GP
GAMESFORUM
INTELLIGENCE

TOP MOBILE GAMES CHALLENGES

A USER ACQUISITION, AD & PRODUCT MONETIZATION REPORT

75 Research Calls

300 Responses

3 Surveys

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INTRODUCTION:

In the time since our last mobile games challenge report looking at user acquisition (UA) and ad monetization (Ad Mon) in the Spring of 2024, a lot has changed. The continued surge of AppLovin, legal battles between the major App Stores and 3rd party stores, ongoing privacy changes, an increasingly crowded market space with CPI increases and CPM decreases is causing great challenges and even greater change.

In this end of year report, we will share findings on the greatest challenges facing not just UA and Ad Mon, but also product monetization (Product). Offering real data from hundreds of surveyed UA, Ad Mon and Product managers with commentary, key insights, and advice from the greatest minds in mobile games growth and monetization.

The report will be broken into three sections: the first will look at the top challenges for UA with a series of graphs and tables followed by insights from industry leaders. This will then be followed by a section dedicated to Ad Mon and then Product.

We hope you enjoy our findings.

METHODOLOGY

FINDINGS

25 UA, 25 Ad Mon and 25 Product managers joined research calls to share their thoughts on the state of their respective disciplines and were asked to list five challenges which they find particularly difficult as we head into 2025.

We recorded the number of times a challenge was mentioned and took the top ten most frequently mentioned challenges per each of the three sectors.

These top ten challenges are listed below, in no particular orde

	UA Top Ten	Ad Mon Top Ten	Product Top Ten
1	Performing in a Crowded Market Space	Developing Effective User Segmentation	LiveOps Development & Assessing ROI
2	Achieving Sustainable Growth Through Retention	Leveraging Ads to Heighten User Experience	Exploring Growth & Monetization on Alternate Stores
3	Building a Marketing Team in 2025	Implementing Hybrid Monetization	Leveraging Segmentation for Content & IAP Personalization
4	Consistency & Attribution in Influencer Marketing	Optimizing Ad Placements & Frequency	Balancing Game Economies & Introducing IAPs
5	Creative Iteration, Ideation & Testing	Tackling Bad Ad Quality	Predictive Modelling for Product Roadmaps
6	Implementing AI in Marketing Processes	Assessing Network Power, Optimisation & Testing	Ideating, Testing & Interpreting Concept Prototypes
7	Leveraging Organic & Low-cost Growth Hacks	Opportunities & Challenges of Brand Advertising	Achieving Sustainable Growth with Retention
8	Navigating the Privacy Landscape	Ad Revenue Optimization by Game Genre	Exploring Further Growth Opportunities in T3 Regions
9	Rewarded Network Growth & Transparency	Implementing AI in Ad Operations	Engaging & Communicating with Players
10	Scaling Brand Awareness & Marketability	Innovation for Compensating for Decreasing eCPMs	Developing GTM Strategies & Launching Games in 2025

These top ten challenges were each placed into a unique survey and sent via email and social media to the Gamesforum community.

We invited the community to review the top ten challenges and rank them from one to ten, with one being of the greatest challenge and ten being of least concern.

We collected well over 100 UA responses, 100 Ad Mon and 80 Product responses from experts, and our team have analysed the results.

Each challenge was given an aggregate score out of ten which demonstrates how it appeared across all respondents' rankings.

We have also shared additional findings based on unique scores of each challenge, frequency with which each challenge appeared as the greatest concern, side-by-side comparisons of how respondents plotted challenges and commentary and insights from key leaders in mobile games growth and monetization.

You can view the results of our survey below in three sections, starting with UA then Ad Mon and followed by Product.

TABLE 1: UA CHALLENGES BY AGGREGATE SCORE

Table 1 shows our UA challenges ranked in order of their aggregate score.

The aggregate score represents how each challenge ranked across all respondents rankings.

Performing in a Crowded Market Space received the highest aggregate score, slightly outranking Achieving Sustainable Growth Through Retention with 0.2 separating the two challenges.

Creative Iteration, Ideation & Testing placed a clear third.

Leveraging Organic & Low-cost Growth Hacks placed fourth with the remaining challenges closely contested for fifth and sixth, seventh and eighth and nineth and tenth.

The aggregate score tells a drastically different story to our past reports and demonstrates a clear and early sign that the industry has changed throughout 2024.
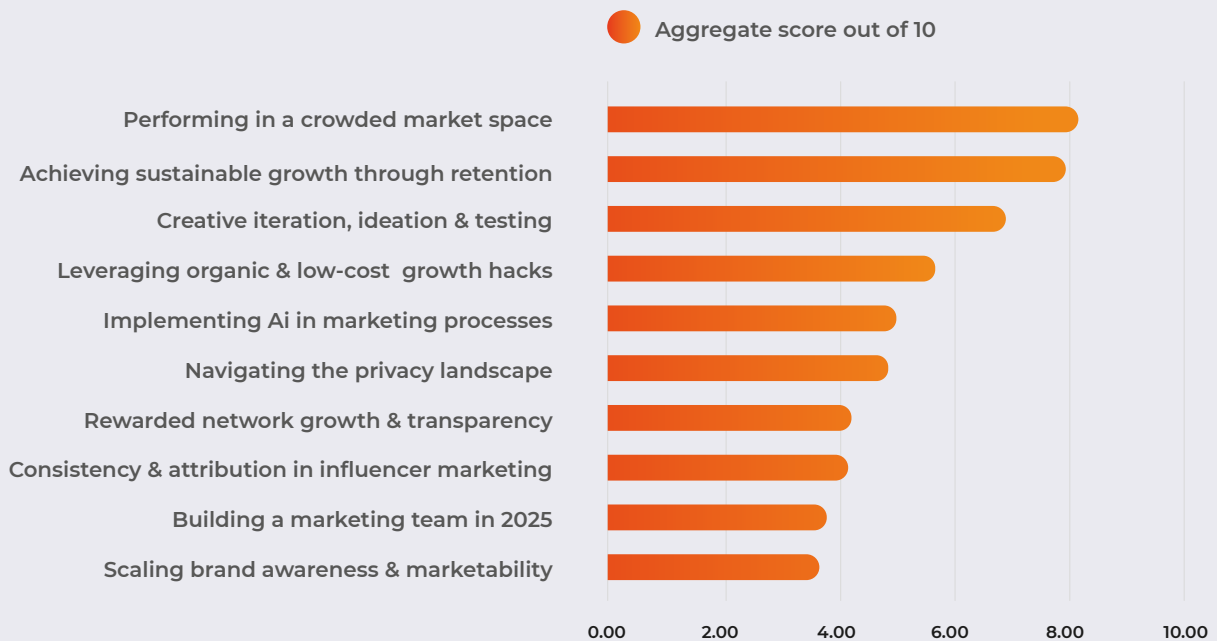
● Aggregate score out of 10

Challenge	Aggregate score
Performing in a crowded market space	8.2
Achieving sustainable growth through retention	8.0
Creative iteration, ideation & testing	6.9
Leveraging organic & low-cost growth hacks	5.7
Implementing Ai in marketing processes	5.0
Navigating the privacy landscape	4.9
Rewarded network growth & transparency	4.2
Consistency & attribution in influencer marketing	4.2
Building a marketing team in 2025	3.8
Scaling brand awareness & marketability	3.7

0.00   2.00   4.00   6.00   8.00   10.00

TABLE 2: FREQUENCY WITH WHICH EACH CHALLENGE RANKED NUMBER ONE

Table 2 depicts a pie chart in which you can see how each challenge ranked as respondents' greatest challenge.

Performing in a Crowded Space overwhelmingly secured the number one spot, with 41% of responses finding it their greatest challenge.

