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Beauty In Gaming: A New Marketing Frontier With A Captive (And Increasingly Female) Audience

by [Eileen Francis](#)

Per Lisa Hau, Bidstack's chief strategy officer, "Gaming has an audience that is undeniable. It reaches one-third of the world's population and continues to grow." And the average gamer is not the popularly imagined anti-social teenage male, as "45% of gamers are now female, and the average age sits comfortably at 34 years old." It's a compelling opportunity for beauty brands, Bidstack says.

Fans of Maximum Games, Inc.'s "Curved Space" – available on PC, PlayStation and Xbox – may be acquainted with the Phantom robot, which can serve players as a controllable companion as they battle cosmic spiders and navigate gunfire and plunging starlit contours in the "weirdest reaches of space."

Both Curved Space and the Phantom robot debuted in 2021. The latter was added to players' toolbox through a collaboration involving Maximum Games, Bidstack Group PLC – a leading in-game advertising and video game monetization platform – and Puig's fashion house and fragrance brand Paco Rabanne.

Paco Rabanne's luxury men's fragrance, Phantom, launched earlier that year in a bottle shaped like a robot.

According to Bidstack's November 2021 announcement, "The [Phantom] character is playful and fun, breaking the fourth wall at certain points with emotion animations whilst showcasing the Phantom bottle beautifully by capturing light and reflections and moving in a dynamic, responsive, and realistic way."

Bidstack adds, “It is the first time a fragrance has featured in a game as a playable character, and the campaign acts as a fine example of Paco Rabanne’s innovative approach to engaging their target audience in a way that respects and enhances the end-user experience.”



BIDSTACK'S LISA HAU, CHIEF STRATEGY OFFICER

Beauty industry players may or may not be familiar with Curved Space, but they should be aware of the growing opportunity for beauty marketing in the world of gaming, Bidstack says.

“I’d say in the next 12 to 24 months, we’ll see more brands generally enter into incorporating gaming as part of their media mix,” said Lisa Hau, chief strategy officer at Bidstack, a London-based company that bridges the gap between interactive entertainment and advertisers, according to its website.

In the view of Bidstack and its clients, gaming is “the next media channel” on account of its popularity among coveted consumer demographics and the connection it affords that isn’t possible in TV and

magazines.

“There is a real sort of sense that gaming is the ‘third place’ where consumers spend their time” after home and work/school, Hau said. “It’s quite immersive and it’s the top of the funnel in terms of brand awareness. When you’re playing, you don’t look away. You’re quite captive in terms of the game play. ... It’s not like watching television where you can be on your phone.”

Hau noted that online gaming reaches one-third of the world’s population and a “very attractive audience that skews younger.”

Young men continue to make up the largest portion of that audience, driving collaborations such as L’Oreal Men Expert’s team-up with London-based professional esports organization Fnatic in January 2022.

The Estee Lauder Companies, Inc.’s men’s skin-care brand Lab Series inked a sponsorship deal in 2019 with the League of Legends team of Chinese esports organization Invictus Gaming.

Bidstack launched a dedicated sports division in January 2023 and announced a multiyear technology partnership with SimWin Sports, the world’s first digital sports league, according to the release. The firm has worked on sports gaming campaigns for well-known cosmetics,

personal care and fragrance brands, including a 2021 campaign for Paco Rabanne's luxury fragrance Invictus (*see box below*).

Bidstack and Turborilla created a campaign for Beiersdorf AG's Nivea Men skin care which placed the brand in online racing and sports games including Mad Skills Motocross 2, with track-side signs reading, "Get Fresh, Be Fresh," alongside Nivea Men products. The campaign ran in Spring 2022 across key European markets, Bidstack said.



NIVEA MEN ADVERTISING IN MAD SKILLS MOTOCROSS 2

Hau acknowledged one aspect of advertising in online games that gives some companies pause: "The format isn't clickable."

However, she said, "it's building up brand equity, and the results for brand uplift and perceptions have been quite attractive. It's important for advertisers to see that ROI."

Changing Gamer = Gamechanger

While still dominated by young men, the gaming population is rapidly growing more diverse. "In only two years, the percentage of gamers aged 55-64 has also grown by a whopping 32%," notes Bidstack. More intriguing for beauty brands, 45% of gamers today are

female, with the average age around 34.

Specifically, PC sports gaming skews male, but mobile game play is evenly split between males and females. Hau noted Kings Candy Crush as having a large audience of females around the age of 35, which is the demographic largely making family purchasing decisions.

