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# VIETNAM GAMING OUTLOOK 2025

IAA to IAP Building Sustainable Growth  
for Vietnam game studios



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# Vietnam Gar

## As we close out 2025,

the mobile gaming landscape has never been more dynamic, or more full of opportunities, for Vietnamese studios. Your teams have already proven the world-class ability to ship addictive games at lightning speed, dominate global download charts, and master user acquisition in ways that larger markets envy. Vietnam's #1 ranking in Google Play downloads is a testament to that relentless execution and creativity.

### Vietnam among the World's Top Publishers of Mobile Games

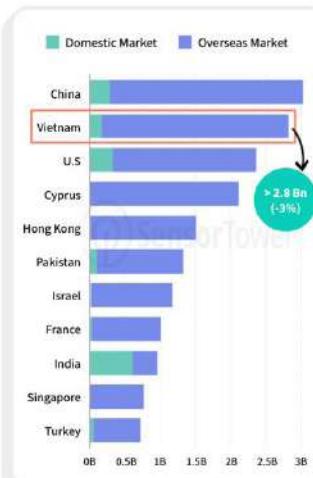
In H1 2025, Vietnam ranked 2nd globally in mobile game downloads, surpassing the U.S. with more than 2.8 billion installs.

4 Vietnam publishers among Top 20 by global downloads, signaling the country's rising prominence in global game publishing.

Majority of Vietnam's downloads come from overseas markets, showcasing strong capabilities in creating export-ready, globally resonant mobile games.

Source: Sensor Tower App Performance Insights  
Period: Jan 1, 2025 – June 30, 2025

### Top 10 Global Mobile Game Publishers HQ By Worldwide Downloads in H1 2025



### H1 2025 Top Game Publishers by Downloads Worldwide, iOS & Google Play Combined

Rank	Publisher	Downloads
1	Asia Interactive Games Limited	~3.3B
2	Minh Anh Studio	~2.8B
3	China Mobile Game Source Ltd. (Sohu Interactive)	~2.6B
4	CMG2017	~2.5B
5	Minh Anh Studio	~2.4B
6	Minh Anh Studio	~2.3B
7	Minh Anh Studio	~2.2B
8	Minh Anh Studio	~2.1B
9	Minh Anh Studio	~2.0B
10	Minh Anh Studio	~1.9B
11	Minh Anh Studio	~1.8B
12	Minh Anh Studio	~1.7B
13	Minh Anh Studio	~1.6B
14	Minh Anh Studio	~1.5B
15	Minh Anh Studio	~1.4B
16	Minh Anh Studio	~1.3B
17	Minh Anh Studio	~1.2B
18	Minh Anh Studio	~1.1B
19	Minh Anh Studio	~1.0B
20	Minh Anh Studio	~0.9B



## Yet the industry is at an inflection point.

The pure ad-driven (IAA) model that fueled hyper-casual's explosive growth can hit hard limits: Rising UA costs, privacy-driven signal loss, shrinking eCPMs, and an unforgiving attention ceiling that caps ARPU and threatens retention. Meanwhile, hybrid casual and IAP-first titles are pulling away, delivering deeper engagement, predictable revenue, and the financial resilience needed to build lasting IPs and global brands.

# Gaming Outlook

**We've had the privilege of partnering with many of the fastest-growing gaming companies,**

and partners in the ecosystem across APAC and beyond. This special feature dives deep into the strategic shift underway: why IAA alone is no longer enough, how hybrid and IAP models restore control and unlock higher LTV, and, most importantly, a practical, battle-tested blueprint for building a world-class IAP system from the ground up. Whether you're still validating your first hybrid title or preparing to take an established game into new high-value markets, the pillars outlined here will give you a clear path forward.



**We're proud to share these insights,**

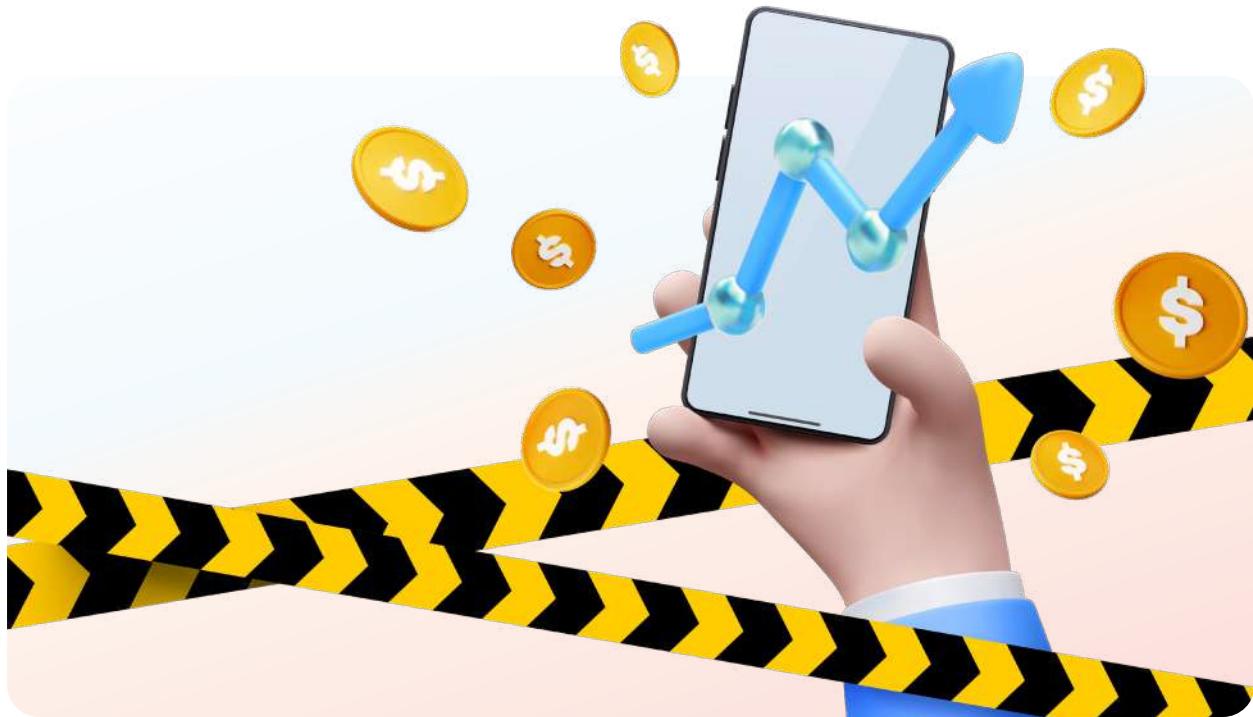
drawn from thousands of gaming transactions processed on our platforms and the real-world lessons of studios who've already made the leap. The future belongs to teams that combine Vietnam's signature speed and data-driven iteration with disciplined, player-first monetisation. We're excited to help you get there.



The Shift:

**IAA -> IAP as the  
New Engine of Growth**

# The Limitations of IAA: From Rapid Reach to a Profitability Ceiling



## The Wake-Up Call for Ad-Driven Gaming

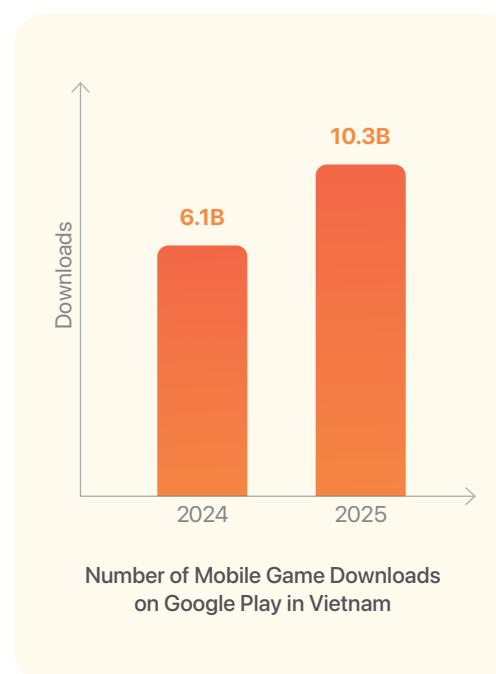
Vietnam's mobile gaming scene is a powerhouse in user growth, ranking #1 globally for Google Play downloads with 6.1 billion in 2024 alone, and projections hitting over 10.3 billion for 2025.