It is worth noting that despite coming sixth in aggregate score, 8% of respondents ranked Navigating the Privacy Landscape their greatest challenge. Doubling the number of responses received by Leveraging Organic & Low-cost growth hacks at 4%.
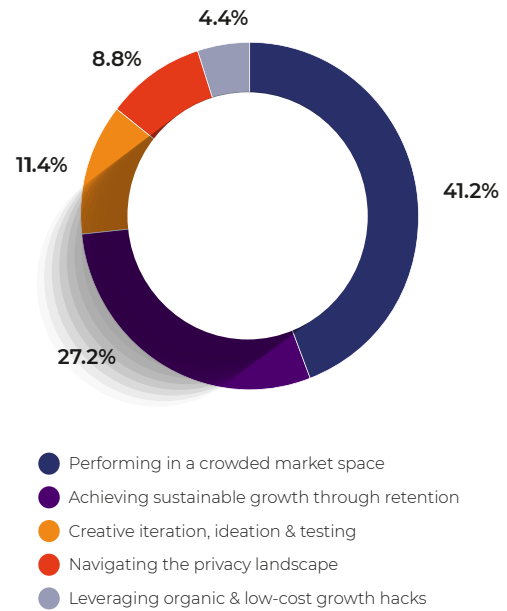

- ● Performing in a crowded market space
- ● Achieving sustainable growth through retention
- ● Creative iteration, ideation & testing
- ● Navigating the privacy landscape
- ● Leveraging organic & low-cost growth hacks

TABLE 3: FREQUENCY WITH WHICH EACH CHALLENGE APPEARED IN RESPONDENTS TOP FIVE

Table Three provides context for the total number of times a challenge appeared across respondents' top five rankings.

While receiving the highest aggregate score across all responses, Performing in a Crowded Market Space placed second with 97 UA managers placing it within their top five challenges.

By comparison, Achieving Sustainable Growth Through Retention was in 99 of our UA experts top five challenges.

Creative Iteration, Ideation & Testing placed third with 86, followed by leveraging Organic & Low-cost Growth Hacks and Implementing AI in Marketing Processes, with 63 and 51 respectively.
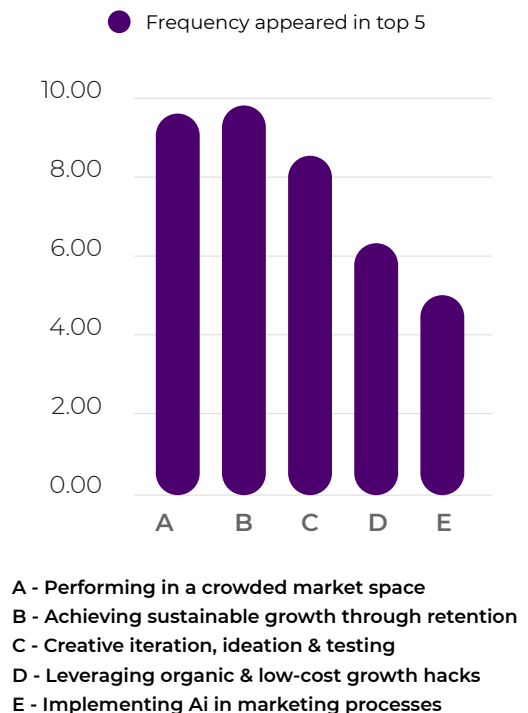

A - Performing in a crowded market space
B - Achieving sustainable growth through retention
C - Creative iteration, ideation & testing
D - Leveraging organic & low-cost growth hacks
E - Implementing Ai in marketing processes

TABLE 4: PLOTTING PERFORMING IN A CROWDED MARKET SPACE VS SUSTAINABLE GROWTH THROUGH RETENTION

Table 4 provides a closer look at how Performing in a Crowded Market Space ranked compared with Achieving Sustainable Growth with Retention.

87 respondents placed Performing in a Crowded Market Space within their top three challenges.

While 80 respondents place Achieving Sustainable Growth Through Retention in their top three.
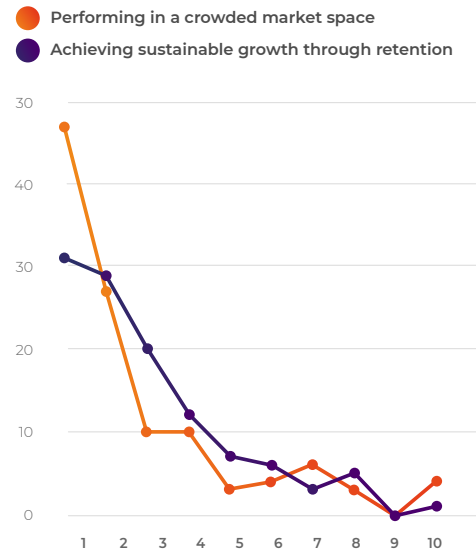

TABLE 5: CREATIVE ITERATION, IDEATION & TESTING IN 2023, 2024 & 2025…

In **Table 5** you can see a comparison of how respondents ranked creative marketing challenges in our most recent 2025 report compared to 2024 and 2023.

In 2023, Creative Optimisation ranked as the greatest challenge for UA managers with 25% of respondents ranking it their greatest challenge.

When compared with 2024, Optimising Creative Ideation & Testing dropped with 16% ranking it their greatest challenge and matched 2023 with 20% ranking it their second most important challenge.

Our 2025 survey reveals that creative marketing continues to fall as a priority challenge for UA managers, with only 25% of responses ranking Creative Iteration, Ideation & Testing in their top two challenges and twenty-seven respondents ranking it their third greatest challenge.
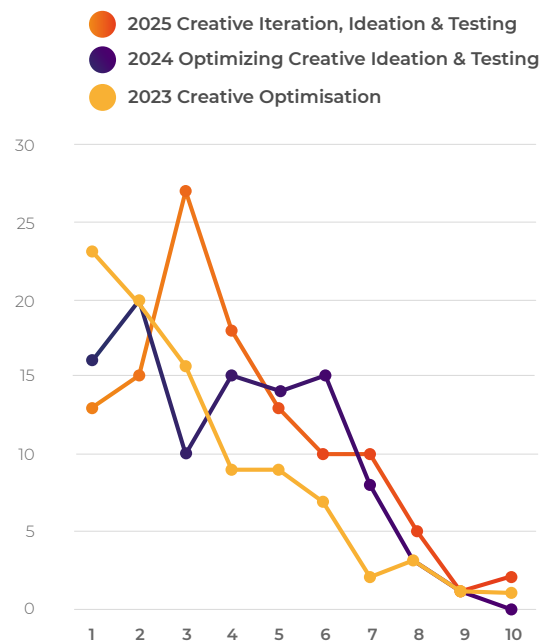
1. PERFORMING IN A CROWDED MARKET SPACE

Performing in a Crowded Market Space ranks as UA managers greatest challenge as we enter 2025. With 41% of our surveyed UA Managers value cutting through the noise of new releases and big UA spenders as their greatest challenge.

It has never been easier to release a game, but to market it, to monetise it, that is a different story. The post-pandemic landscape has left a very different F2P mobile games ecosystem, new releases continue to populate stores, driving up CPIs and squeezing the available market share. Combine this with apps like Temu spending big on UA, the gaming share shrinks further.

Performing in a Crowded Market Space sets the scene for further findings in this report. As you will see there is a renewed focus on retention, better audience segmentation and user personalisation, approaching hybrid monetization and balancing the game economy, striving for new avenues of growth and exploring both low-cost and exotic channels to achieve this.

> Nowadays the market is consolidating and becoming more and more saturated, which creates more room for creativity and opportunities. It's more important to become fully data driven, AB test everything and be open to new sources of UA like rewarded platforms, DSPs and even web to app approach.

Glib Platonov,
CEO, **Outloud Games**

> The challenge varies for each company. Some studios aim for the top ranks, as the organic lift it provides is essential for profitability. For others, intense competition drives up CPIs, making scalability difficult if their LTV isn't strong enough to offset the costs.
>
> Smaller studios, however, might see this as an opportunity. A crowded genre indicates a strong audience demand, guiding them toward creating games that can still generate revenue. Not every developer is willing to invest the time and resources required to dominate a vertical like larger studios do, some just want to make a living out of games.

María de la Puente,
Head of UA, **Funcraft**

2. ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE GROWTH THROUGH RETENTION

Placing second amongst respondents is Achieving Sustainable Growth Through Retention.