Bidstack cites data from London-based consumer insights platform GWI indicating that 39% of beauty and cosmetics fans enjoy playing video games, and 22% enjoy esports. Further, "Beauty fans that game are more receptive to advertising and appreciate the quality of luxury products, being 52% more likely than the general population to buy the brands they've seen advertised, and 43% more likely to buy the premium versions of these products," the firm says.

Studies Bidstack conducted with partner Lumen Research Limited, an "attention technology" firm with eye-tracking software to monitor where gamers are looking while they play, found that ads dropped into games for brands in luxury, retail, technology, banking and hospitality outperformed traditional digital advertising. In some cases, gamers viewed the ads for double the length of time, comparatively.

Some of the biggest names in beauty already are actively exploring the gaming space.

E.l.f. Cosmetics, Inc. was an early entrant, partnering in November 2020 with the second most-followed female gamer on livestreaming platform Twitch and launching a limited-edition cosmetics and skin-care collection specifically to gamers in July 2022. (Also see "[E.l.f. Has A Go At Twitch Crowd, Hitching Wagon To #Loserfruit](#)" - HBW Insight, 23 Nov, 2020.)

The Estee Lauder Companies, Inc.'s MAC developed cosmetic artistry looks for The Sims life simulation video games and in 2020 rolled out a makeup collection inspired by Honor of Kings, "the world's most-played mobile MOBA [multiplayer online battle arena]," through a reported partnership with publisher Tencent.

At the Estee Lauder's brand's [ANRcade microsite](#), visitors can learn about Advanced Night Repair Synchronized Multi-Recovery Complex and play video games to earn "youth-generating power points."

Meanwhile, L'Oréal SA's NYC Professional Makeup opened its own interactive makeup sampling space last year on the Roblox gaming platform. (Also see "[L'Oréal Exploring New Ways To Put Virtual Makeup On Consumer Avatars In Digital Worlds](#)" - HBW Insight, 21 Dec, 2022.)

Playing With Dolls

Hau said women are flocking to sites that

Case Study Of Gaming Ad Effectiveness: Paco Rabanne Invictus

Bidstack Group PLC worked with advertising agency Starcom Worldwide to develop a campaign for Puig's Paco Rabanne Invictus fragrance for holiday 2021. The campaign set out to "elevate Invictus above the competition by engaging the target audience through their passion points in new environments," Bidstack explains on its website.

After the fragrance brand identified soccer, sports, nutrition and fitness as "key passion points" for its target audience, Bidstack and Starcom determined sports gaming the ideal channel.

The campaign set out to position Invictus as an "authentic" part of the gaming experience, first through "seamless branded activations that would simulate the real world in virtual environments with in-game ads delivered onto The Scent of Victory pitch-side billboards, trackside banners and across other sporting venues," according to Bidstack.

Bidstack and Starcom created a virtual reality event, the "Invictus Challenge," where players could take on a sporting icon in an immersive training environment featuring Invictus branding.

Seventy-two percent of impressions reached adults 18-34, the target audience, with each unique player spending 20.88 minutes engaging with the in-game ads across the

combine gaming with fashion and shopping. She pointed to DREST, a gaming company that launched last year that “merges the creative worlds of luxury fashion, beauty and lifestyle with the infinite possibilities of the metaverse.” The site allows visitors to dress supermodels in high-fashion brands and style their hair and makeup.

“It’s like a styling game, it’s like playing with your dolls. And there are brand partnerships,” mostly in the areas of fashion and some in beauty, she said. Those include reported deals with Gucci Beauty, NARS, and Bakeup, a “digital-first” beauty brand developed by London-based celebrity makeup artist Joe Baker and LA-based recording artist Grace Gaudstad.

Visitors to the site can apply cosmetics to their avatars while other viewers rate their looks. “I think that’s actually quite a clever way of advertising for brands introducing new products,” Hau said.

She added there is also value in the data feedback aspect of the site. “That’s very attractive for brands in terms of, you know, what color lipstick was chosen? You get to learn a lot about the consumer, and I think we’ll see more of that.”

campaign. More than 15,000 people took on the virtual reality challenge, Bidstack notes.

The campaign increased purchase intent and improved brand perception among the target audience, with 24% of those exposed to the campaign saying they are “likely” or “very likely” to purchase from Paco Rabanne in the future, versus 15% of those not exposed to the campaign, according to Bidstack.

“As the metaverse evolves, beauty brands and other advertisers who lean into this new frontier have an opportunity to uniquely shape the future of advertising, moving away from the fragmented interruptive formats we see now,” Bidstack says.