That's massive market share, especially for studios going global, where the first goal is often flooding the funnel with installs before chasing cash.

### BUT HERE'S THE CATCH:

While downloads soar, revenue doesn't keep up. Vietnam sits in the top 4-5 for global downloads, yet its gaming market revenue is expected to just top \$430 million in 2025, a fraction of leaders like the US or China.

This gap highlights IAA's core flaw: it excels at rapid reach but hits a wall on sustainable profits, pushing Vietnamese studios toward IAP hybrids for better financial stability.



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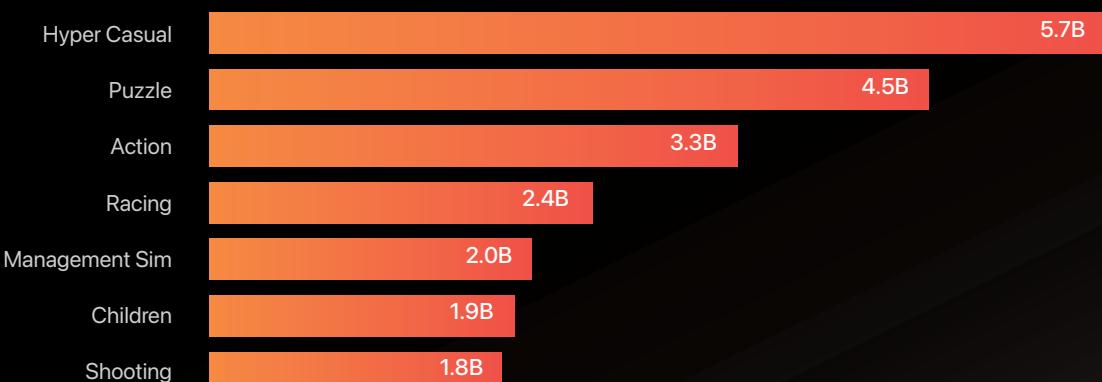
## The UA Cost Crunch: A Battlefield of Bids

User acquisition is getting brutal, CPIs climbing in mature markets like the US, Japan, Korea, and EU as everyone chases the same high-value players. AI-fueled ad saturation on platforms like Meta shortens creative lifespans, forcing faster refreshes and bigger spends with wild ROAS swings.

Data from Q1-Q3 2025 shows downloads up 7.4% to 38.9 billion, but revenue skewed heavily to IAP at 67.8% of \$82.5 billion, leaving ad-dependent titles with eroding economics. Often, studios bail after Day-7 ROAS checks, as UA costs eclipse ad returns, especially when IAA offers few fixes beyond cramming more impressions, which risks user burnout.

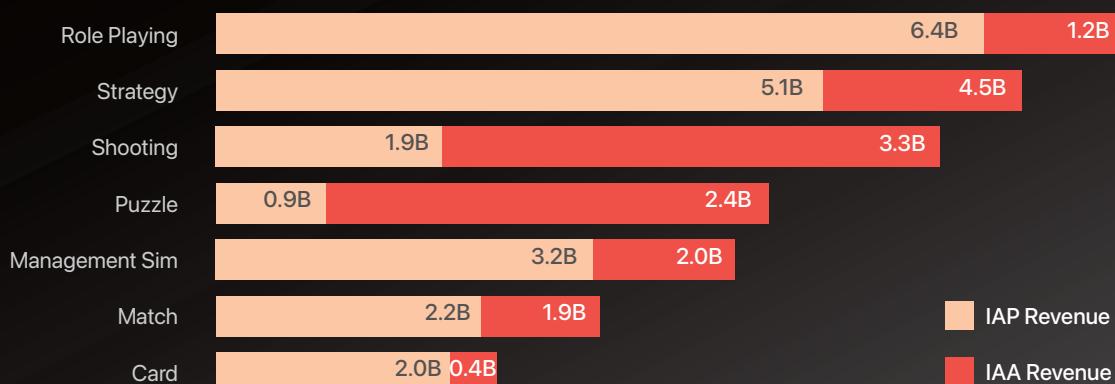
### Top 7 Mobile Game Genres by Downloads

Q1-03 2025, excl. Mainland China



### Top 7 Mobile Game Genres by Revenue (IAA+IAP)

Q1-03 2025, excl. Mainland China



Sources: PocketGamer.biz UA Report 2025

## 2

## Privacy, signal loss, and attribution challenges

Privacy shifts and signal loss have weakened targeting precision and measurement clarity, with 2025 marking a tipping point as [Google's Privacy Sandbox fully rolls out on Android](#), mirroring [Apple's App Tracking Transparency](#) (ATT) framework and further limiting third-party cookie tracking.

When your monetization hinges almost entirely on ad networks' ability to deliver matched fill at healthy eCPM, degraded attribution becomes an existential problem. You feel it immediately in fluctuating fill rates, inconsistent eCPMs, and noisier ROAS, compounded by Apple's November 2025 App Store Review Guidelines update, which tightened data-sharing disclosures for third-party AI models and reinforced ATT's asymmetrical requirements favoring Apple Ads over external networks, following a €150M French antitrust fine earlier in the year. Teams end up padding budgets for volatility rather than investing that money into content, live-ops, or systems that raise LTV. This dynamic is precisely what pushes studios to look for controllable revenue levers, most notably IAP and subscriptions, that are less at the mercy of external ad auctions. Surveys of developers in early 2025 ranked privacy changes and rising UA costs as top threats, driving a 60% increase in active mobile game advertisers adapting with first-party data strategies like in-app surveys and contextual targeting.

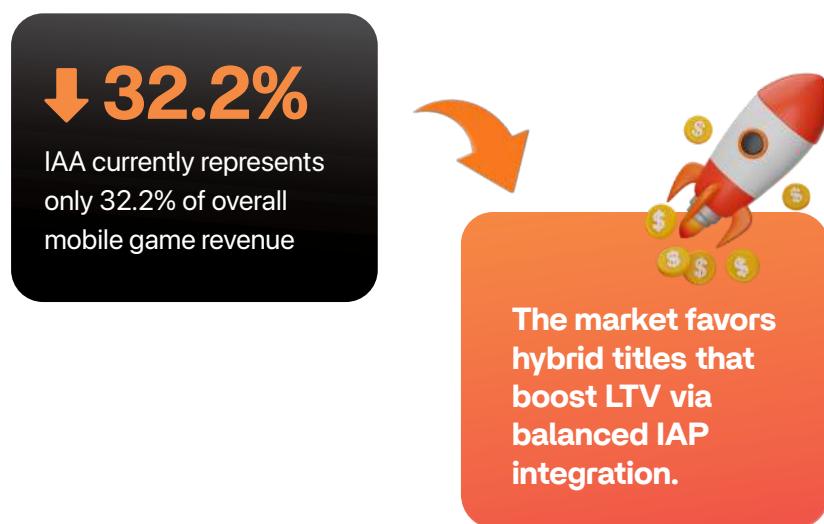


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## ARPU Plateaus: Hitting the Ad Attention Wall

IAA-first loops offer limited room to expand value per user. The “price” a player pays is attention, not money, and the studio’s lever is frequency and placement of ads. That quickly hits a UX wall. Once you saturate session time with rewarded/interstitial placements, the marginal gains per impression diminish while the risk of churn rises. ARPDAU stabilizes at a ceiling, and any shock to traffic quality or eCPM pushes you below break-even.

