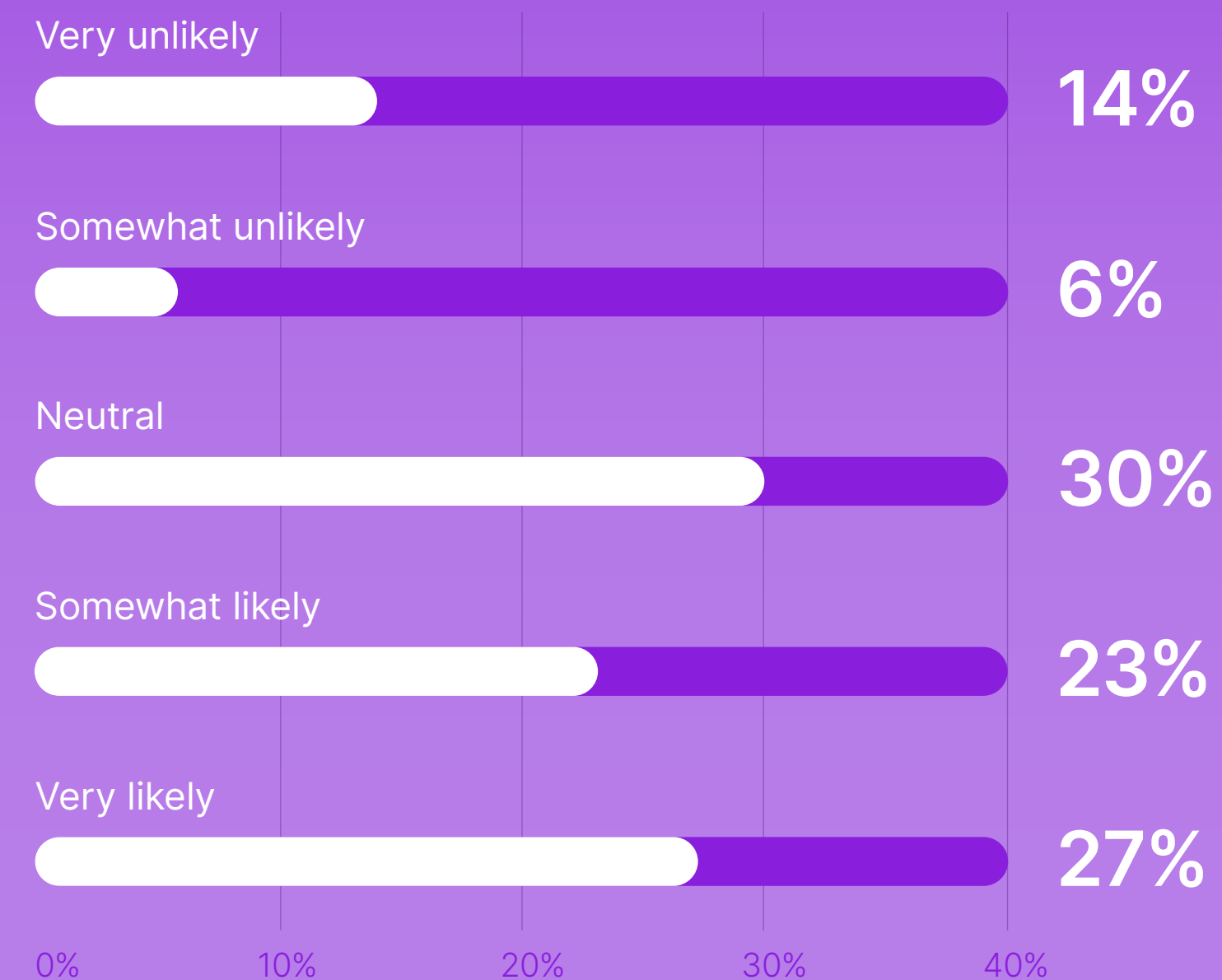**30%**

0%   10%   20%   30%   40%

When it comes to an in-game ad motivating consumers to make purchases, our results show that, broadly speaking, consumers are likely to open their wallets after seeing a product advertised in a game they enjoy playing.
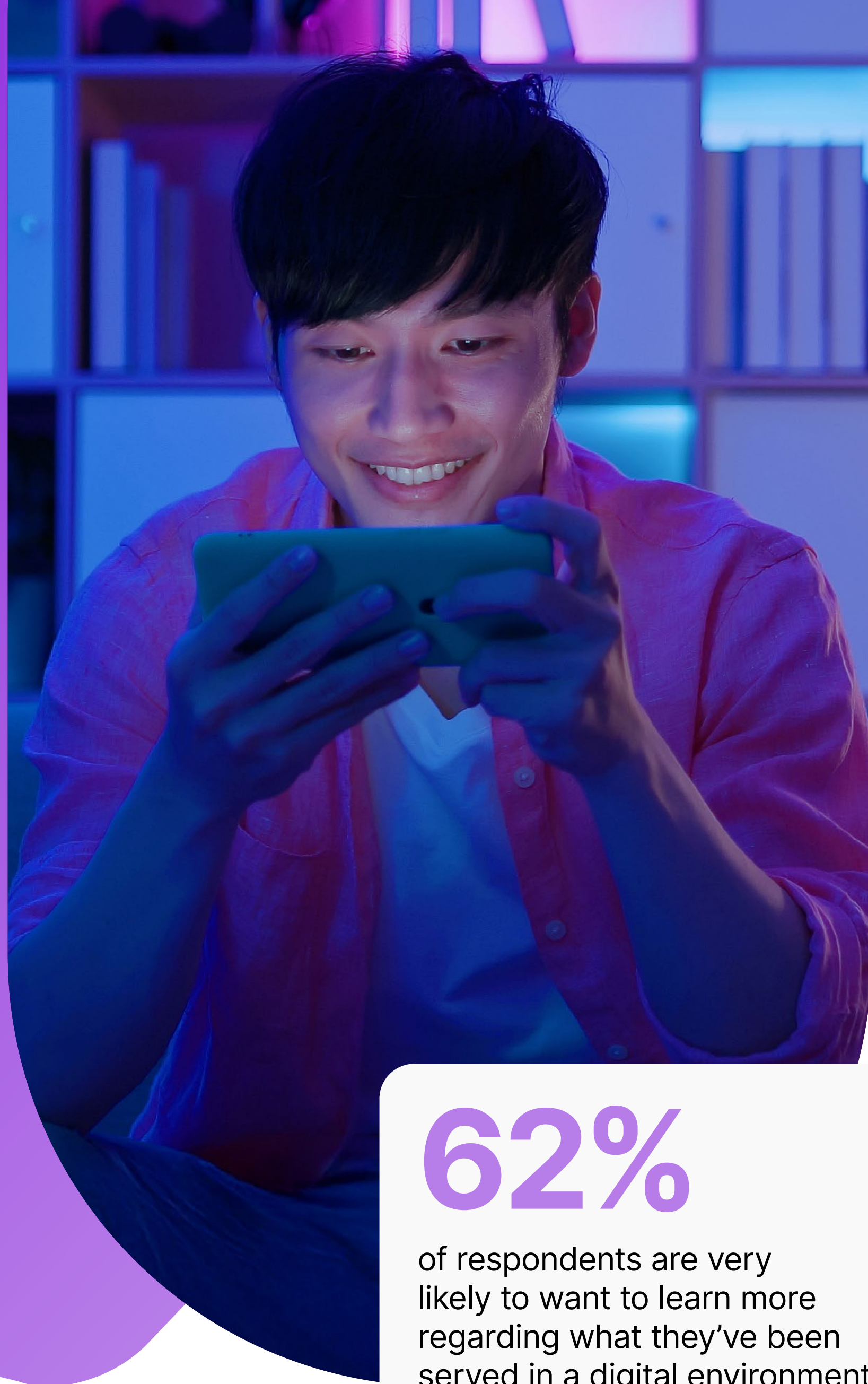
Exactly **one in two** people surveyed by Cint stated that they'd make a purchase based on in-game advertising.

Nearly a third **(30%)** polled neutrally on the topic, while a fifth **(20%)** were either very or somewhat unlikely to purchase a product they'd had advertised to them in the midst of a gaming session.

Purchase intent

How likely are you to purchase a product if you see it advertised in a video game you enjoy?

Very unlikely
14%

Somewhat unlikely
6%

Neutral
30%

Somewhat likely
23%

Very likely
27%

0%   10%   20%   30%   40%

As per our findings, consumers are also likely to have their interest piqued by a product if they're presented with it in the form of an in-game advertisement.

62% of respondents are very or somewhat likely to want to learn more about something they've been served in a virtual environment. In contrast, **16%** indicated that being advertised to in this way wouldn't generate any interest in finding out further details about the product in question.

Purchase consideration

How likely are you to seek out more information about a product or service you saw advertised in a video game?