27% of UA managers held retention as a key to achieving sustainable growth as their greatest challenge. With 99 respondents held the challenges around retention within their top five challenges.

The prominence of retention as one of the greatest challenges, coupled with the greatest challenge Performing in a Crowded Market Space speaks to a broader change in approaches to UA and a UA managers responsibilities. There is now an emphasis on performance beyond acquisition.

Publishers are looking to further mixing their monetization model, marketers need to look past initial acquisition, evaluating LTV of users, optimising monetisation to service payers and non-payers but also explore new channels to drive growth. Retaining beyond D7 is the new priority.

"

Sustainable growth hinges on retention, not just acquisition. To keep users engaged, studios must prioritize adaptability—leveraging AI to tailor experiences in real-time to evolving user preferences. This could mean dynamically adjusting gameplay, content, or even monetization strategies to match individual needs. Retention isn't about keeping users longer
at any cost; it's about delivering ongoing value and creating a genuine connection. Growth doesn't just come from attracting new players—it's rooted in delighting the ones you already have.

Gus Viegas,
VP of Marketing, **Cosmic Lounge**

"

While UA managers face cut-throat competition due to rising acquisition costs, the ever-increasing need for in-game monetization complements the red ocean of games marketing and development. The best fix? Assist your product teams in the early stages to position the game for the right audience and implement retention-driving creative strategies.

Sebastian Lüdemann,
UA & Marketing Consultant

3. CREATIVE ITERATION, IDEATION & TESTING

Marking the greatest shift from previous UA challenge reports by Gamesforum is Creative Iteration, Ideation & Testing, placing this time as the third greatest challenge for respondents.

Placing third in aggregate score, over 1.0 below Achieving Sustainable Growth Through Retention, the challenge of creative marketing is dethroned from its previous spot as the greatest challenge in our 2024 and 2023 reports.

However the challenges still persist. Competitor analysis and copy-catting of creatives proves to be difficult both in striking the right mark with the audience, but also in resource allocation and the timeline necessary to turn around an effective creative.

Marrying this with ongoing privacy and attribution challenges, it demonstrates a continuing narrative of needing to appeal to a broader audience, be it through well designed CGI ads or the use of highly dramatic or misleading ads.

One trend that became prominent during research is the increase in playables, providing great success both as an ad but also as a means of testing new features. With some publishers experimenting with "endless" playables, allowing the player to play beyond thirty-seconds and up to as long as ten minutes.

"
With increasingly saturated channels, creative iteration is no longer optional—it's essential. Testing creative ideas quickly and learning from audience responses is the only way to stay ahead. In influencer marketing, this means empowering creators with creative freedom while ensuring alignment with the brand's goals, which leads to content that resonates organically.

Marion Balinoff,
Influencer Marketing Consultant

4. LEVERAGING ORGANIC & LOW-COST GROWTH HACKS

Leveraging Organic & Low-cost Growth Hacks ranked fourth.

With an aggregate score of 5.79, prioritising low-cost growth hacks appeared in over 50% of UA managers' top five challenges for 2025.

As depicted in Table 2, only 4.4% of respondents valued leveraging organic and low-cost growth strategies as their greatest challenge. When compared to Navigating the Privacy Landscape, privacy featured as a greater primary concern with double the number of responses, 8.8% placing privacy as their greatest challenge.

This disparity between organic and low-cost growth not as a primary challenge but an additional concern amongst UA managers further demonstrates the uneasy UA landscape.

It is worth noting that the challenge of organic growth was omitted from our 2024 report but did feature in our 2023 report as the second greatest challenge amongst UA managers.

5. IMPLEMENTING AI IN MARKETING PROCESSES

Rounding off the top five challenges for UA managers, Implementing AI in Marketing Processes placed fifth.

Beating Navigating the Privacy Landscape by 0.15 and placing in 51 UA managers' top five challenges.

Akin to challenges surrounding organic and low-cost strategies, few UA managers valued Implementing AI in Marketing Processes as the greatest challenge. Only 2% of respondents viewed adopting AI as their greatest challenge, while Navigating the Privacy Landscape, which scored sixth in aggregate score, received nearly 9% of the vote as the greatest challenge.

The distinction for Implementing AI in Marketing Processes came from the frequency it appeared in respondents top five challenges, with 51 holding it in their top five compared to 46 for privacy.

Back in 2023 at Gamesforum Hamburg, the question was asked of how many people in the room used AI in their work, only one hand was raised then. The accessibility and capability has increased exponentially but using it effectively and to its full potential is the real question. This is why we believe it is featured amongst the top five challenges for UA managers in 2025.

It is no longer a case of using AI, but how you use it and with what efficiency.

As a part of the survey, we invited respondents to add any additional thoughts they had on challenges facing mobile games as we move into 2025. The quotes have been kept anonymous, but below you can find some examples of what our surveyed UA managers had to say about additional concerns they have.

"Attribution. This can be tricky with SKAN 4.0 and now it will be even more challenging as Google Privacy Sandbox comes into play.

"Growth requires a lot of upfront budget. Working with smaller devs, they don't like to spend 1000s per day to test i.e. soft launch or new creatives or ideation.

"Justifying new user acquisition when costs increase and the value of the user remains constant YOY.

"Garnering accurate demographic data regarding genre and target market.

"Bringing data professionals and marketing professionals closer together.

"The privacy landscape is a mess of federal and state laws with haphazard application. When even larger companies are baking the cost of non-compliance into their growth plans, it leaves little choice for smaller gaming companies. The hope is that privacy regulation is applied at the platform level, forcing all players to play with the same rules.

Alex Kozachenko,
CEO, **HyperBeard**

TABLE 6: AD MON CHALLENGES BY AGGREGATE SCORE

In **Table 6** shows how Ad Mon managers ranked our top ten challenges based on an aggregate score out of ten.

Developing Effective User Segmentation ranked as the greatest challenge for Ad Mon managers, placing comfortably above Optimizing Ad Placements & Frequency.

You can see close contention at third and fourth place with Implementing Hybrid Monetization and Leveraging Ads to Heighten the User Experience differentiating by 0.1 in aggregate score.