In 2025, this plateau is stark: IAA now accounts for just 32.2% of mobile game revenue (down from prior years’ shares), as players in privacy-constrained environments opt out of ad-heavy experiences, favoring titles with hybrid models that boost LTV through balanced IAP integration. Without direct purchase mechanics, you have no natural path to unlock the willingness-to-pay of your most engaged cohorts, especially as economic pressures in mature markets curb discretionary ad engagement.



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## Retention harm from ad fatigue and flow disruption

Ad overload degrades UX and drives churn.

Ad frequency, if not thoughtfully orchestrated, breaks play flow & creates fatigue. Players especially sensitive to interruptions churn early in the journey, exactly when you need them to pass your day-1/7 retention gates.

Teams try to compensate by adding more ads to maintain revenue, but that worsens experience and accelerates churn, creating a vicious loop: more ads → lower retention → lower eCPM/fill → need more ads. The result is a gradually shrinking base of high-quality users who could have converted under a better value proposition.

This year’s trends amplify the issue: with Google’s September 2025 Play Store AI revamp introducing in-game “Play Games Sidekick” overlays for real-time tips (rolling out to titles like Star Wars: Galaxy of Heroes), players expect seamless, non-intrusive assistance, making disruptive IAA feel even more outdated and retention-killing.



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## Operational risks: fraud, policy shocks, vendor dependence

Ad fraud and invalid traffic introduce silent leakage, distort KPIs, and degrade optimization signals. Meanwhile, platform policy changes can alter what placements are allowed or how they're measured, breaking previously reliable waterfalls overnight, such as [Apple's November 2025 guidelines clarifying that HTML5/JavaScript mini-games](#) (common in hyper-casual IAA titles) are now fully subject to App Store review standards, closing loopholes and increasing rejection risks for ad-heavy prototypes.

### Ad-only Studios

Most critically, ad-only studios depend on a small set of networks/mediations; when auction dynamics change, exacerbated by [Google's July 2025 policy mandating Android 15 targeting for new apps](#), which includes enhanced privacy APIs for ad consent, this lack of diversification is the opposite of resilience.

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## Cash Flow Chaos: Lumpy and Unpredictable

IAA revenue is seasonal and extremely sensitive to macro conditions in ad markets. That translates to lumpy cash-in and unpredictable budget envelopes, a poor foundation for headcount plans, UA scale-ups, or content bets.

### In Vietnam

Vietnamese studios operating globally also juggle many currencies; with ad-only revenue, you lack the pricing/packaging tools that let you shape cash-flow quality (e.g., subscription share, bundles that lift upfront revenue, or region-tier pricing that smooths FX exposure). In 2025, [this volatility spiked with a 7% drop in gaming UA spend](#), forcing many to pivot amid post-pandemic normalization and privacy-induced attribution noise.

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## Margin structure you don't fully control

Because IAA margin rides on eCPM and fill, your unit economics are dictated by external auctions rather than internal product strategy. When CPI rises and ARPDAU fails to keep pace, thin margins vanish. The absence of direct pricing power translates into limited ability to defend profitability, especially as [2025's hybrid monetization trends show IAP driving 13% YoY revenue growth to \\$150B globally](#), while IAA struggles with fill rate dips from signal loss.

*Sources: Udonis Revenue*

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## Scaling constraints

Hyper-casual paved the way for speed, but sustainable scale requires depth, meta systems, progression, cosmetics, and value ladders, that enable users to pay for tangible upgrades or status.

IAA lacks the structural mechanics to monetize that depth. As a result, studios plateau earlier unless they rebuild product around monetizable value, not just ad exposure.

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## Strategic brand risk and audience mismatch

Heavy ad loads can harm perceived quality, constrain genre ambition, and attract less loyal audiences. As studios mature, they seek to build brands and IPs; ad-centric UX can work against that long-term positioning.

In 2025, with developers citing rising UA costs and privacy as top threats in surveys, the mismatch is pushing a clear shift: hybrid models blending IAA for non-payers with IAP for depth, as evidenced by research showing hybrids yielding higher revenues and LTV.

**The Smart Shift Ahead**

**The conclusion isn't that IAA is obsolete. It remains a powerful UA amplifier and supplementary revenue stream.**



But the model can no longer be the sole backbone of a sustainable P&L for most teams. The pattern we see globally in 2025 is to reposition IAA as a support mechanism, widening the top of the funnel and monetizing non-payers, while the core revenue engine shifts toward IAP and subscriptions.

That strategic pivot restores control over monetization, creates new LTV levers, and makes cash flow more predictable.

» Next stop: IAP/hybrid dominance in 1.2. (Core themes: UA surges, privacy pitfalls, ad model shackles, ARPU dead-ends.) stream.

# Why IAP and hybrid casual are rising (global view): control, depth, predictability

The mobile gaming world is shifting gears fast. In-app purchases (IAP) and hybrid casual models are taking center stage because they fix IAA's main headaches, like high costs, unclear data, and limited user value. These approaches give studios direct control over pricing, build deeper game experiences, link revenue more closely to player engagement, and offer a stronger path to global growth with steady finances.

## » As 2025 ends, the numbers show the momentum:

Global IAP and subscription revenue reached \$150 billion, up 13% from last year, with iOS leading at 55% share.

Hybrid casual games grabbed the biggest slice of downloads, up 3.4% even as overall installs stayed flat, and their revenue jumped 37% year-over-year.

## » In Vietnam,

where gaming downloads hit over 6 billion on Google Play alone in 2024 (projected to top 10 billion in 2025), IAP growth in apps and games surged 65%, the fastest in APAC, making hybrids a smart play for local studios aiming for worldwide reach.



Global IAP and subscription revenue

**\$150B**

Up from last year

**+13%**

Operating System (OS)

**iOS**

Hybrid casual

**+37%**

YoY revenue

In Vietnam

Download on Google play

**6B**

IAP growth in app **65%**

1

## You control the paywall and the price ladder

With IAP, studios take charge of their monetization setup: items like boosters or energy packs, permanent unlocks, currency bundles, cosmetics, battle passes, and subscriptions. This lets you create value steps that match what players are willing to pay, across different groups and countries. You can test with copy, bundles, discounts, and geo-specific pricing; time offers to progression peaks for that “aha” buy moment.

Hybrids amplify it: **72% of devs now blend models, with RPGs leaping from 41% to 51% hybrid adoption.** It's a big change from IAA, where “payment” is just ad views and the market decides the value. In Vietnam, this control helps studios handle global currencies better and counter rising costs.

Hybrid amplify it:

**72%** of devs  
blend models

2

## Revenue becomes more predictable and retention-linked

IAP ties money directly to how engaged players are. As you add deeper systems and story arcs, loyal players spend more often and in bigger amounts. Subscriptions bring in regular income, helping smooth out cash flow for ongoing updates and expansion. Airwallex's IAP basics, like clear product lists, local pricing, and tax handling, make this reliable at scale.

In 2025, [payer numbers grew 6% globally despite flat installs](#), with long-running games taking half of IAP revenue. In Vietnam, finance app sessions rose 84% in Q1, showing how steady models like subs can boost growth.

3

## Hybrid casual: the bridge between reach and depth

Hybrid casual combines hyper-casual's easy start and wide appeal with deeper elements from casual or mid-core games. Ads still help with non-spenders and user growth, but IAP drives the main lifetime value through things like speed-ups, boosts, or custom items. This keeps production quick while adding reasons for players to pay.

Globally, [hybrids led with 37% IAP growth and 30% overall revenue increase in 2025, dominating puzzles and strategy](#) like Royal Match and Monopoly GO! (hitting \$5B lifetime). They flip 98% non-payers into spenders. In Vietnam, where the gaming market is set to hit 21% strategy revenue boom on Google Play, hybrids fit perfectly with local strengths in fast iteration and data-driven tweaks.

