

GAMING

In the hands of student gamers, new worlds open, connections spark and choices matter

An Eighteen24 White Paper · Sept 2025



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A preview of how UK students play, what gaming means to them, and where brands earn the loyalty.

The full paper sets out the scale of the student gaming opportunity, the role gaming plays in identity, social life and ambition on campus, and how brands can build presence through every academic moment that matters. This summary gives you the headlines.

FOR THE FULL PAPER

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INSIDE THIS SUMMARY

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- Six headline insights
- How to access the full paper

A complete guide to gaming and the UK student audience.

The full paper covers category data, behaviour, cultural shifts and media planning implications drawn from 20+ industry sources including UNiDAYS, ukie, Newzoo, SQ Magazine, National Literacy Trust, Bain & Company, J.P. Morgan, WARC, Kantar and Posterscope.

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This summary covers six headline insights. The full paper goes further with platform-by-platform breakdowns (PlayStation, Xbox, Nintendo, PC, VR), the academic year rhythm, brand case studies and the activation playbook for reaching 70% of UK students at the moments that drive discovery and downloads.

What the data tells us.

INSIGHT 01 • THE MARKET OPPORTUNITY

Every student plays, and Gen Z drives 43% of UK gaming spend.

Every student plays games at least occasionally and 1 in 3 plays daily. Gen Z accounts for 43% of UK gaming spend each month, equating to around £279m monthly at an average of £48.10 per head. The wider UK consumer games market reached £8.76 billion in 2025, up 7.4% year on year. The full paper breaks down the layers of student gaming behaviour and what is driving sustained demand.

43%

of UK monthly gaming spend comes from Gen Z

Source: UNiDAYS Gaming Report 2024 / ukie 2025

INSIGHT 02 • STUDENTS DRIVE THE DEMAND

Gaming sits alongside going out as a core student spend.

Gen Z students spend an average of £48.10 per month on gaming, equivalent to about 4% of a typical student budget and almost equal to what they set aside for going out. For this audience, gaming is not a casual extra. It is a budget line and a source of belonging. The full paper sets out how brands earn share of that wallet through the academic year.

£48.10

average Gen Z gaming spend per month

Source: UNiDAYS Gaming Report, 2024

INSIGHT 03 • GAMING IS SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

For Gen Z, gaming is a social network in its own right.

58% of Gen Z consider gaming their main social space, outranking messaging apps and social media. 70% have met new people through gaming and 63% have met a good friend or partner this way. 76% of young people discuss video games with peers, more than double the rate for books. The full paper sets out how peer networks become powerful word-of-mouth engines for brands.

70%

of Gen Z have met new people through gaming

Source: SQ Magazine, Gen Z Gaming Platform Preferences, 2025

From play to purchase.

INSIGHT 04 • IDENTITY MADE PLAYABLE

Skins, avatars and customisation carry real budget.

52% of Gen Z gamers spend on in-game customisation, with average monthly in-game content spend of £22. 60% say self-expression through gameplay is more important than ever. These purchases often carry no gameplay advantage but the same weight as other lifestyle decisions. The full paper sets out how identity-led spend creates a powerful psychological bond with the brands that enable it.

52%

of Gen Z gamers spend on in-game customisation

Source: SQ Magazine, Gen Z Gaming Platform Preferences, 2025

INSIGHT 05 • MULTI-PLATFORM IS THE DEFAULT

Most students play across two or more devices.

90% of student gamers play mobile, 42% use consoles regularly, and 57% play across two or more platforms. Mobile reaches widest. Consoles attract the deepest spend. PC anchors esports and indie discovery. Cross-platform players are typically more loyal and higher value. The full paper sets out how brands engage students seamlessly across devices and contexts.

57%

of Gen Z use two or more devices for gaming

Source: UNiDAYS Gaming Report, 2024

INSIGHT 06 • DISCOVERY GOES PUBLIC

Public screens make gaming discovery a shared experience.

38% of students hear about new titles through friends and 33% have made purchases based on creator endorsements. On campus, full-motion DOOH turns one-to-one personal screen targeting into one-to-many shared discovery, sparking peer conversation and group validation. OOH exposure makes consumers 63% more likely to take brand action online. The full paper sets out why visibility in trusted, high-dwell campus spaces is what turns interest into download, subscribe or trial.

63%

more likely to take brand action online when exposed to OOH

Source: Posterscope / WARC, 2015-2020

GET THE FULL PAPER

Ready for the full picture?

We share the full white paper directly with brands, agencies and media planners working in this category. It's a short conversation and we'll send the complete report straight back to you.

Email us for the full paper.

Tell us a bit about your brand or planning brief and we'll send the complete Gaming white paper, plus answer any questions you have about reaching the UK student audience.

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Already chatting with someone at Eighteen24?
Reply to their last email and ask for the full Gaming paper.

Curated research

Sourced from 20+ industry references including UNiDAYS, ukie, Newzoo, SQ Magazine, Bain & Company, Kantar, J.P. Morgan and Posterscope.

Built for planners

Behavioural frameworks, brand case studies and the academic year demand calendar structured for use in briefs and recommendations.

Calendar-aligned

Maps the rhythm of the student year, from Freshers and Black Friday through to exam stress, AAA launch windows and summer downtime.

The UK's largest student DOOH network

Over 400 premium full-motion D6 screens placed inside Students' Unions across 130+ campuses and 90+ universities, including 21 of the top 25. Positioned in cafes, study areas, gyms, social spaces and walkways where dwell time is highest.

400+

SCREENS

90+

UNIVERSITIES

2M

STUDENTS
REACHED
WEEKLY

116M

IMPRESSIONS
PER FORTNIGHT

Our formula for effective Gen Z engagement

Be where they
are

Be where they
care

Be where they
share

Be where they
see you

Don't miss the moment to win the game.

Gaming isn't a side interest for students. It's where friendships form, loyalties are set, identities shaped and trends spread at speed. The student years help decide which platforms, franchises and ecosystems they carry forward into adult life.

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