0.14 separated Tackling Bad Ad Quality in fifth place and Innovation for Compensating for Decreasing eCPMs at sixth.
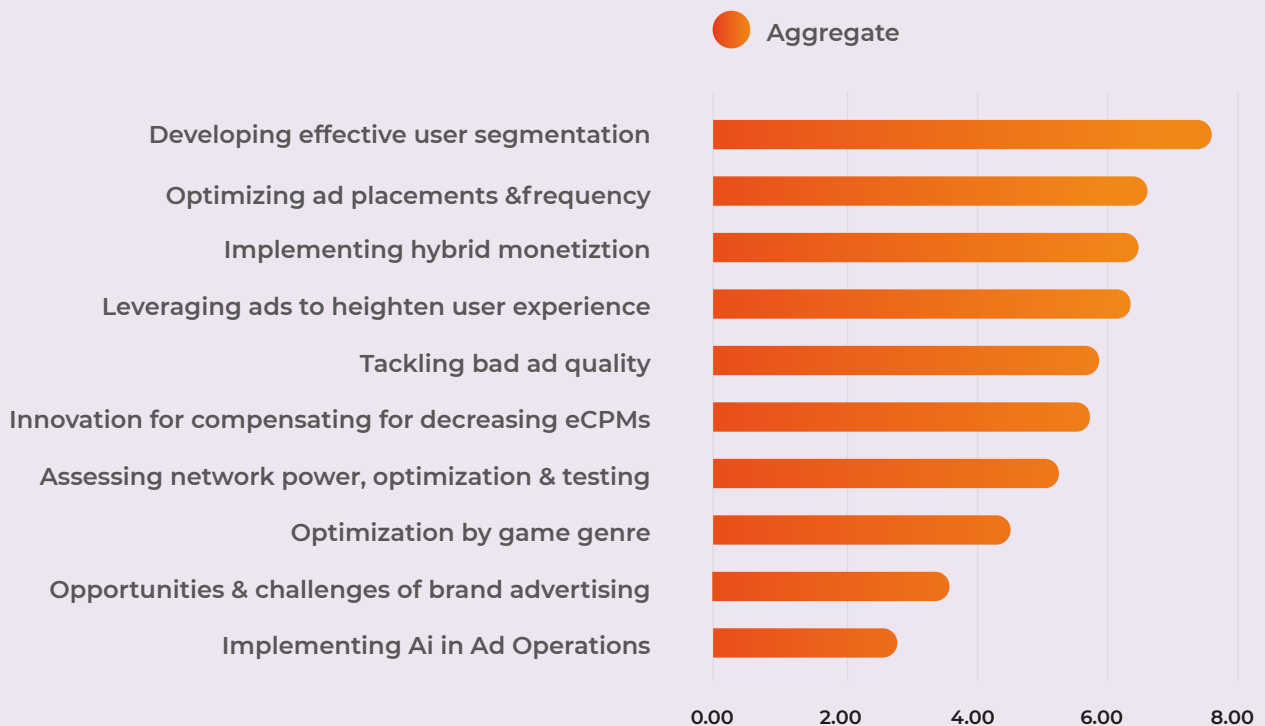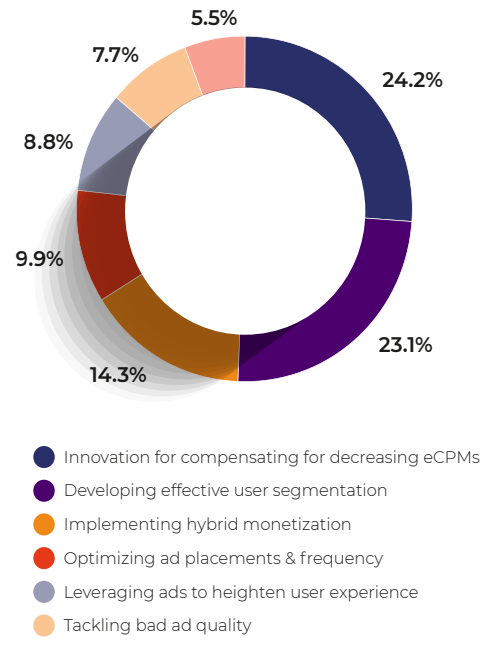
TABLE 7: FREQUENCY WITH WHICH EACH CHALLENGE RANKED NUMBER ONE

Table 7 shows the frequency with which respondents ranked each challenge as their greatest concern.

Unlike in our UA pie chart in Table 2, all challenges received at least one ranking as the greatest challenge, demonstrating more diversity in what our Ad Mon managers consider to be of greatest concern.

Innovation for Compensating for Decreasing eCPMs received a ranking of the greatest challenge with nearly 25% of respondents placing it as their greatest challenge, despite its low aggregate score placing it sixth overall.

- ● Innovation for compensating for decreasing eCPMs
- ● Developing effective user segmentation
- ● Implementing hybrid monetization
- ● Optimizing ad placements & frequency
- ● Leveraging ads to heighten user experience
- ● Tackling bad ad quality

Whilst achieving the highest aggregate score, Developing Effective User Segmentation saw 23% of Ad Mon managers rank it as their greatest challenge.

Despite placing second in aggregate score, for Optimizing Ad Placements & Frequency, only 10% of respondents ranked it as their greatest concern, placing it fourth behind Implementing Hybrid Monetization.

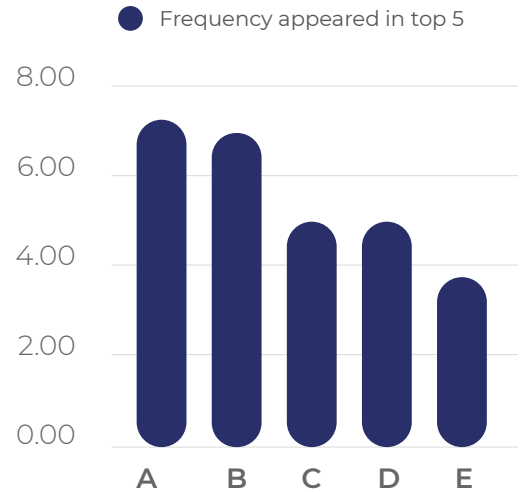| Challenge	Percentage
Innovation for Compensating for Decreasing eCPMs	24.2%
Developing Effective User Segmentation	23.1%
Implementing Hybrid Monetization	14.3%
Optimizing Ad Placements & Frequency	9.9%
Leveraging Ads to Heighten User Experience	8.8%
Tackling Bad Ad Quality	7.7%
Ad Revenue Optimization by Game Genre	5.5%
Assessing Network Power, Optimisation & Testing	3.3%
Opportunities & Challenges of Brand Advertising	2.2%
Implementing AI in Ad Operations	1.1%

TABLE 8: FREQUENCY WITH WHICH EACH CHALLENGE APPEARED IN RESPONDENTS' TOP FIVE

Table 8 depicts how frequently the top five challenges appear based on aggregate score across respondents' top five challenges.

Developing Effective User Segmentation appeared most frequently with 72 respondents placing it in their top five.

Leveraging Ads to Heighten User Experience featured in 59 respondents' top five challenges, receiving one more response than Implementing Hybrid Monetization at 58.

Notably missing from this table is Innovation for Compensating for Decreasing eCPMs, but this can be explained more in Table Nine.

● Frequency appeared in top 5

A - Developing effective user segmantation
B - Optimizing ad placements & frequency
C - Implementing hybrid monetization
D - Leveraging ads too heighten user experience
E - Tackling bad ad quality

TABLE 9: PLOTTING DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE USER SEGMENTATION VS INNOVATION FOR COMPENSATING FOR DECREASING ECPMS

Table 9 provides more context on how Innovation for Compensating for Decreasing eCPMs received a majority of responses as the number one challenge amongst respondents but failed to reach the top five in regards to aggregate score.

Innovation for Compensating for Decreasing eCPMs was ranked as the greatest concern by 24% of respondents, but only 47 of our Ad Mon managers placed it in their top five.
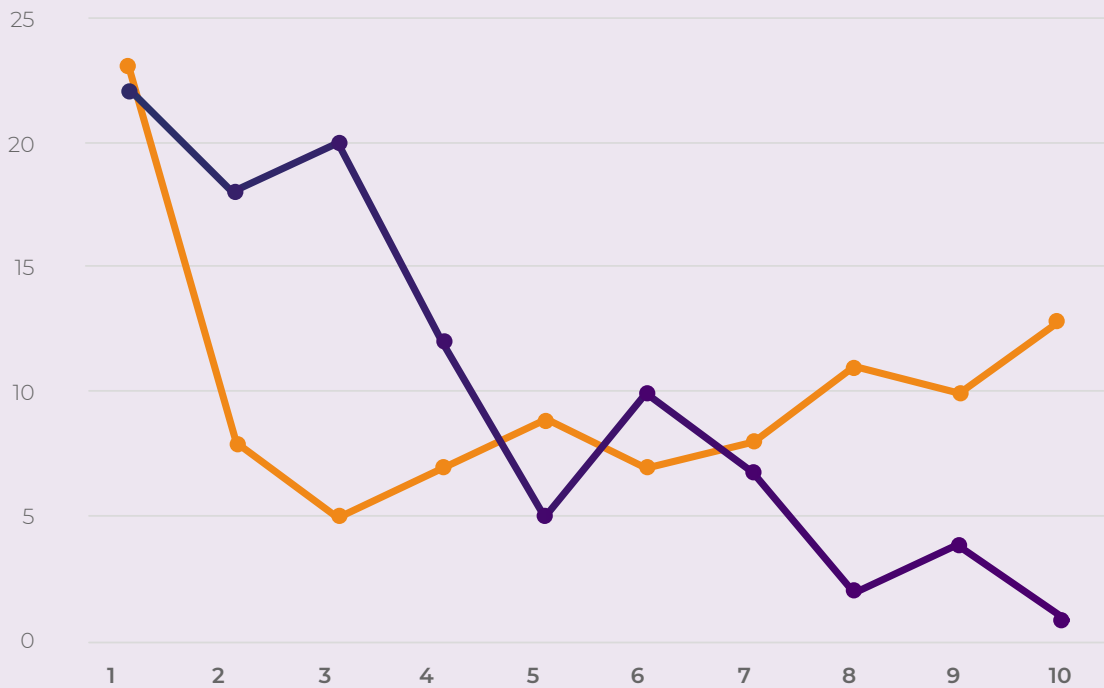
As can be seen in **Table 9,** there is a sheer drop off in ranking, creating a U-shape effect in its plotting across all of our respondents' rankings. 13 respondents placed Innovation for Compensating for Decreasing eCPMs as their least concerning challenge.