**Ads help with:**

- non-spenders and
- user growth

**IAP drives the main lifetime value through:**

- speed-ups,
- boosts, or
- custom items

4

## Margin defence and FX discipline

Direct sales mean margins matter, and IAP lets studios protect profits closely. Showing prices in local currencies and settling in the same (multi-currency processing) avoids extra conversion fees (Airwallex's like-for-like settlements save 1-3%).

### Model fees transparently, refund in native currencies to cut disputes 25%. 2025 edges:

- [Epic's April win zeroed Apple's external fees for 30% US IAP gains](#);
- Hybrids leverage [SDKs for 48% ARPU jumps](#);
- Emerging spots like [Turkey saw +28% spend via tailored packs](#).

5

## Conversion excellence: one-tap flows, smart risk, localised UX

The system goes beyond game offers to smooth checkout experiences. Features like one-tap payments, saved cards, and selective security checks cut drop-offs. Localizing currency, language, and payment options builds trust and raises completion rates. A/B testing the whole process, from offer text to error messages, adds steady gains.

### Improve the payment experience

One-tap payments

Saved cards

Selective security checks

Localizing currency

Language

Payment options

Airwallex's tools, like webhooks for reliable transactions, support this end-to-end. In 2025, Apple's updates expanded product pages and offer codes, lifting conversions 20% in hybrids.

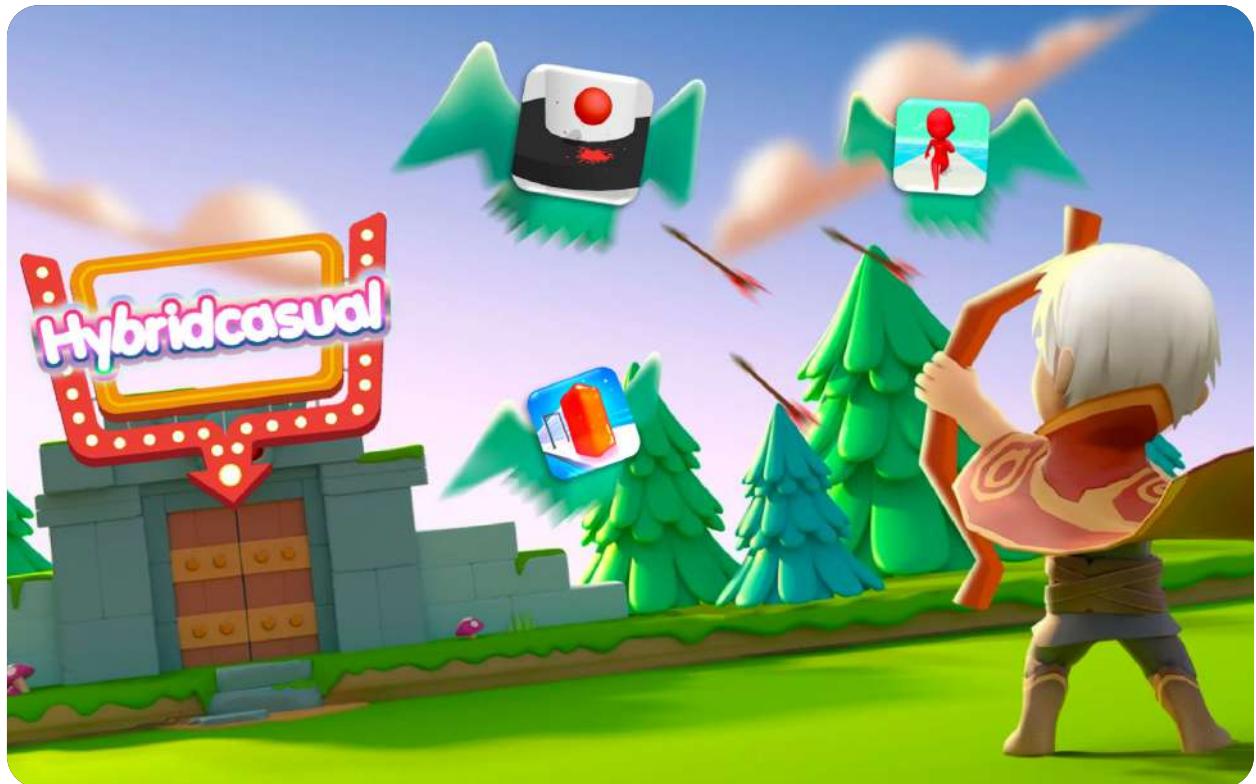
# The Roadmap for Vietnamese studios going global

## Key Strengths

Vietnam's strengths, fast development, practical approaches, and data focus, align with hybrid casual. It keeps your user acquisition skills while adding IAP depth for longer player value. Hybrids give Vietnamese teams tools to compete on speed and substance worldwide.

## IAP-Led Monetization

In aggregate, IAP and hybrid casual are rising because they reintroduce agency into monetization. You trade dependency on opaque ad markets for a design space where product, pricing, and payments work together to grow LTV. That is why the recommended path, also reflected in our event framework, is to move through four disciplined phases: build the foundations (catalog, pricing, tax), maximise conversion (integration and checkout), protect margin (methods, fees, FX, settlement), and operationalise for the long run (fraud, disputes, finance ops, go-live).



Source: deconstructoroffun



# Vietnam Gaming Outlook 2026: **Predictions & Opportunities**

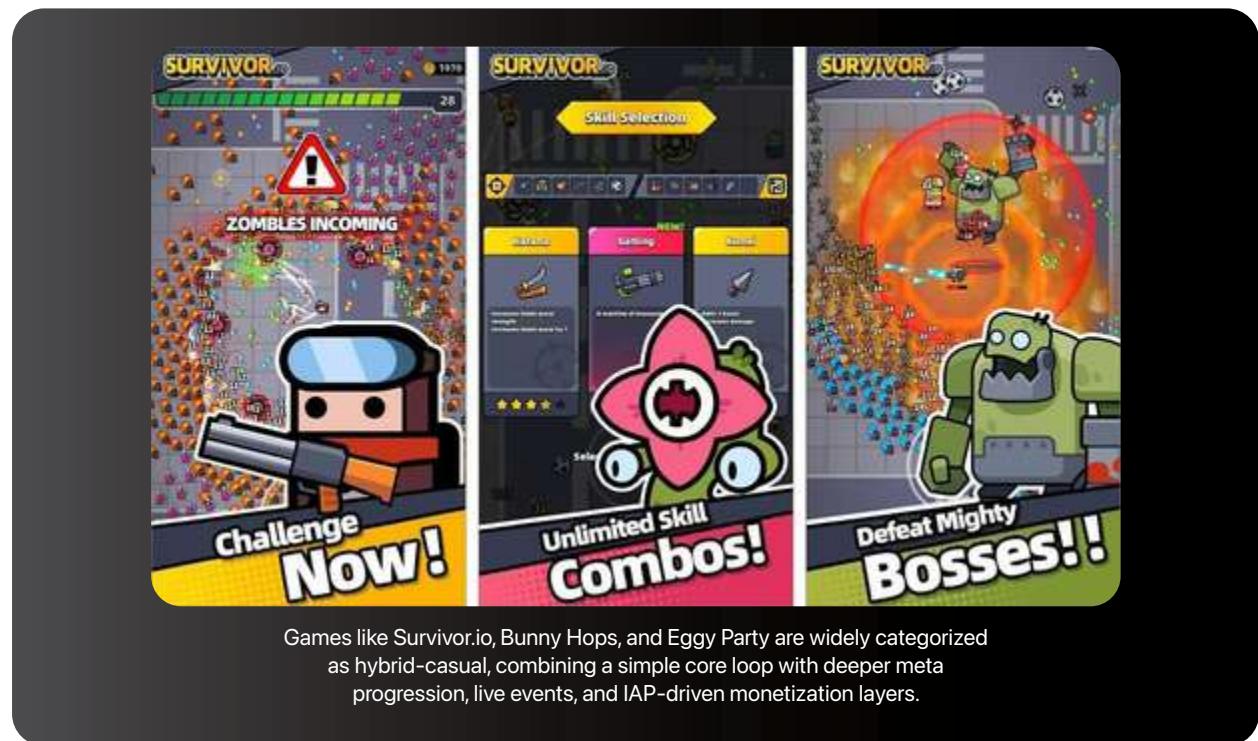
# 2026: The true era of hybrid-casual games

Vietnam's mobile gaming scene is a powerhouse in user growth, ranking #1 globally for Google Play downloads with 6.1 billion in 2024 alone, and projections hitting over 10.3 billion for 2025. That's massive market share, especially for studios going global, where the first goal is often flooding the funnel with installs before chasing cash.

