

### PokerStars' innovative campaign pairs real-time, dynamic rich media with programmatic efficiency



PokerStars is the world's largest poker site, and its European Poker Tour (EPT) is the world's richest and most popular tour of its kind. Since 2004, the EPT has paid out more than €617 million (approximately \$773 million USD) in tournament prize pools and hosted successful festivals across Europe.

#### The campaign goal: All eyes on Barcelona

More than 1,400 players would vie for over €7 million (\$8.8 million USD) in prize money at a Barcelona event, with every stage of the tournament streamed live. To increase awareness and build momentum for subsequent stages of the tour, PokerStars wanted to draw as many eyes to the exciting live stream as possible.

Working with Sizmek and DSP MediaMath, PokerStars launched an innovative real-time campaign that combined programmatic buying, expandable dynamic creative ad units with live video, and analytics from Sizmek.

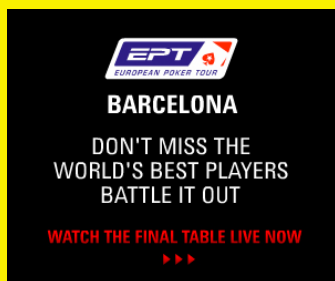
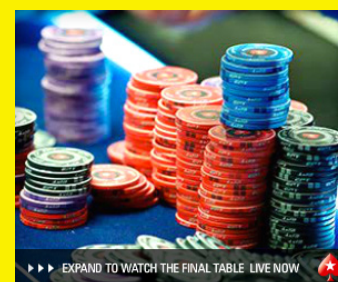
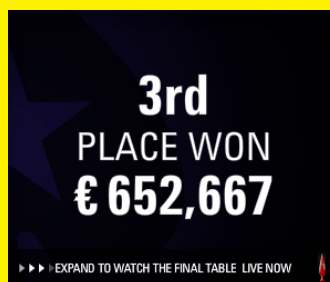
#### Campaign execution

The aim of this groundbreaking campaign was to promote the EPT across nine European markets by serving localized versions of the webcast within an expandable ad unit. The ad unit featured a teaser message tied directly to the current video stream. When a user hovered over the teaser, the ad expanded to show the live action, so the two components had to be continually synchronized.

For example, the precise number of players left or Euros left to win would be featured in the teaser:



The campaign included live stream broadcasting play as the field dwindled from 1,400 players down to eight. At the final table, the video actually showed the players' cards, giving viewers an insider's look at each player's strategy and prospects for victory.



This campaign relied on a number of advanced techniques for success:

- **Dynamic Creative via XML feed:** To keep the ads and video in perfect sync, the PokerStars team needed a way to easily and frequently refresh the message that appeared in the ad unit so that it accurately aligned with the action on the live stream. Key actions, such as how many players were left and how much prize money was still left in the pot – needed to be updated every 1-2 hours at the final table as players folded, the field shrank, the pot grew, and the tension mounted. And updates had to be made in nine languages across multiple formats.

Sizmek Dynamic Creative made this agility possible, which enabled on-the-fly updates to ad creative via XML feed. Updated and localized ad versions were quickly served to track right along with the Barcelona action – without time-consuming retrafficting.

- **Multiscreen execution:** Knowing that a large part of its audience use mobile, PokerStars developed both Flash and HTML5 dynamic ad units. It was a smart strategy, as 19% of the campaign viewers ultimately accessed the campaign via mobile device or tablet.
- **Verification and viewability:** PokerStars used Sizmek analytics to capture data about what factors, including ad viewability, drove the most webcast views. That data will help them to optimize future campaigns as the tour travels across Europe in the coming months.
- **Expandable units via real-time bidding (RTB):** Another innovative element to this campaign was the combination of advanced rich media formats with a programmatic buying model. Using audience profiling, the campaign targeted users who had previously interacted with the PokerStars brand – on the site or social page or at PokerStars.tv – but who hadn't downloaded the app.

RTB buys are typically limited to standard online advertising or other very straightforward units to reduce complexity. But working with Sizmek and MediaMath for the programmatic buy, PokerStars was able to run rich media expandable units to increase engagement.

“We are always looking for innovative ways of bringing the world’s best live poker action to a new targeted audience. Working with Sizmek was a no brainer. Their platform allowed us to easily keep the ads in perfect sync with the tournament’s live webcast – it worked very well.”

**Tom Sturman,**  
Digital Advertising Manager  
at PokerStars

## Results

The Barcelona event was the EPT’s most successful tournament ever—more people watched the live stream than ever before collectively across all platforms. This campaign contributed to these extraordinary outcomes:

- **1.3 million** impressions
- **19,000** video views of **30 seconds** or more
- Average dwell rate of **79 seconds** – more than twice the benchmark average
- Total expansion rate **67% vs. 31%** benchmark

The combination of Sizmek’s Dynamic Creative, multiscreen execution, expandable units with programmatic ads, and analytics – as well as PokerStars’ own data - brought in these overall results:

- Campaign was **4X more effective** in driving views compared to standard banners.
- Over the course of the tournament’s nine days (95 hours of broadcasting), **total viewership reached nearly 2.8 million**. The allotment breakdown: PokerStars.tv (1,100,840), YouTube (583,151), Affiliates (455,644), PokerStars Mobile (341,608), Facebook (180,210), Other distribution methods (106,617), and Eurosport (8,211).
- **10% contribution**. Without the Sizmek campaign, PokerStars results would be down 10% on their YouTube viewing figures across the final four days of the tournament. YouTube live stream was brought in through the display advertising for these four days only as the momentum and excitement of the competition increased.

## Implementing the campaign at future venues

PokerStars will be duplicating this successful campaign strategy at future venues and expand it to include direct publisher buys.