

Nativex



Creative Marketing Playbook:

STRATEGY GAMES



TABLE OF CONTENTS

3	FOREWORD
5	Creative Types Using Different Styles to Skillfully Attract Players
6	Live-action: Deep Localization, Long Life Cycle
7	2D Editing: Refined Product Features
8	UE4 Video: Strong Audio-visual Impact, Larger Display Space
9	Playable Interactive Ads: Simulate Real Games and Stimulate User Engagement
11	Popular Ideas SLG Innovative Themes Emerge, and Advertising Keeps Pace with Iteration
12	Generate Ideas Based on Game Functions
13	Generate Ideas Based on Realistic Scenarios / Interpersonal Relationships
17	Generate Ideas Using Imagination
19	Promotion Strategy Matching Advertising Strategies for the Promoting Stage
20	Pre-registration Period: Polishing content
20	Promotional Period: Guarantee quality
21	Stable Promotion Period: Frequent advertising
22	Solutions Global Creative Solutions for Real Growth
23	Overseas Creative Models
24	Nativex Creative Solutions
26	EPILOGUE





FOREWORD

The North American market, the world's largest market for mobile games, is growing rapidly. According to a joint report released by US market research institutions NPD and Sensor Tower, the number of active mobile game players in the US and Canada reached 228.7 million in 2021. In terms of revenue, the US gaming market reached upwards of \$15.3 billion in 2019 and is expected to reach \$22.8 billion in 2022.


Strategy games (SLG) have been thriving. In this genre alone, the total revenue of the US market in 2022 is expected to reach \$7.01 billion, and the market size is expected to reach \$9.35 billion in 2026.

In addition to the broader market space, **SLG games with high ARPU values have always been a popular path for Chinese developers.** In the past ten years of helping game developers to grow globally, Nativex has found that SLG games made by Chinese companies are popular in global markets almost every year.

Since SLGs have a long life cycle, continuously maintaining user acquisition and player retention is crucial. Advertising is an important starting point for game developers, and **creative advertising is the key to ensuring growth.** As a global mobile marketing expert, Nativex has accumulated deep experience in SLG growth, helping top SLG developers expand into global markets and capture the growing demand.

With the practical experience of first-line marketing, Nativex's goal is to provide a creative marketing guide around the SLG category in the US market, bringing you analysis and insights, along with in-depth case studies.

- INSIGHTS BY TOPWORKS GLOBAL CREATIVE STUDIO OF NATIVEX
- MATERIAL REFERENCE BY C.A.S - CREATIVE ANALYSIS SYSTEM (OVERSEAS EDITION) OF MORE THAN DATA RESEARCH



In the first half of 2022, 13,588 mobile game ad creative videos hit the global market, accounting for 86% of all ad creative types. This means that video advertising remains the No. 1 ad format for mobile game advertising. In H1 2022, the number of strategy game advertisers ranked third in terms of the share of game advertisers by genre, with a share of 9.64%.

Data shows that **videos with uniform and rough content cause viewing fatigue, and more handicapped users look forward to seeing placement ads in sophisticated audio-visual language.** Based on their long life cycle, SLGs must continuously maintain user acquisition and player retention. This results in the quality and performance of creative content becoming the key to growth. Advertisers must capture user attention and increase the number of quality players.

To keep North American players who already experience countless game ads, game developers need more attractive creatives that resonate with players.

CREATIVE TYPES

LIVE-ACTION, 2D EDITING,
UE4 VIDEO, PLAYABLE
INTERACTIVE ADS

Use Different Formats to Attract Players

SLG games advertising in the form of **live-action**, **2D editing**, **UE4 video**, and **playable interactive ads**. While the different formats have corresponding focuses, it varies in what they can achieve.