By comparison, Developing Effective User Segmentation received just one fewer response, ranking it as the greatest challenge at 22. A further 38 of our Ad Mon managers placed it as their second and third greatest challenge, compared with a collective 13 for Innovation for Compensating for Decreasing eCPMs.

TABLE 10: TACKLING BAD AD QUALITY IN 2023, 2024 & 2025

Table 10 provides a look at how the challenge of tackling bad ad quality has ranked across our 2023, 2024 and most recent 2025 Ad Mon challenge survey.

In 2023, aggregate score placed Ad Quality as the second greatest challenge for Ad Mon managers, placing behind Ad Mon & User Experience.

Our 2024 Ad Mon challenge report saw Ad Quality & App Health place second behind Audience Segmentation in aggregate score, but received 20% of respondents ranking it as their greatest challenge compared to 13% in 2023.

In our most recent survey, respondents valued Tackling Bad Ad Quality as a challenge considerably less than previous years, with only 7.7% placing it as their greatest challenge and 59 Ad Mon managers holding it within their top five concerns.

- 2023 Ad Quality
- 2024 Tackling ad quality & protecting app health
- 2025 Tackling bad ad quality
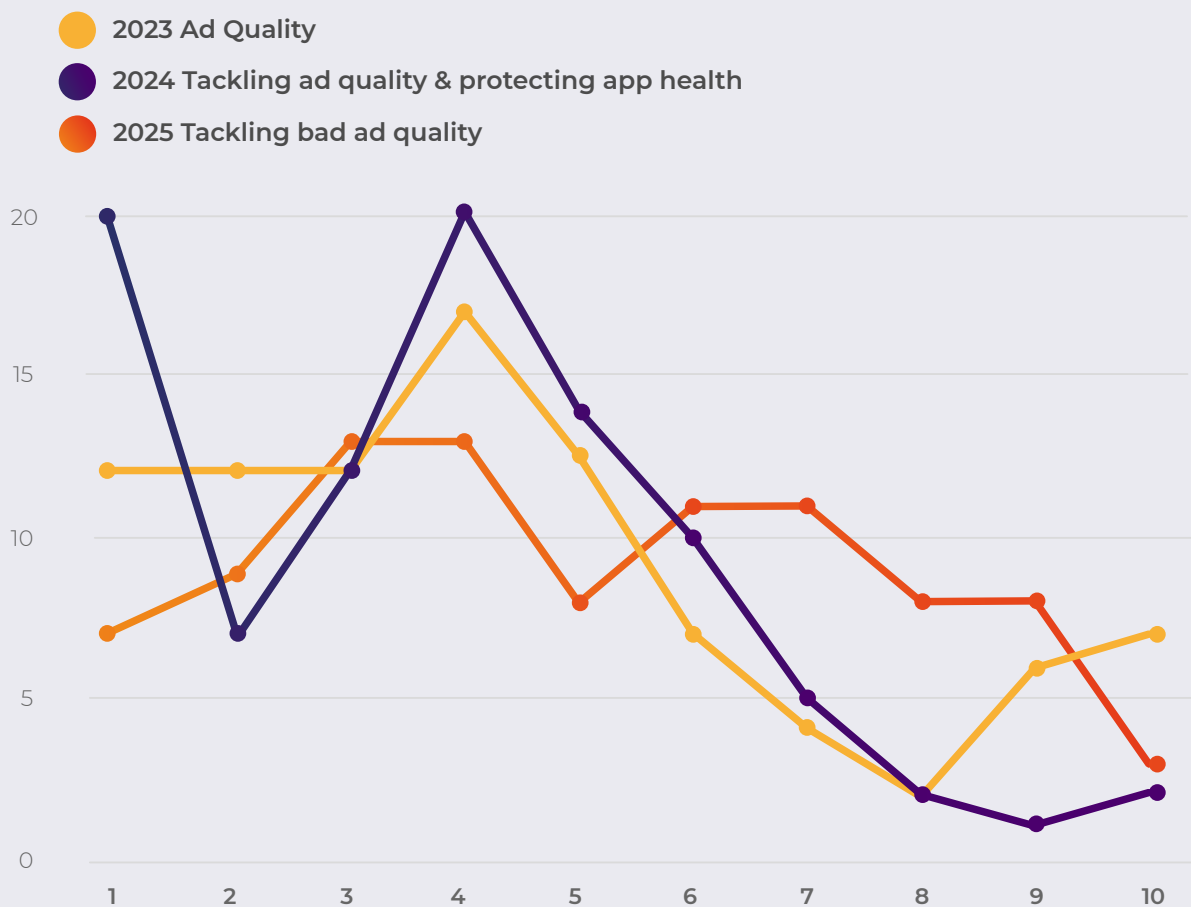
1. DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE USER SEGMENTATION

Developing Effective User Segmentation placed as the greatest challenge amongst Ad Mon managers.

With an aggregate score of 7.63, respondents considered challenges in achieving an effective audience segmentation strategy as their biggest concern. 75% of respondents placed Developing Effective User Segmentation within their top five concerns.

Our survey looking to 2025 continues the findings of our 2024 Mobile Games Challenges Report, in which Audience Segmentation ranked as the greatest challenge.

The prominence of user segmentation as a challenge amongst respondents speaks to the changing landscape of ad revenue with Ad Mon managers looking for incremental revenue increases in ads while also maximising the revenue potential of both payers and non-payers. The best way to achieve this is by properly segmenting to allow for different user experiences, ad and IAP personalisations and the ability to present games to geos in an appropriately monetized capacity.

However, it is worth noting that while Ad Mon managers ranked Developing Effective User Segmentation as the greatest challenge on average, it did not receive the most votes as the single greatest challenge. 23% of respondents placed it as their greatest challenge, compared to 24% who placed Innovation for Compensating for Decreasing eCPMs as their number one challenge.

"This is becoming more crucial and incremental for the monetization strategies where our control on the prices of our own ad inventory deprecates more and more. The most important part of an effective user segmentation is to understand our own user base and try to prevent possible cannibalization in between different segments.

Tezcan Unlu,
Senior Advertising Monetization Manager, **Kolibri Games**

"The biggest challenge in working with segmentation is deciding what to base it on. Moreover, small datasets often lack sufficient depth to create meaningful segmentation. The variability in segmentation approaches, the complexity of implementation, and the lack of success stories make it a roadblock for many mid-sized companies without a dedicated data science team.

Katerina Maliaran,
Head of Ads Monetization, **Burny Games**

2. OPTIMIZING AD PLACEMENTS & FREQUENCY

Placing second is Optimizing Ad Placements & Frequency.

Achieving an aggregate score of 6.64, 68 Ad Mon managers held it in their top five challenges, yet only 10% of respondents held it as their greatest challenge.

Whilst ad ops has become increasingly automated in the era of bidding, an increased emphasis has been placed on evaluating ad placement and frequency to maximise player revenue potential. This speaks to the further development of Ad Mon managers into product management experts, with a larger responsibility for the ad and further, user experience.

"For Banners, optimizing ad placements frequently is still important. Most of the Banner Waterfalls have an important share of voice coming from the line items themselves. For Interstitials and Rewarded Videos, although we can still generate a decent amount of revenue from line items, we can understand that Bidding has a more significant power there, so ad placement optimization is becoming less important.