At the forefront of this evolution is the shift from hyper-casual to hybrid-casual, which has moved well beyond speculation and into market reality. Leading industry reports from Mistplay, Unity, and Co-op Board Games consistently highlight hybrid-casual as the dominant force in both download volume and revenue growth.

By combining a simple core loop with deeper layers such as meta progression, live events, and in-app purchases, as seen in games like Survivor.io and Eggy Party, hybrid-casual games strike a rare balance. They retain the scale once associated with hyper-casual, while delivering significantly stronger lifetime value. This superior LTV profile has prompted studios, publishers, and agencies alike to aggressively scale UA investment in the genre.

As a result, 2026 is likely to mark not the arrival, but the consolidation of a "true hybrid era", one where hybrid-casual becomes the default blueprint for sustainable growth rather than a transitional experiment.



Games like Survivor.io, Bunny Hops, and Eggy Party are widely categorized as hybrid-casual, combining a simple core loop with deeper meta progression, live events, and IAP-driven monetization layers.

At the same time, merge games enhanced with storytelling continue to stand out as a strategic advantage for studios. The success of Gossip Harbor highlights how drama-driven narratives, distinctive characters, and continuous meta-events can significantly boost player retention. Heading into 2026, this formula is increasingly seen as a gold-standard model, especially when layered with light RPG elements to add depth and long-term engagement.



Gossip Harbor blends merge gameplay with drama and romance, retaining players through compelling storytelling and a steady cadence of meta-driven live events.

Match-swap puzzle continues to dominate the casual market in terms of revenue, with games like Fishdom, Lily's Garden, and Royal Match consistently ranking among top-grossing games. According to AppMagic, match-3 games alone generated over \$2.7 billion in revenue and 395 million installs in the first half of 2025, reinforcing puzzle as a core pillar of the mobile games economy.



Story-driven puzzle formats, such as murder mystery and relationship-based variants, are expected to surge in 2026, as rising CPI pushes studios to rely more heavily on emotional hooks to attract and retain players.

The rise of story-first experiences among Gen Z and Millennial players further reinforces this momentum, suggesting that narrative-driven puzzle formats, particularly murder mystery and relationship-focused games, will continue to expand.

Meanwhile, mid-core strategy titles are expected to remain revenue powerhouses despite rising CPI. Live-ops is no longer optional but essential, favoring studios with strong data capabilities, sizable budgets, and mature operational expertise. Smaller teams, by contrast, are likely to pivot toward RPG-idle hybrids as a more sustainable path, preserving strategic depth while easing acquisition costs.

**Smaller teams are likely to pivot toward RPG-idle hybrids**

# UA strategies driven by bolder, more experimental creatives

Heading into 2026, mobile gaming is expected to see continued disruption in both creative execution and user acquisition strategies. As competition intensifies and CPI remains under pressure, studios and ad networks are being pushed to rethink how they capture and qualify player attention.

While no longer a new concept, Playable Ads are on track to become a baseline requirement rather than a competitive advantage in 2026 UA strategies.

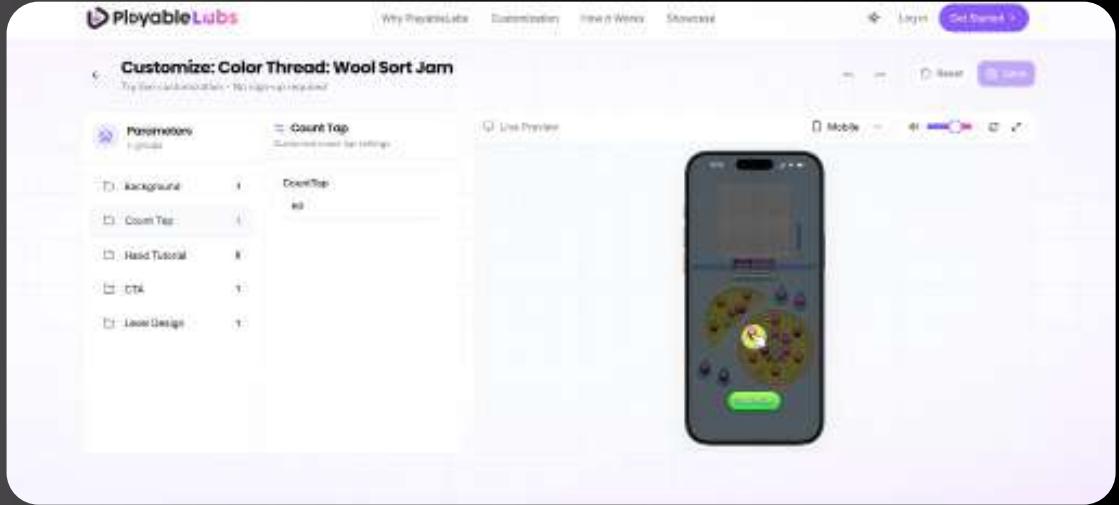
Compared to traditional video ads, playables consistently deliver significantly higher conversion rates and have been shown to improve early retention by 30-40%. By allowing users to interact with real gameplay, playable ads serve as an effective pre-qualification funnel, filtering out low-intent installs, improving ROAS, and supporting more sustainable, quality-led growth at scale.



Royal Match's explosive growth, fueled by a playable ads first strategy, is clearly reflected in its revenue and download trajectory, offering one of the most compelling proofs of how effective Playable Ads can be as a UA lever at scale.

Unlike video or banner formats, building a high-quality playable ad requires complex HTML5 engineering, rigorous QA processes, and often weeks of in-house effort for a single concept. In a 2026 UA landscape where speed is measured in seconds, such delays translate directly into lost competitive advantage. This has created strong demand for solutions that can compress production cycles from weeks to days, enabling rapid, continuous A/B testing without overloading technical teams.

Powered by a flexible, customizable dashboard, Playable Labs allows teams to quickly update visual assets, fine-tune technical parameters, and generate multiple creative variants with ease. Built-in auto-localization further ensures each playable is market-ready across regions. This level of agility dramatically reduces turnaround time and production costs, while giving teams full control over the quality and performance of every playable creative.



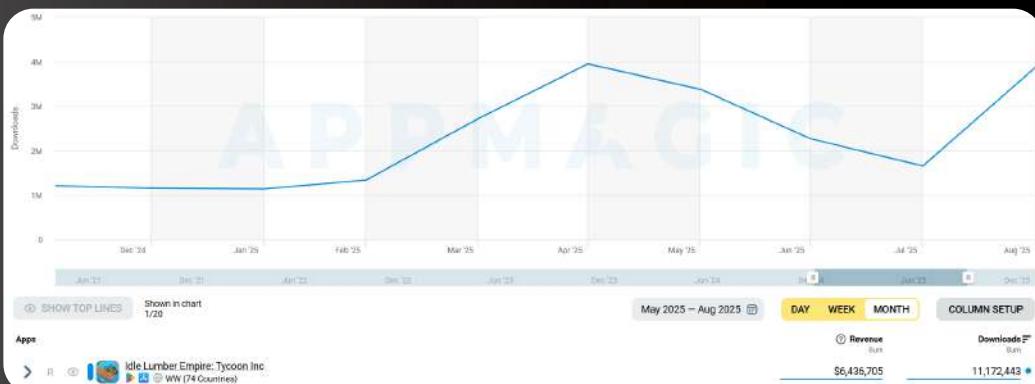
Playable Labs is a fully made-in-Vietnam product, delivering fast, efficient, and performance-driven playable ad solutions.