Very unlikely
11%

Somewhat unlikely
5%

Neutral
22%

Somewhat likely
32%

Very likely
30%

0%   10%   20%   30%   40%

62%

of respondents are very likely to want to learn more regarding what they've been served in a digital environment.
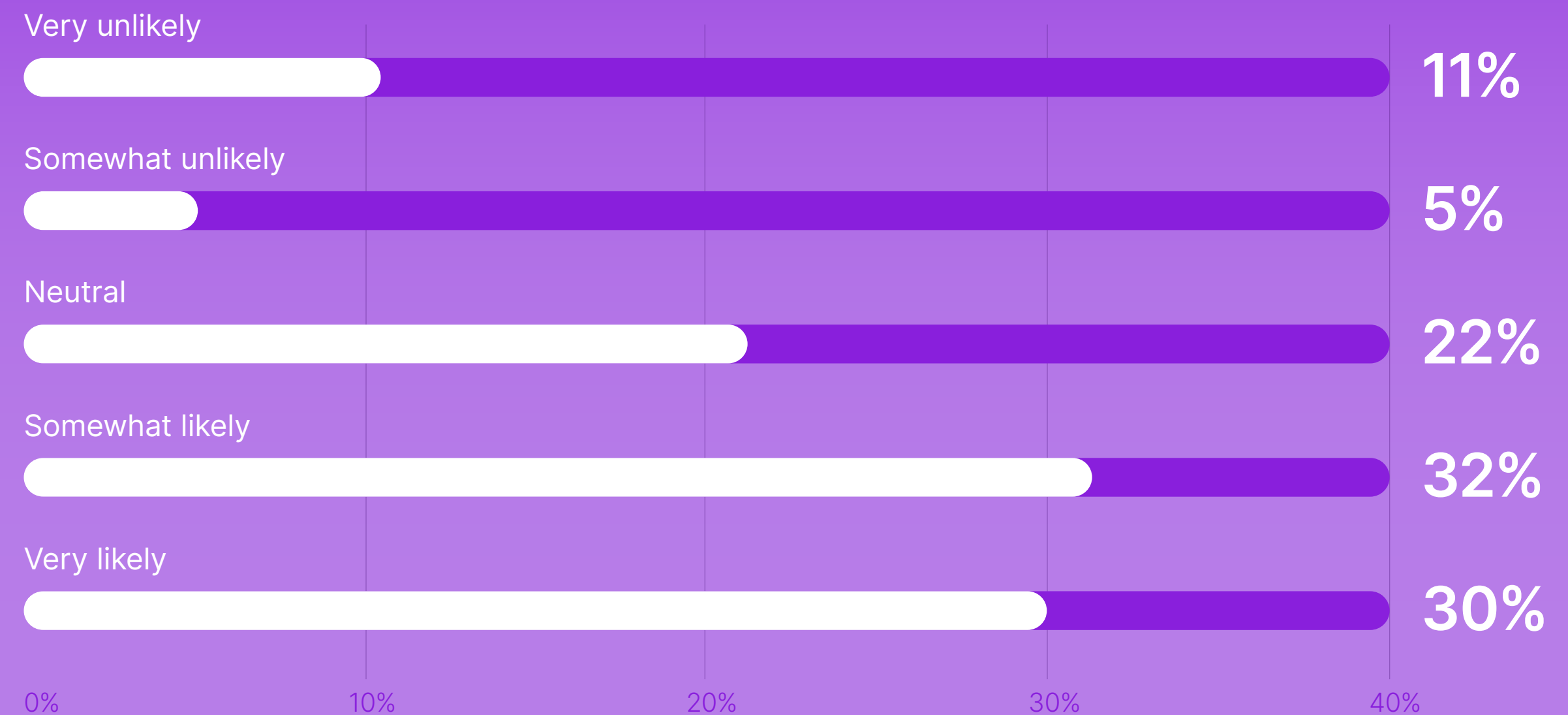
The challenges of in-game advertising

There's evidently a desire on the part of brands to continue exploring the potential and possibilities of running campaigns in virtual worlds, and our survey shows that gamers are receptive to being advertised to in this manner.

What, though, are the current biggest challenges in measuring the effectiveness of in-game advertising across platforms? And how might they be solved in the near future?

"Establishing standards of measurement is one of the biggest challenges facing the in-game advertising industry in addition to remaining privacy compliant with users' personal data," says Failon.

Scalable and accurate measurement of in-game advertising impact is being enhanced by innovations in data collection and privacy-compliant tracking. Failon highlights server-to-server (S2S) integrations as a key emerging workflow.

31%
of respondents stated that the Playstation 5 is their preferred console of choice.

16%

of respondents declared that being advertised in-game would not generate any interest in finding out about the product.

"Integrations of that kind support scalable measurement of in-game advertising by facilitating the privacy compliant exchange of data directly between tech stacks rather than relying on a user's personal device."

In the near future, addressing these challenges will require a concerted effort towards industry-wide collaboration to define and adopt universal measurement standards.

Coupled with the continued development and widespread implementation of privacy-preserving technologies like S2S integrations, the in-game advertising landscape can move towards a more transparent, accountable, and scalable measurement framework, instilling greater confidence for advertisers and media professionals.

Conclusion

The gaming industry has unequivocally transformed from a niche hobby into a dominant entertainment powerhouse, attracting significant attention from brands seeking engaged audiences in immersive environments.

As we've explored in this report, IGA offers a powerful channel for brand visibility and favorability through various formats, from non-interruptive billboards to opt-in video ads. This shift is driven by the recognition of gamers as a diverse and active audience, challenging outdated stereotypes.

Our research further highlights that consumers are receptive to well-executed in-game ads, with over half agreeing they enhance the gaming experience and a significant portion indicating a likelihood to make purchases or learn more about advertised products.

Moving forward, establishing industry-wide measurement standards and continuing to leverage advanced, privacy-centric data solutions will be crucial for unlocking the full potential of in-game advertising in cross-platform media measurement.

Feeding the world's curiosity.

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