More Than 40% of Mobile Gamers Have Paid For Bots To Help Them Win, Says Adjust

New survey finds gamers spend an average of $65 on a bot; Generation Z gamers paid the most, with 12% of them spending more than $200

San Francisco / Berlin, April 15, 2020 — Growth in mobile gaming is exploding, more so than ever since the outbreak of COVID-19 virus. Data from Adjust suggests that installs in March 2020 have more than doubled from the same time last year. And with apps encompassing 81% of time spent on digital gaming around the globe already, it promises to be an important year of growth for mobile gaming. By 2021, more than one in four people are expected to be active mobile gamers, and are predicted to spend more than $180 billion on mobile games. But this growth has seen a corresponding rise in in-app bot fraud.

Cheaters use bots -- machines that perform repetitive tasks in an app or website -- to automate gameplay, giving them an unfair advantage over real players. Googling the words “bot for mobile games” yields upwards of 79.5 million results. Adjust released the results of a survey today that finds 41% of mobile gamers have paid for a bot to win, spending an average of $65. The research examines the profile of players in the U.S., as well as the impact bots have on a game’s community and economy, including:

- 31% of respondents say they always play against a bot.
- 63% say that bots are negatively impacting the game, its community and economy. Nearly three-quarters (74%) of those who feel this way are Generation Y, and 61% are those who play every day.
- 12% of Generation Z respondents paid $201+ for a bot -- the most of any generational cohort.
- e-Marketer reports that the majority of mobile gamers in the U.S. are female; however, nearly three-quarters of gamers (72%) surveyed by Adjust who had used a bot identified as male, versus only 28% of female gamers. Generationally, half of gaming bot users surveyed were either Generation Y or Generation X.

In addition, when asked which statements about bots applied to them:
- 39% of respondents think that bots ruin the game for everyone else.
- 37% say they don't think it's fair that people can use bots.
- 27% think people should be able to use bots if they want, and 28% say they are likely to use a bot if they know other people are doing so.

“Bots not only negatively impact the social experience by taking the fun out of competing, but they also fundamentally damage the business model of the game,” explained Yaron Oliker, CEO and co-founder of Unbotify, an award-winning cybersecurity startup acquired by Adjust in 2019. “First, you lose your most valuable users, which decreases revenue and could even damage your reputation. Secondly, people who pay for bots don’t make in-game purchases, also leading to loss of app revenue.”
N3TWORK, a premier games, media and technology company, noticed early on how bots were being used by millions of people from around the world in order to cheat to win, and also to profit. Because the scope and complexity of cheating with bots is constantly evolving, N3TWORK needed to rely on more than good game design to stop cheaters and sought additional support to help identify and eliminate bot use in its games.

“Protecting the integrity of our leaderboards, which in some cases lead to cash payouts, is essential to maintaining competitive viability and a fun user experience in our games,” said Dan Barnes, COO at N3TWORK. “Keeping bots from gameplay is an ever-evolving challenge, and Unbotify has been an essential partner in making sure our players are all playing by the same rules. Like other types of fraud, it requires diligence and rigorous cybersecurity to completely eliminate -- which is Unbotify’s expertise.”

Unbotify is a tailored software solution that uses sensor data directly from smartphones to build machine learning models based on real users’ behavior. By learning how an app is used when real people play, the solution can distinguish between humans and bots, and tell whether a game has been hijacked by fraudsters.

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About the Survey
The survey was conducted by Censuswide on behalf of Adjust. It polled over 500 U.S. gamers between February 21 and February 24, 2020.

About Adjust
Adjust is a global B2B SaaS company. Born at the heart of the mobile app economy and grown out of a passion for technology, the company now has 16 offices around the world.

Adjust's platform includes measurement, fraud prevention, cybersecurity and marketing automation products. Together, they make marketing simpler, smarter and more secure for the 32,000 apps working with Adjust. Global leading brands including Procter & Gamble, Rocket Internet and Tencent Games have implemented its solutions to secure their budgets and improve results.

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