Alongside this, one of the most prominent trends is the use of AI in advertising. After its breakout year in 2025, AI has become a standard tool for studios, enabling the rapid production of creative variants at nearly twice the speed of traditional manual workflows.



From a performance standpoint, AI-generated visuals have proven to be highly effective attention hooks, capable of capturing user interest within the first critical moments.

From “odd-yet-addictive” visuals to AI-humanized characters inspired by viral memes, campaigns like Idle Lumber Empire and Capybara GO! demonstrate that AI not only optimizes production costs but can also deliver a significant uplift in installs.



Idle Lumber Empire sees a sharp surge in downloads.

In parallel, IP collaborations remain a high-impact growth lever. Partnerships such as Monopoly GO! x Star Wars, Topwar x Pacific Rim, and Dragonheir x Dungeons & Dragons continue to demonstrate their ability to expand player reach, lift ARPPU, and drive strong in-app revenue growth.



IP collaborations are typically expected to expand the player base, introduce fresh gameplay mechanics, and, most importantly, drive a significant uplift in in-app revenue.

Within this broader wave of collaboration, influencer-led creatives continue to hold strong momentum. The case of Last War: Survival, from Antony Starr to Daniel Wu and Knossi, illustrates how celebrities have become a powerful lever to combat creative fatigue, generate hundreds of new ad variations, and sustain long-term growth.

At the same time, publishers are actively exploring new user acquisition channels, ranging from interactive ad formats to rewarded UA, a channel now rated by 82% of developers as outperforming traditional CPI-based acquisition. Looking further ahead, as chatbots evolve into mainstream consumer platforms and experiment with advertising models, they could emerge as a promising new UA frontier in the years to come.

# Monetization in 2026: What's next for game studios?

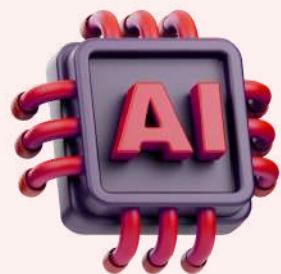
**As the digital advertising landscape evolves at unprecedented speed, DSPs and SSPs remain the twin engines of the programmatic ecosystem.**

DSPs empower advertisers to reach the right users at the right moment, while SSPs enable publishers to maximize the value of every impression. Heading into 2026, this relationship will be significantly reshaped by AI advancements and tighter privacy regulations.



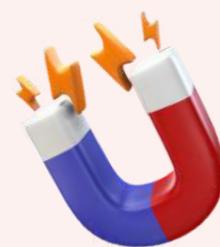
## On the demand side, AI-driven bidding is set to become the new standard.

Instead of relying on user identifiers, deep-learning models will predict conversion potential using contextual signals, marking a critical shift in the era of signal loss. In parallel, DSPs will increasingly prioritize supply path optimization (SPO), favoring transparent, direct inventory paths and eliminating inefficient reseller chains to improve media efficiency.



## SSPs are evolving in tandem.

Curated marketplaces are gaining traction, allowing premium inventory to be packaged around specific audience segments and sold at a higher value. Modern SSPs are also moving toward hybrid monetization, supporting both open auctions and direct deals within a single platform, giving publishers greater control while minimizing channel conflicts. Direct DSP-SSP integrations will become the norm, reducing intermediary fees and improving delivery speed.



**Alongside this, OpenRTB continues to serve as the foundational transaction standard of the programmatic ecosystem, enabling studios and publishers to better control how inventory is bought and sold at scale.**

Meanwhile, formats such as audio and native ads, though not new, are being explored more deeply as complementary monetization channels, helping diversify revenue streams without compromising user experience.



### **Finally, Direct Demand monetization and Web Shops are opening new revenue pathways for game studios.**

Direct deals offer higher yield and stronger brand control, while Web Shops are evolving into full-fledged community hubs, integrating loyalty programs, dynamic pricing, and cross-platform payments. In an environment defined by rising UA costs, these models are increasingly seen as strategic pillars for sustainable monetization.





**Best practices & solutions**

## From IAA to IAP

# Data, Metrics, and Tools Powering Mobile Game Growth

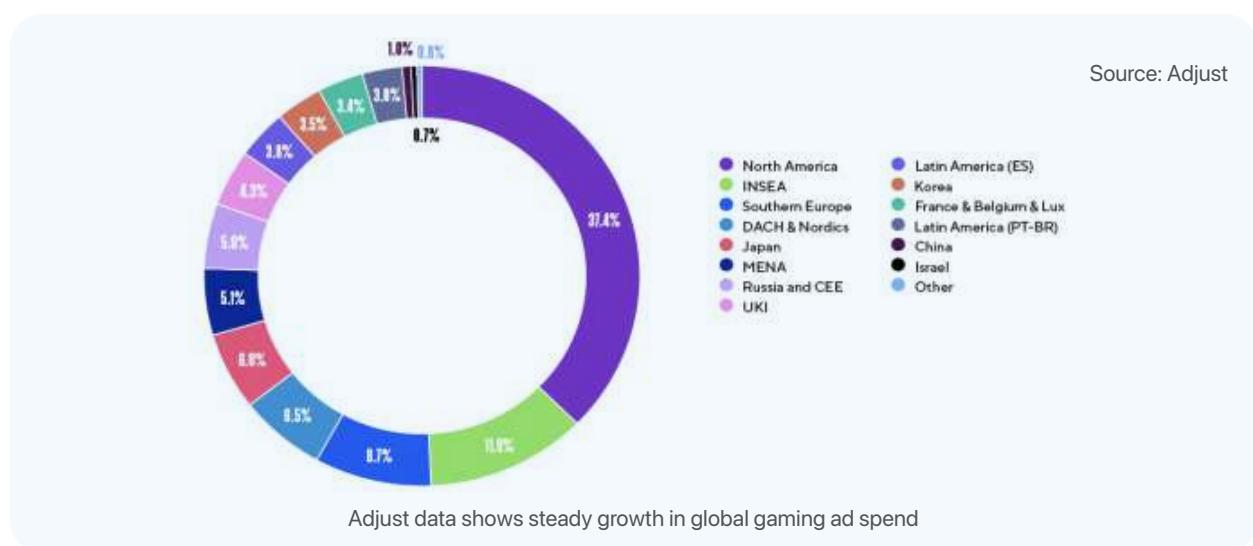
As competition in mobile gaming continues to intensify, monetization has evolved beyond a choice between in-app advertising (IAA) and in-app purchases (IAP).

Today, most studios are operating hybrid models, using IAA to scale reach while relying on IAP to drive long-term revenue. However, IAP is fundamentally more complex. It requires a deep understanding of player behavior, a structured measurement framework, and clean, reliable data. Without these foundations, optimizing IAP becomes guesswork rather than strategy.



## Global market trends: IAP continues its upward momentum

According to Adjust data, global gaming ad spend continues to grow steadily. North America remains the largest market, accounting for close to 40% of total spend, followed by India, Southeast Asia, and key European markets. This growth reflects not only rising user acquisition costs, but also increasing pressure on studios to monetize more efficiently once players are acquired.