Bruno Balistrieri,
Senior Ad Monetization Analyst, **Kwalee**

"Understanding if you have the right logic with your ad offers is usually a challenge for Ad Mon managers and product teams. We see that there are different games in the market which have similar ad placements but with different logics in terms of cooldown period, number of available ad watches, frequency etc. Teams should focus on testing different variants of ad offers by relying on their own data when they want to optimize their ad monetization..

Tezcan Unlu,
Senior Advertising Monetization Manager,
Kolibri Games

3. IMPLEMENTING HYBRID MONETIZATION

Maintaining its rank from 2024 to 2025, Implementing Hybrid Monetization placed third amongst respondents.

14% of Ad Mon managers held Implementing Hybrid Monetization as their greatest challenge, while fifty-eight of respondents placed it in their top five challenges, maintaining a steady ranking as the third greatest challenge.

Hybrid monetization has become an essential part of launching or maintaining a successful mobile title in 2024, blending ads and IAPs to maximise revenue potential. But it is a delicate balancing act, requiring Ad Mon managers to work not just in ad ops, but also in product management, game economist and segmentation mastery.
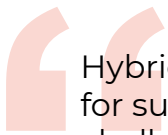
"Hybrid monetization in 2024 is not just a trend but a necessity for sustainable growth and revenue diversification. The main challenge next year will be achieving a seamless balance between in-app purchases and ads, ensuring one source doesn't cannibalize the other.

Katerina Maliaran,
Head of Ads Monetization, **Burny Games**
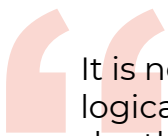
"It is necessary that you have a well-developed and logical game economy for your titles. Understanding in depth what paths your users do in your game can open opportunities to increase the number of IAPs, ads revenue and even offerwalls progressively. New approaches from the market, such as offering rewards to users to download an external app in exchange for getting $X amount back from them, could only be a short-term problem-solver, but if you don't have a well-developed economy and internal events, the likelihood of success could be minimal.

Bruno Balistrieri,
Senior Ad Monetization Analyst, **Kwalee**

4. LEVERAGING ADS TO HEIGHTEN THE USER EXPERIENCE

Leveraging Ads to Heighten the User Experience placed fourth amongst respondents.

Despite falling behind Implementing Hybrid Monetization by 0.1 in aggregate score, Leveraging Ads to Heighten the User Experience was placed in more respondents' top five challenges. 9% of Ad Mon managers held it as their single greatest challenge.

The art of leveraging ads monetization to improve the game experience speaks to ongoing trends between the increased marrying of the ads and product revenue teams. An Ad Mon manager must now work more closely with game teams in designing placements to optimise revenue potential, while also overseeing best segmentation practices and balancing the broader game economy to further increase incremental monetization potential.

5. TACKLING BAD AD QUALITY

Tackling Bad Ad Quality fell to the fifth greatest challenge amongst respondents.

8% of respondents placed ad quality as their greatest challenge, with 50 respondents holding it within their top five challenges.

One of the most prominent changes between the 2024 and our end of year survey is the fall of ad quality as a priority for Ad Mon managers. In our last report, 20% of respondents ranked it as their greatest challenge, compared to 8% this time.

Table 10 provides a deeper insight into how the challenge of ad quality has changed across our three annual reports.

> Bad ad quality remains one of the top challenges facing app publishers in 2024, and this trend is expected to persist into 2025. The key lies in moving beyond reliance on ad vendors alone. Publishers must proactively invest in solutions that provide real visibility and control over the ads running within their apps. This proactive approach ensures a consistent, high-quality ad experience, safeguarding both user trust and app revenue.

Alex Yerukhimovich, General Manager, **AppHarbr**

> Ad quality will continue to deteriorate as bad ads is equal to network margins. Publicly listed companies have an incentive to keep making ads more intrusive.

Felix Braberg,
Ad Monetization Consultant & Co-Founder,
two & a half gamers

Like our UA survey, we invited our Ad Mon respondents to anonymously provide further insights into the challenges discussed above, alongside any additional ones they currently face. You can see these comments below.

"

Assessing Network power, optimization should include; first more transparency on what info we pass to the DSPs and how much do mediation platforms retain. Second, being able to enable networks for certain geos only based on performance and tech issues.

"

Segmenting, testing and personalizing ad delivery to different player cohorts and segments.

"

Decreasing eCPMs vs increasing CPI, a lack of demand sources and mediation platforms.

"

Ads delivery stability in cases when user don't have internet connection or it's bad Cross-promo cooperation with other publishers

"

Working to get brand advertising in rotation with performance ads.

"

The omission of Innovation for Compensating for Decreasing eCPMs from the top five challenges despite its prevalence as the number one challenge for 24% of Ad Mon managers demonstrates, as seen in Table 9, the importance of making up for lost ad revenue in new and innovative ways for certain respondents.

It is worth noting that upon diving into the survey responses, it became clear that the emphasis on innovation for decreasing eCPMs as a challenge came from senior experts in ad monetization, Directors and VP's of monetization, in particular Ad Mon placing it as their number one challenge. This showcases a clear drive to find ways to incrementally increase ad revenue beyond ad ops and placement optimization, to something new, something groundbreaking.

Josh Vowles,
Head of Product, **Gamesforum**

TABLE 11: PRODUCT CHALLENGES BY AGGREGATE SCORE

Table 11 represents our top ten challenges in order of concern represented by an aggregate score out of ten.

LiveOps Development & Assessing ROI achieved a score of 7.9, a whole 1.0 higher than Balancing Game Economies & Introducing IAPs in second place.

Achieving Sustainable Growth with Retention placed third with a score of 6.76.

At the other end of the spectrum, Exploring Growth & Monetization on Alternate Stores and Engaging & Communication with Players placed eighth and nineth respectively, with 0.5 separating the two challenges.
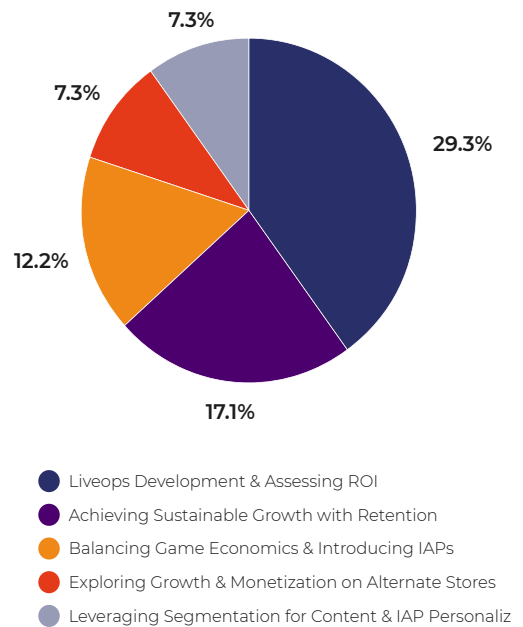

● Aggregate score

Challenge	
LiveOps development & assessing ROI	
Balancing game economies & introducing IAPs	
Achieving sustainable growth with retention	
Leveraging segmentation for content & IAP personalization	
Ideating, testing & interpreting concept prototypes	
Predictive modelling for product roadmaps	
Developing GTM strategies & launching games in 2025	
Exploring growth & monetization on alternate stores	
Engaging & communicating with players	
Exploring further growth opportunities in T3 regions	

0.00   2.00   4.00   6.00   8.00

TABLE 12: FREQUENCY WITH WHICH EACH CHALLENGE RANKED NUMBER ONE

Table 12 contains all ten challenges as a percentage of the respondents that ranked them the greatest challenge.

Close to 30% of respondents selected LiveOps Development & Assessing ROI as their greatest challenge.

By comparison, despite placing second in aggregate score, only 12% of respondents ranked Balancing Game Economies & Introducing IAPs as their greatest challenge, falling behind Achieving Sustainable Growth with Retention with 17% and Developing GTM Strategies & Launching in 2025 with 15%.

Notably Developing GTM Strategies & Launching in 2025 placed seventh in aggregate score, indicating a sheer drop off in priority amongst respondents, following 15% of respondents ranking it their greatest challenge.