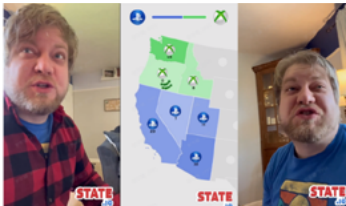


LIVE-ACTION

Deep Localization, Long Life Cycle

Due to the mature film and entertainment industry, North American gamers are more interested in live-action creatives. **Live-action videos can be highly integrated and used in a variety of ways. For example, 2D / 3D videos of game footage can be embedded into episodes to achieve better content delivery.** Live-action video can be used to present rich content in the language of film and television, while at the same time, it can be used to combine real culture with game content to enhance the appeal of the advertisement.

Usually, SLGs contain a lot of social elements. Videos of real-life interactions can be well integrated with different scenarios, reflecting the player's warfare / army / partnership. Utilizing both real-life humans and virtual game characters can better attract users and drive their emotions.



SOURCE: C.A.S (OVERSEAS EDITION)
OF MORE THAN DATA RESEARCH

Production
Difficulty:



Localization
Difficulty:



Content
Clarity:



Impact
Rating:




2D Editing

Refined Product Features

The most original game form, 2D, can effectively show the content and characteristics of the game itself. The simplistic production and low cost of 2D clips make it a go-to for many SLG games. However, its simplicity has saturated the market and tends to have a short life cycle.

Gamers in the European and American markets prefer quality live-action content, so there is less content that contains purely game clips. Generally, game developers tend to embed game clips into live-action scenarios or UE4 creatives, with trendy music to high-light videos.

	Production Difficulty:	★ ★
	Localization Difficulty:	★ ★
	Content Clarity:	★ ★ ★
	Impact Rating:	★ ★ ★


SOURCE: C.A.S (OVERSEAS EDITION) OF MORE THAN DATA RESEARCH

UE4 Video

Strong Audio-visual Impact, Larger Display Space

UE4 videos are more complex than live-action and 2D clips, thanks to virtual engine technology.

For example, the battles often seen in the world of SLG games can be shown in all dimensions through UE4 video. It has the ability to show the detailed features of the characters and equipment to a greater extent. For creative directors, UE4 video also gives them more room to create video content with more dramatic in-game conflict.

	Production Difficulty:	★★★★
	Localization Difficulty:	★★★
	Content Clarity:	★★
	Impact Rating:	★★★★★

SOURCE: C.A.S (OVERSEAS EDITION) OF MORE THAN DATA RESEARCH



Playable Interactive Ads


Simulate Real Games and Stimulate User Engagement

Playable ads are a form of HTML5 that transforms advertisements into mini-games, allowing players to experience them without downloading. This helps games gain more exposure and reach more potential users. Most SLG developers are currently hesitant about this format because of the perceived high cost and technical requirements.

With the growing popularity of mid-core and casual games, SLG games are adopting their methods for traffic buying. For example, SLGs are taking the highlights of their game and using them as playable ads to gain more downloads. **These interactive creatives can give users a better sense of what to expect from the game and help strengthen brand awareness, especially for IP-based mid-core and hardcore gaming titles.**

Playable Interactive Ads

**Simulate Real Games and Stimulate
User Engagement**



Star Wars: Galaxy Heroes

PLAY NOW

Production Difficulty:	★★★★
Localization Difficulty:	★★★
Content Clarity:	★★★★
Impact Rating:	★★★★

SOURCE: C.A.S (OVERSEAS EDITION) OF MORE THAN DATA RESEARCH





POPULAR IDEAS

SLG INNOVATIVE THEMES EMERGE, AND ADVERTISING KEEPS PACE WITH ITERATION

The emergence of new and innovative themes of SLG mobile games has naturally increased the development of more creative content. The combination of creative advertising and new game themes has helped rejuvenate the SLG audience and attract a large number of new users, which plays a crucial role in boosting the success of advertising. Through this, game developers have the ability to quickly gain insight into the creative direction of SLG games and improve the quality and efficiency of the creation of advertisements.



Generate Ideas Based on Game Functions

> Game Narration

Game narration is a creative format that shows off the game's features in a unique way.

This format is dialogue-based and features live actors performing as players, experiencing the game while commentating. Most of the commentary revolves around the game characters, game mechanics, built-in gift packs, etc. to fully showcase the game content.