On the revenue side, Sensor Tower reports that global IAP revenue grew by 12.5%, reaching USD 150 billion - equivalent to roughly USD 285,000 spent every minute. Of this, gaming contributes roughly USD 82 billion, driven largely by mid-core and casual titles.

Genres such as strategy, RPG, puzzle, and casino continue to dominate IAP revenue rankings. While this creates new competitive opportunities, it also raises the bar for data sophistication and purchase funnel optimization.



## The measurement framework behind IAP performance



Studios that scale IAP effectively tend to organize their measurement frameworks around three core metric groups, each reflecting a different stage of the player lifecycle.

**01**

**Acquisition metrics** provide the entry point: total installs, growth trends over time, and the split between paid and organic downloads. These signals help studios assess traffic quality before players even enter the game

**02**

**Engagement and quality metrics** - including DAU/MAU, retention, session length, and session frequency - reveal whether players are truly engaging with the experience and progressing far enough to reach monetization moments.

**03**

**Early monetization metrics**, such as IAP revenue, ARPDAU, and revenue per download, show how effectively the game converts early engagement into value.

Based on insights shared by IAP-focused studios, these three metric groups do not exist in isolation. Instead, they form an interconnected IAP revenue funnel. Daily revenue is ultimately driven by the combination of DAU, buyer rate, purchase frequency, and transaction value. Monitoring each layer of this funnel allows studios to identify bottlenecks quickly and optimize with precision.



Source: iLOGO

## Why pre-purchase behavior matters?

**Rather than focusing solely on pricing or bundle configuration, leading IAP studios begin by analyzing player behavior before a purchase occurs.**

Mapping the sequence of events leading up to transactions helps answer a critical question: which in-game contexts create the strongest purchase intent?

In practice, IAP events can occur across a wide range of contexts - after completing a tutorial, winning or losing a level, leveling up, claiming a reward, opening a limited-time bundle, or interacting with IAP placements such as popups or home screen icons.

By comparing these journeys, studios can identify which contexts generate the highest conversion rates and prioritize optimization accordingly.

### Example

In the example illustrated below, first purchases frequently occur immediately after the tutorial or when players interact with IAP touchpoints tied to rewards or first-time bundles. This suggests that players respond more strongly when IAP feels like a natural extension of progression and rewards, rather than a standalone sales prompt. The presence of retry flows following purchase failures also offers valuable insight, allowing studios to assess purchase intent and evaluate whether payment friction, rather than motivation, is limiting conversions.

```
[5] tutorial_step > spend_resource/play_normal > level_start > session_start > in_app_purchase/com.survivor.1stbuy

[5] tutorial_step > iap_show/home_popup/com.survivor.1stbuy > feature_open/1stpack > iap_click/home_popup/com.survivor.1stbuy >
in_app_purchase/com.survivor.1stbuy

[5] tutorial_step > iap_show/home_icon/com.survivor.bundle1.ss,com.survivor.bundle2.ss,com.survivor.bundle3.ss,com.survivor.bundle4.ss >
earn_resource/claim_limited_bundle > earn_resource > in_app_purchase/com.survivor.1stbuy

[5] tutorial_step > iap_show/home_icon/com.survivor.bundle1,com.survivor.bundle2,com.survivor.bundle3,com.survivor.bundle4 >
earn_resource/claim_limited_bundle > earn_resource/level_up_reward > in_app_purchase/com.survivor.1stbuy

[5] tutorial_step > iap_show/home_icon/com.survivor.bundle1,com.survivor.bundle2,com.survivor.bundle3,com.survivor.bundle4 >
earn_resource/claim_limited_bundle > earn_resource > in_app_purchase/com.survivor.1stbuy

[5] tutorial_step > iap_show/home_icon/com.survivor.1stbuy > feature_open/1stpack > iap_click/home_icon/com.survivor.1stbuy >
in_app_purchase/com.survivor.1stbuy

[5] tutorial_step > iap_click/home_popup/com.survivor.1stbuy > purchase_fail/home_popup > iap_click/home_popup/com.survivor.1stbuy >
in_app_purchase/com.survivor.1stbuy
```

Example of pre-purchase user journeys – source: Adjust client

# Analyzing IAP across three key dimensions: Purchase flow, geography, and player age

In day-to-day operations, understanding how revenue is generated is often more valuable than tracking total revenue alone.

Based on insights from IAP-focused studios, effective analysis typically spans three dimensions:

1

## Purchase flow

Purchase flow analysis reveals how players move between IAP tiers. Strong first-purchase performance followed by steep drop-offs in subsequent packs often signals issues with pricing, bundle value, or offer placement. Optimizing bundle sequencing, timing, and messaging can significantly improve conversion at higher price points.

**IAP Package purchase flow**



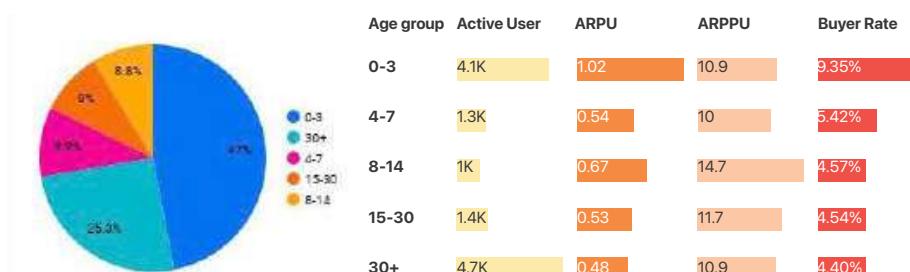
Source: Adjust's client

2

## Country-level

Country-level analysis enables more accurate user acquisition investment. Differences in purchasing behavior, first-time buyer rates, and ARPPU across markets make geographic segmentation essential for both monetization and UA efficiency.

**IAP Metrics by User's Age**



3

## User age

User age analysis, measured by days since install, highlights when purchases are most likely to occur. In many cases, a significant share of IAP revenue is generated within the first few days post-install, while a secondary peak emerges later among long-term, high-value players. These patterns directly inform onboarding design and late-game monetization strategies.

Cohort analysis: connecting retention, revenue, and ROAS

For gaming teams, cohort analysis remains a critical tool for evaluating the impact of product and marketing changes over time. By grouping users by shared attributes - such as install date or acquisition source - studios can track retention, engagement, and monetization trends longitudinally.

Cohorts									
Cohort analysis		Retention & Monetization							
Dimension	Initial	Last 3 Months							
Campaign Name	Initial	Last 3 Months							
Campaign Name	Users	0D	1D	2D	3D	4D	5D	6D	
User Reactivation Campaign	5,831	616	665	700	712	728	737	766	
New Market Launch	5,480	447	476	494	507	511	519	526	
Remove Ads Campaign	3,278	153	304	400	412	413	426	435	
Brand Awareness Campaign	1,647	942	1,003	1,041	1,076	1,096	1,114	1,129	
Wayward Devils Campaign	1,147	156	170	176	177	178	181	182	

## Clean data as a prerequisite for confident decision-making

Accurate optimization depends on clean data. IAP-focused games are particularly exposed to noise from invalid installs and fraudulent purchase events, which can distort performance insights.

To address this, Adjust provides layered protection. Fraud Prevention filters low-quality traffic at the source through configurable rules, while Purchase Verification validates transactions directly with Apple and Google to ensure reported revenue reflects real player spending.

With reliable data in place, studios can make confident decisions across acquisition, monetization, and product optimization.

## Conclusion

Sustainable IAP growth is not driven by offers alone. It requires a consistent analytical mindset, clearly defined metrics, and trustworthy data. By understanding pre-purchase behavior, optimizing purchase flows, and measuring player value over time, studios can build IAP strategies that scale - even as competition in mobile gaming continues to intensify.