- Liveops Development & Assessing ROI
- Achieving Sustainable Growth with Retention
- Balancing Game Economics & Introducing IAPs
- Exploring Growth & Monetization on Alternate Stores
- Leveraging Segmentation for Content & IAP Personaliz

| Challenge	Percentage
LiveOps Development & Assessing ROI	29.3%
Achieving Sustainable Growth with Retention	17.1%
Developing GTM Strategies & Launching Games in 2025	14.6%
Balancing Game Economies & Introducing IAPs	12.2%
Exploring Growth & Monetization on Alternate Stores	7.3%
Leveraging Segmentation for Content & IAP Personalization	7.3%
Predictive Modelling for Product Roadmaps	4.9%
Engaging & Communicating with Players	4.9%
Opportunities & Challenges Ideating, Testing & Interpreting Concept Prototypes	2.4%
Exploring Further Growth Opportunities in T3 Regions	0%

TABLE 13: FREQUENCY WITH WHICH EACH CHALLENGE APPEARED IN RESPONDENTS TOP FIVE

In **Table 13** the top five challenges are shown as represented
by the number of respondents that placed each challenge within their
top five challenges.

LiveOps Development & Assessing ROI is held again as the greatest challenge, with 68 Product managers placing it in their top five.

Balancing Game Economies & Introducing IAPs and Achieving Sustainable Growth with Retention placed second and third, with 60 and 56 respondents selecting them respectively.

Notably, Ideating, Testing & Interpreting Concept Prototypes was ranked as the greatest challenge by 2% of Ad Mon managers, despite 50% of respondents placing it in their top five greatest challenges, outranking Leveraging Segmentation for Content & IAP Personalization.


● Frequency appeared in top 5
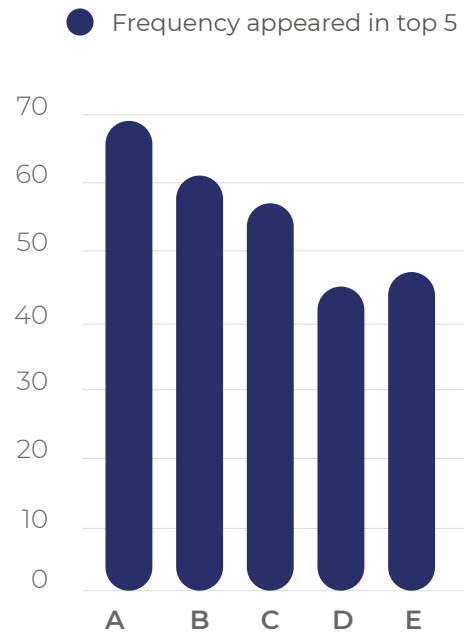
A - LiveOps Development & Assessing ROI
B - Balancing Game Economics & Introducing IAPs
C - Achieving Sustainable Growth with Retntion
D - Leveraging Segmentation for Content & IAP Personalization
E - Ideating, Testing & Interpreting Concept Prototypes

TABLE 14: PLOTTING BALANCING GAME ECONOMIES VS ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE GROWTH WITH RETENTION

Table 14 provides a side-by-side comparison of Balancing Game Economies & Introducing IAPs and Achieving Sustainable Growth with Retention.

Despite receiving an aggregate score separated by 0.5, Achieving Sustainable Growth with Retention was ranked as the greatest challenge by 14 respondents, and as the second greatest challenge by a further 14 respondents.

By comparison, Balancing Game Economies & Introducing IAPs placed amongst respondents as the third to sixth greatest challenge.
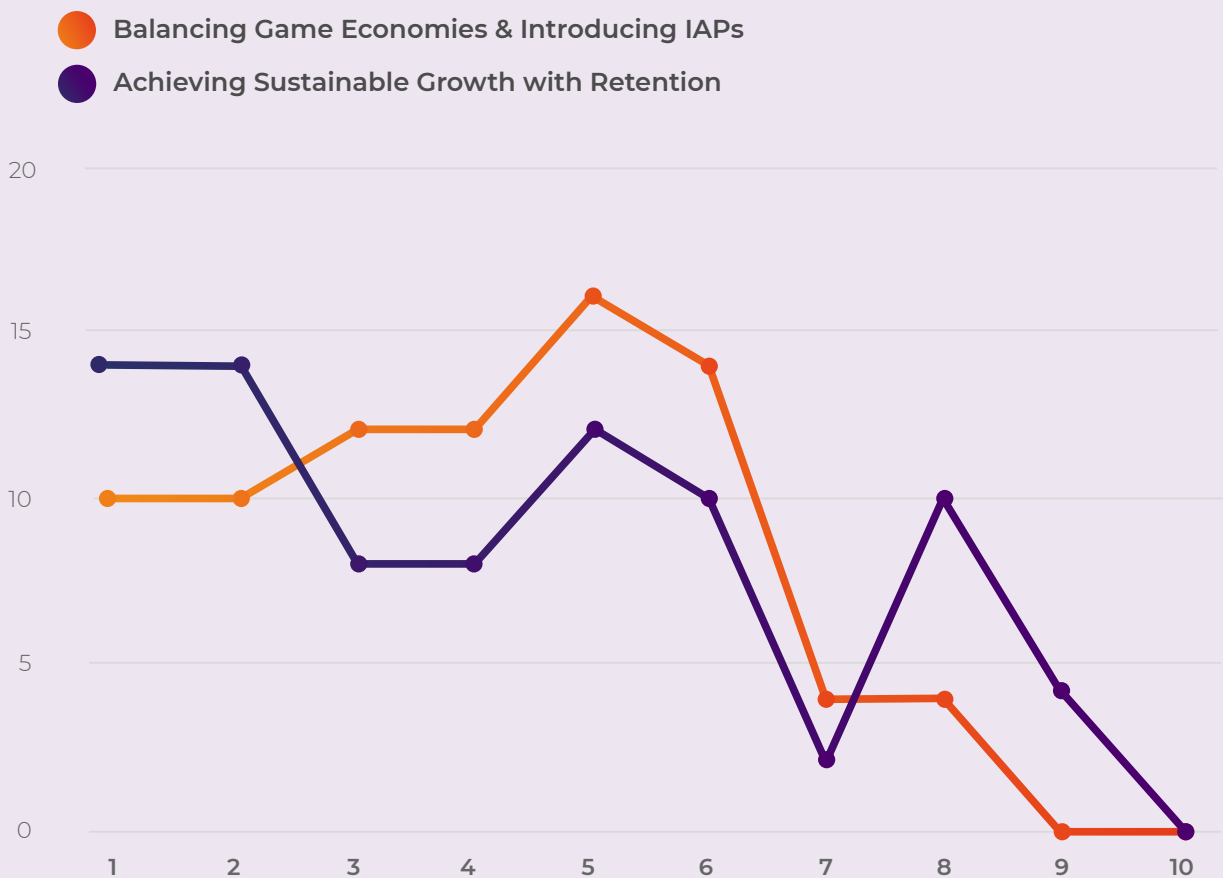
TOP FIVE PRODUCT MONETIZATION CHALLENGES

1. LIVEOPS DEVELOPMENT & ASSESSING ROI

LiveOps Development & Assessing ROI placed as the greatest challenge by Product managers.

With an aggregate score of 7.9, LiveOps Development & Assessing ROI placed well above subsequent challenges, with 29% of respondents ranking it as their single greatest challenge as we head into 2025.

LiveOps can mean different things to different companies. While some use it to update titles, others employ it as a tool to retain and re-engage player, acquire new users and drive further monetization opportunities.

But hitting the right tone with players is an art, and allocating resources to do so successfully is a difficult justification, especially if the full scope of ROI is not realised. Risks must be taken.

" It's important to take risks every once in a while; very well-thought-out, calculated risks that could potentially be really good, or unsuccessful, but that's where pivoting shines, and as LiveOps professionals we all need to have that backup plan because of how familiar we are with pivoting.

Mari Yalong,
Product Manager, LiveOps, **PerBlue**
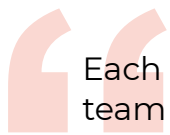
" Each studio running a live game will have to allocate a team or a few teams specifically for running events. Big companies have already been doing it and even Supercell admitted doing that to a certain extent. It's going to become a common practice rather than a best practice.