Creative Tips: Considering the characteristics of SLG games, it is suggested to use narrations. Multiplayer interactive narration with back-and-forth dialogue would be more subtle. It can also be mixed with plot twists and a freeze-frame of the game logo.

Production Advice: Avoid boring single narrations - add creativity by having one person play multiple roles, evoke interpersonal storylines, and juxtaposition.



SOURCE: C.A.S (OVERSEAS EDITION) OF MORE THAN DATA RESEARCH

Generate Ideas Based on Realistic Scenarios / Interpersonal Relationships

> Getting Caught

"Getting caught" as part of a plot line has a powerful effect on game difficulty and strategy and is primarily found in live-action advertisements.

Creative Tips: By leveraging the video's speed, you can create a huge plot twist, evoke the audience's emotions, and attract attention. The focus of this creative is to highlight the extreme emotional differences that occur before and after the plot twist, such as anxiety to absurdity, sadness to laughter, etc.

Production Advice: Editing music and sound effects are vital elements for this creative type. Usually, the plot twist should be more surprising if there is a faster pacing at the beginning.



SOURCE: C.A.S (OVERSEAS EDITION) OF MORE THAN DATA RESEARCH

Generate Ideas Based on Realistic Scenarios / Interpersonal Relationships

> Social Conflict

Combine gaming with an everyday social life scenario to create a story that can resonate with users. By using the curious nature of the gaming audience, you can create entry points that naturally lead to the game's content in a social setting. **This creative can be used in SLG games to showcase elements such as comparative battle power, sieges, etc.**

Creative Tips: By using a familiar social scenario, you can embed dialogue that showcases different elements of a game. These can be topics such as improving battle power or any other insights into the game. This strategy can immerse gamers into the advertisement while communicating specific game aspects.

Production Advice: Avoid weak storylines, and include twists / contradictions in social settings to guide the audience's emotions. Multiplayer plots tend to be vague, so prioritize the characters and dialogue. Objects in social environments, such as tables, chairs, food, glasses, etc., can be fully utilized as tools to advance the plot.

Generate Ideas Based on Realistic Scenarios / Interpersonal Relationships



SOURCE: C.A.S (OVERSEAS EDITION) OF MORE THAN DATA RESEARCH



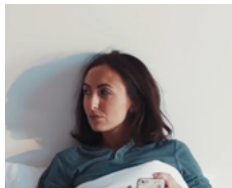
Generate Ideas Based on Realistic Scenarios / Interpersonal Relationships

> Emotional Entanglement

This creative type utilizes complex emotional relationships that use the game as a "communication language" to drive the plot. Most usually end with a showdown between two characters, leading to a winner and loser. **This is primarily seen in live-action footage and UE4 videos.**

Creative Tips: Controversial content is more likely to be sought after and favored by younger people.

Production Advice: Using dramatic scenes from popular TV shows and fusing them with realistic experiences in European / American culture is one way to create an emotional entanglement.



SOURCE: C.A.S (OVERSEAS EDITION) OF MORE THAN DATA RESEARCH

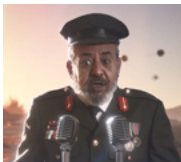
Generate Ideas Using Imagination

> Pretending to be mysterious

This type of idea usually allows for a lot of cinematic-level audiovisual language to be used. The example provided begins with the main character appearing in an imaginary environment. This was created with both visual effects and background music. However, this scene suddenly transitions to a different environment, creating an awkwardly funny situation. This sudden shift can better grab the attention of viewers. **The plot of SLG games, such as plotting sieges and capturing areas, works well with this creative type.**

Creative Tips: The quality of the audio-visual language affects the audience's attention and has the power to lead the viewer to immerse themselves in the creative.

Production Advice: Incorporate more cinematic audio-visual language and use various scenes and depth of field to achieve a more realistic and engaging view of the setting.



SOURCE: C.A.S (OVERSEAS EDITION) OF MORE THAN DATA RESEARCH

Generate Ideas Using Imagination

> Role-playing

Role-playing creatives emphasize the game's plot with content that is more aligned with the actual scenario of the game. **Many SLG themes, such as ancient, modern, and future-era, work well with role-playing creatives. This is primarily seen in live-action videos.**

Creative Tips:

Role-playing videos have a long history in the North American market and are a popular video format. This creative can easily be incorporated into film and TV and has the advantage of being produced in the mid-to-high-end grade.