Ahmetcan Demirel,
Product Management &
Game Design Consultant

TOP FIVE PRODUCT MONETIZATION CHALLENGES

2. BALANCING GAME ECONOMIES & INTRODUCING IAPS

Balancing Game Economies & Introducing IAPs placed as respondents' second greatest challenge in aggregate score.

Falling 1.0 below LiveOps Development & Assessing ROI in aggregate score, only 12% of respondents valued Balancing Game Economies & Introducing IAPs as their greatest challenge.

Sixty respondents placed the challenge of balancing the game economy in their top five challenges, highlighting the importance of the topic as a third to fifth greatest challenge. As such, while not a pressing issue, balancing game economies remains present as a background concern for respondents. This can be seen in comparison with Achieving Sustainable Growth with Retention in Table 14.

Replicating the trend of hybrid monetization as seen in the Ad Mon portion of this report, the art of balancing ad and IAP revenue is of particular importance to monetization managers. Striking this balance can generate substantial incremental revenue and maximise potential for different player groups. After all, the goal can no longer be to prioritise one over the other.

> The biggest problems I see here frequently are spend depth and appetite. Both are really about spending now hurting further spending, and the economy absolutely has to be designed to handle deep spending or you won't get it.
>
> **Devin Becker,**
> Senior Games Industry Consultant, **Naavik**

> Introducing IAP requires a ton of polish that could take many months or years but its super exciting and gave us an opportunity to start making comics for our games.
>
> **CK Wang,**
> CEO, **Kooapps**

3. ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE GROWTH WITH RETENTION

Placing as the third greatest challenge for Product managers is Achieving Sustainable Growth with Retention.

With an aggregate score of 6.76, Achieving Sustainable Growth with Retention fell 0.12 short of Balancing Game Economies & Introducing IAPs. Yet, 17% of respondents placed the matter of retention as their single greatest challenge, with over half placing it in their top five challenges

Achieving Sustainable Growth with Retention featured across both our Product and UA challenges, with CPI increases and the changing privacy landscape making for expensive UA, and a reliance on retaining and re-engaging users. Sustainable growth has become a priority, and doing so requires a lot of testing, a solid data framework and appropriate revenue diversification.

"To achieve sustainable growth with retention, mobile games should use a data driven approach to measure which feature is improving retention and which is causing churn. To understand the true impact of a feature or campaign, we should have robust A/B testing systems. Another significant lever is revenue diversification. Having multiple monetization systems such as IAP, Ads, subscriptions, and alternate stores enable mobile games to monetize different segments of players better and drive revenue growth more sustainably.

Oindrila Mandal,
Senior Game Product Manager

"Getting your ads in front of a lot of people isn't hard, just expensive, but getting your ads in front of the right people takes time and skill from our UA team. Focusing on finding the players that are most likely to convert is more important to us than just getting raw numbers of people in.

Joel White,
Head of Product Management, **Gamigo Group**

4. LEVERAGING SEGMENTATION FOR CONTENT & IAP PERSONALIZATION

Placing fourth Leveraging Segmentation for Content & IAP Personalization.

With an aggregate score of 6.02, personalization ranked as the fourth challenge in aggregate score despite 44 people placing it amongst their top five challenges, with 7% placing it as their number one challenge.

The question of segmentation featured across all three of our surveys. This speaks to the theme of pursuing sustainable growth via personalised game experiences, with gameplay, content and offerings tailored to reflect the user.

However, like the challenge of LiveOps Development & Assessing ROI, the challenges for Leveraging Segmentation for Content & IAP Personalization lies on testing capabilities, enhancements in AI and resource allocation.

> "I'm confident that personalization in mobile games will reach new heights in 2025. With AI advancing daily, we'll unlock even better ways to deliver exceptionally curated, personalized content for players. Developers will also focus on dynamic segmentation that adapts seamlessly to ever-evolving user behaviours, ensuring games remain engaging and relevant.

Elizaveta Savenkova,
CBDO, **ZiMAD**
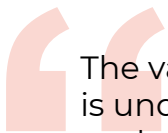
> "The value of user segmentation for both IAP & content is undeniably high, however, the challenge remains in understanding how far you should go in order to get the best ROI possible.

Teddy Petkova,
Senior Product Manager, **Midoki**

5. IDEATING TESTING & INTERPRETING CONCEPT PROTOTYPES

Rounding off the top five challenges, Ideating, Testing & Interpreting Concept Prototypes.

With an aggregate score of 5.63, Ideating, Testing & Interpreting Concept Prototypes beat Predictive Modelling for Product Roadmaps by 0.25, with two more Product managers holding Ideating, Testing & Interpreting Concept Prototypes in their top five challenges.

Despite this, half the share of respondents voted Ideating, Testing & Interpreting Concept Prototypes as their greatest challenge.

In an increasingly crowded marketspace, the need to constantly innovate and evolve is clear. But doing so rapidly, in a thorough manner, is a challenge in itself. The importance of being able to successfully create, test and interpret the success of prototypes requires a sturdy framework and innovation. Currently, some are testing concepts through playable ads while others use mini-games to draw in broader users.

After asking respondents to rank our presented top ten challenges, we invited them to add any comments on the challenges listed or provide context, thoughts or additional concerns they have in the product monetization space. You can view their thoughts below.

" When to know when the games require a pivot or a big bold beat, for example what did it take to make Brawl Stars take on bigger risk?

" Our challenges are faced more on the platform side and cross game integration. Being able to leverage similar product events across various games without redevelopment.

" Communicating with users is the most important thing and meeting user requests.

" The order of the challenges depends on the performance of the game, for some expansion is a top priority when you have exhausted the current market, for others it is making gameplay more enjoyable.

On Developing GTM Strategies & Launching Games in 2025

" Meta & AppLovin seem to have found their footing as scalable UA channels so there's some reason to be optimistic about 2025. AppLovin's latest results are a strong indicator the industry has finally, started to turn the corner post ATT and no longer being reliant on tracking individual, high paying users. As a result, I expect to see a small, but significant, increase in successful new releases in 2025.

Dylan Tredrea,
Mobile F2P Product Consultant

CONCLUSION

It is no secret that the industry has changed not just in the last few years post pandemic, but the last six months.

The industry is undergoing a seismic shift. Old UA and Ad Mon hacks have been taken away. Publishers and developers must look for growth, in users and revenue incrementally, with an emphasis placed on proper audience segmentation to create tailored game experiences in the interest of reaching full monetization potential and retaining players beyond D7 or D30.

This is true even in the case of incentivised traffic. Rewarded networks have offered great growth potential in the last year, providing opportunities for UA teams to access high LTV players. But, with more networks popping up, the share of the market is being squeezed. UA teams must now look to better retain these players beyond their reward.

This emphasis speaks to a desire for sustainable growth, with it a focus on working with product, analytics and game teams to ensure player bases are correctly segmented. Such collaborative efforts could allow Ad Mon teams to effectively monetize the non-payers, Product to provide personalized and fresh content to keep players coming back and for UA to ensure player LTV is realised to its maximum potential.

There are still winners, great winners at that, but stores are crowded and will only become more so. Risks need to be taken as we move into 2025.

"The games industry has matured into a highly competitive space, which can sometimes feel daunting. Yet, in recent years, we've witnessed remarkable breakout successes like Royal Match, Monopoly Go, Whiteout Survival, Last War, and, most recently, Pokémon TCG, all climbing to the top of the grossing charts. These examples demonstrate that with the right team, a deep understanding of your genre, and strong marketing and LiveOps capabilities, exceptional success is still achievable.

Luis de la Cámara,
VP of Marketing, **Rovio**

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THE HOME OF MOBILE GAMES INDUSTRY PROFESSIONALS

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UPCOMING GAMESFORUM CONFERENCES:

2025

Gamesforum Cyprus, 9 & 10 April

Gamesforum Hamburg, 10 & 11 June

Gamesforum London, 16 & 17 September

Gamesforum San Francisco, 22 & 23 October

Gamesforum Vietnam, Late November

2026:

Gamesforum Barcelona, Early February