Production Advice:

The scenes, especially the costumes, must be carefully planned. It also requires a high level of localization and is more suitable for game developers with a larger testing budget.



SOURCE: C.A.S (OVERSEAS EDITION) OF MORE THAN DATA RESEARCH



PROMOTION STRATEGY

MATCHING ADVERTISING STRATEGIES FOR THE PROMOTING STAGE

The objectives of each promotion stage should be different, and the focus of creative content and strategies varies accordingly. Generally speaking, SLG games are mainly divided into the **pre-registration period, promotional period, and stable promotion period.**



Pre-registration Period: Polishing Content

As the name suggests, the goal of this promotion phase is to **obtain pre-registrations**. The direction of the advertisements placed are mainly for product promotion, IP awareness, and core gameplay display.

It is recommended to show game elements, game selling points, and classic character images; by highlighting the selling points of a game and showing actual gameplay at the beginning, it can attract potential players.

Creative Tips: Users at this stage are still unaware of the game's distinct features, so showing content that can communicate the game's features is key. We recommend promoting the game between periods of low app publication and the peak seasons.

Creative Keywords: Brand Promotional Videos, Character & Gameplay Graphics, Game IP, Review

Promotional Period: Guarantee Quality

During the pre-registration period, the main goal is to **popularize the game before it is released**.

Therefore, during the promotional period, the objective is to build user trust and increase user retention. This can be done using a spokesperson, KOL, product promotion, and IP.

Creative

Tips:

This phase requires many promotional videos to be generated; thus, production quality, quantity, and budget usually reach their peak. The timing of this promotion phase is recommended to focus on major in-game events and product updates.

Creative

Keywords:

Influencer collaboration, game IP, game gift packs, lead generation ads, quality live-action ads, CG animation ads, trendjacking ads

Stable Promotion Period - Frequent Advertising

Increasing installs and driving AEO (in-app event optimization)

is the goal during the stable promotion period. During this stage, feedback and data are essential for performance analyses, especially from potential or new users. Therefore, the main content for this phase can be live-action advertisements and video clips of the game.

Creative

Tips:

After the game has been popularized, the culture and trends of the game will gradually become more familiar to the audience. This allows you to use more of the game's culture for video ads.

Creative

Keywords:

Return gift packs, game recording, anchor commentary collaboration, game content updates, quantitative effect ads



SOLUTIONS

GLOBAL CREATIVE
SOLUTIONS
FOR REAL GROWTH

Overseas Creative Models

Considering the demand of game developers and North American users, we recommend a combination of **creative types, tags, promotion stages, and creative ideas to create quality advertisements**. Of course, this is not a one-size-fits-all approach, and will require testing.

Creative Types - A	Tags - B	Promotional Stage - C	Creative Ideas - D
- Determined by the marketing plan	- Determined by the target audiences	- Determined by the game's promotional cycle	- Determined by specific requirements - There is no limit on the number of creative ideas
Live-action	Fitness Culture	Pre-registration Period	Generate Ideas Based on Game Functions
2D Editing	Adventurous Spirit	Promotional Period	Generate Ideas Based on Realistic Scenarios / Interpersonal Relationships
UE4 Video	Fitness Movements	Stable Promotion Period	Generate Ideas Using Imagination
Playable Interactive Ads	Entertainment Trends		

A Mobvista Company



Nativex is a leading digital marketing agency providing advertisers access to the world's top traffic channels. Nativex helps brands and apps worldwide through a suite of automated user acquisition tools, influencer marketing services, and creative customization capabilities.



950M+

Daily Devices Reached

17

Offices Globally

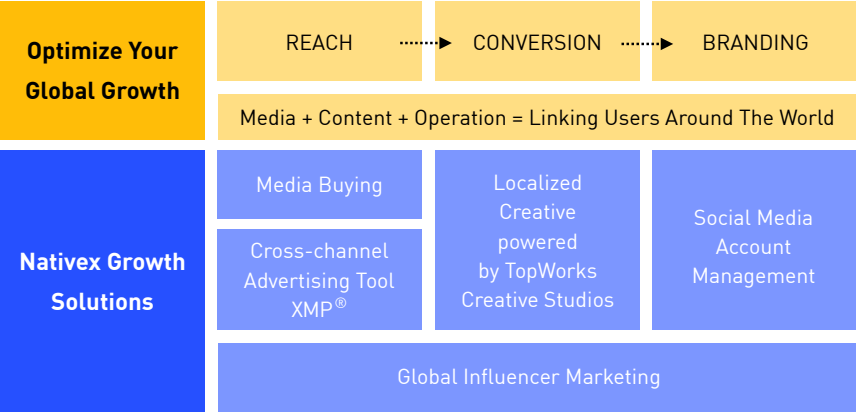
200+

Countries & Regions

3,000+

Clients Worldwide

Providing Growth Solutions Across the Entire Customer Journey



TopWorks Global Creative Network | Impactful Growth, Creative Excellence

The complex block displays creative capabilities and performance metrics. It is structured as follows:

- Creative Capabilities** (Yellow box)
- Live-action** (Grey box)
- TVC** (Grey box)
- UE4** (Grey box)
- CG** (Grey box)
- AE** (Grey box)
- Playable ads** (Grey box)
- TVC** (Image of a TV commercial)
- Live-action** (Image of a live-action commercial)
- AE** (Image of an animated commercial)
- UE4** (Image of a UE4 commercial)
- 200+** (Large blue number)
- 30+** (Large blue number)
- 90%+** (Large blue number)
- Creative Execution Teams** (Text)
- Countries and Regions Covered** (Text)
- Repurchase Rate** (Text)

EPILOGUE

For quite some time, the SLG game category has been one of the popular categories for game developers globally. Most developers start their expansion from mature markets such as the United States, and then emerging markets such as Brazil and Indonesia. From the creative perspective, many SLGs have similar gameplay and storylines, but they each have their own characteristics in terms of creative elements. This is because they can **apply various creative strategies for different markets and players**. Some key goals include figuring out how to penetrate local markets and how to create materials that can resonate with audiences - which is Nativex's specialty. Through its worldwide TopWorks creative team, Nativex provides high-quality creative strategies at controllable costs to global developers. With data from a large number of previous cases and years of experience, Nativex continue to accumulate and analyze the quality of the creative content to match the requirements of different media channels and help our clients achieve sustainable growth.

— Alan Xie,

Vice President, Nativex



EPILOGUE



Data shows that strategy games have been one of the US market's most profitable categories for three consecutive years. **To seize this opportunity, marketers and developers need to understand the needs and motivations of SLG players to create an optimal gaming experience and market it effectively.** For example, they enjoy SLG mainly for the thrill of defeating others or a sense of accomplishment, so showcasing characters and using exciting, challenging tones and storylines in creative videos can attract this group better.

— Yikai Li ,

General Manager, Europe & Americas, Nativex



From ideation to production, quality is the key. SLG Developers in SEA region keen to break into larger global markets should adopt creative strategies aligned with the preferences of their desired target audience. We strongly suggest that creative studios create impactful creatives by understanding the characteristics of local audiences. It is crucial to focus on localization in language, culture, and trends, to build familiarity and emotional connection with local players.

— Suki Lin,

Senior Regional Director, Nativex



EPILOGUE

Creative ability is crucial for advertising content's quality and performance, especially for media buying. SLGs' uniqueness like expansive maps and group battles, can be fully demonstrated by well-made, innovative content. In different markets, figuring out how to fully deliver / present the game's culture, settings, and plot to players in a popular way is the key to success. TopWorks is helping game developers solve these obstacles with professional creative teams around the world. By understanding the cultural nuances of the local market, we can produce more attractive creatives.

— Maggie Qi,

Head of Topworks, Global Creative Studio of Nativex



Nativex

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