## The IAP Monetization System:

# Pricing, Packaging, Checkout, Build-to-Scale Blueprint with Airwallex

## Unlocking IAP's Full Potential: A System for Sustainable Wins



Global IAP and subscription revenue has reached roughly \$150 billion, up about 13% year-on-year. Hybrid casual titles have surged, with IAP revenue up close to 88% to around \$733 million, even as overall installs stay broadly flat. The App Store has grown about 5.4% while Google Play has held steady, but both platforms have raised the bar:



Apple's October updates added up to **70** bespoke product pages and extended offer codes to every IAP, pushing developers toward more targeted, promotion-driven funnels.



Google's **Billing Library 8.0** (general availability mid-year) tightened compliance and lifecycle handling around in-app billing.

At the same time, direct-to-consumer (D2C) channels are growing fast, up around 46% in the US with quarterly IAP rebounds hitting roughly \$21 billion in Q3, and pulling more revenue outside of traditional app-store rails. IAP becomes a real growth engine only when it is treated as a system, not as a handful of offers bolted onto a game. Drawing from Airwallex's 2025 gaming coffee talk event, this blueprint breaks it down into four powerhouse pillars: Foundation, Conversion, Margin Optimization, and Sustainability.

For Vietnamese teams, this combination of market momentum and infrastructure is a clear opening: you already have the speed and UA skills; a disciplined IAP system gives you the financial engine to match. The blueprint below breaks that system into four practical pillars, then shows what Airwallex can provide out-of-the-box.



## Foundation, Get the Basics Precisely Right



### Key idea

Your catalog, pricing, and tax model are trust signals and LTV levers, not admin tasks. In a world where fraud and disputes are estimated to be up by low double digits, strong foundations are the first defence.

## Design a clear, durable catalog with concrete SKUs

Anchor your monetisation in a simple, well-defined set of products, each with server-authoritative entitlements and audit trails. A typical mix that we see in top-grossing games:

### Consumables

such as energy refills or level skips

### Non-consumables

such as ad-free modes or permanent feature unlocks

### Currency packs

e.g. \$4.99 gem bundles

### Cosmetics and skins

e.g. hero skins at \$9.99

### Battle passes / seasonal tickets

e.g. \$14.99 per season

### Subscriptions

e.g. a \$4.99/month VIP pass for daily rewards or ad-light play

Server-side validation and clear entitlement history are what let you:

Resolve support tickets quickly

Defend legitimate purchases when chargebacks appear, particularly as D2C claims grow.

Recent data suggests that games with robust entitlement systems and documentation see significantly lower effective dispute rates, even as overall D2C disputes climb by low-teens percentages.

## Build value ladders that follow progression and “pain points”

Rather than isolated prices, think in terms of value ladders that track how invested a player is:

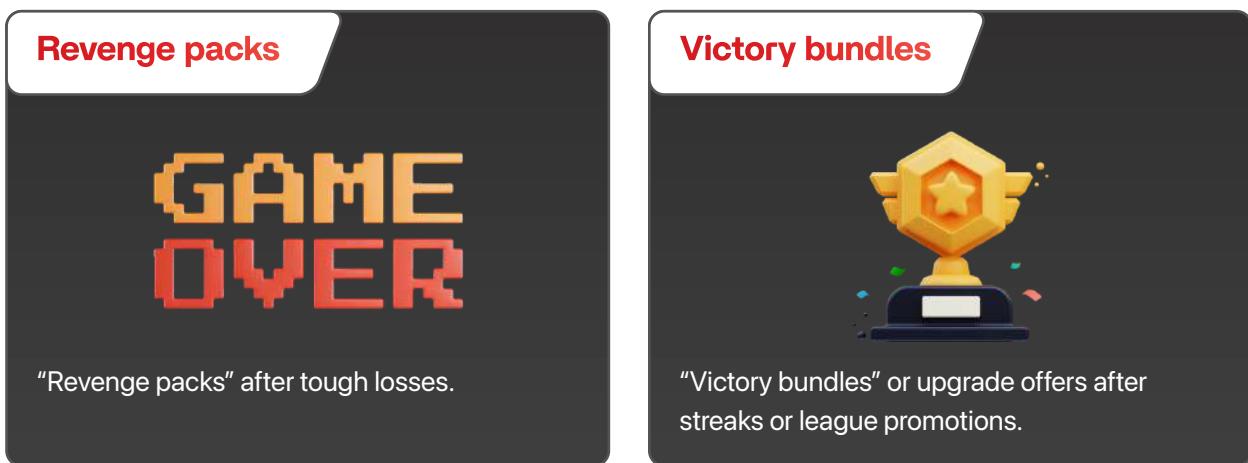


**Entry-level packs**  
**\$0.99**  
that appear after repeated failures and remove early friction.

**Mid-tier bundles**  
**\$19.99**  
that combine currency and progression boosts, aimed at players who are clearly engaged.

**High-tier “elite” offers**  
**\$99.99**  
that emphasise exclusivity, unique cosmetics, premium passes, or strong late-game advantages that avoid pay-to-win optics.

Contextual surfacing works extremely well:



**Revenge packs**  
**GAME OVER**  
“Revenge packs” after tough losses.

**Victory bundles**  
  
“Victory bundles” or upgrade offers after streaks or league promotions.

### 2025 IAP Monetization Trends

Across 2025, we see **payer counts up around 6% globally**, with **Day-90 ARPPU rising**, and legacy titles (6+ years old) capturing roughly half of all IAP revenue.

Games such as **Monopoly GO!**, now past **US\$5B lifetime**, convert a very high share of previously non-paying users through these ladders and contextual hooks.

## Localise prices and offers with data-driven tactics



Well-localised pricing is one of the best documented conversion levers:

- 1 Use local currencies and psychological price endings (e.g. **\$0.99, ₫19,000**).
- 2 Factor **VAT/GST into displayed prices** where required (e.g. **20–27% VAT** in many EU markets).
- 3 Apply **purchasing-power-parity (PPP) tiers**, for example, calibrating a **US\$1.99** starter pack to around **25,000 VND** in Vietnam, which has been associated with **20%+ conversion lifts** in some emerging markets.

Apple's October changes also matter here:

- 1 Offer codes now extend to **consumable IAP**, with reports of **~20% bundle-lift gains** when used with seasonal or event-driven promotions.
- 2 Some hybrid titles stack **subscriptions** on top of core IAP, seeing **~6% incremental payer gains** and initial iOS purchases averaging around **US\$18**.

## Choose a commerce and tax model that matches your ambitions

Studios generally choose between:

A gateway/PSP model for speed and control

or

A merchant-of-record (MoR) model for outsourced tax & compliance, or

or

A hybrid approach by market.

For example, an MoR partner can handle **EU OSS VAT**, invoice issuance, and tax remittance, while you focus on design and live-ops. Others prefer PSP-style setups to keep direct control.

Either way, align early on:

How you collect buyer-location evidence,

&

How digital tax is calculated,

&

How subscriptions vs consumables are recognised in revenue.

Tools like **Airwallex's automated tax engine**, already used to track changes such as **Bulgaria's euro adoption in December 2025**, reduce the overhead of staying compliant as these rules shift.

## Conversion Pillar: Turn Browsers into Buyers with Zero Friction



### Key idea

Once a player decides to buy, your only job is to avoid giving them reasons to bail. Well-designed checkout flows are consistently delivering **double-digit conversion uplifts**.

## Match integration depth to your stage

A pragmatic path looks like:

- **Hosted Checkout Pages** for fast pilots and soft-launches (often live in a matter of days).
- **UI Elements** for more control of branding and layout without taking on full PCI scope.
- **Native SDKs / low-level APIs** once you are ready to tune each interaction and integrate more tightly with in-game flows.

This staged approach is especially useful for Vietnamese studios: you can validate core IAP ideas quickly, then invest in deeper integration once you see signal.

## Localise the entire checkout experience, not just currency

Best-performing titles go beyond price localisation:

- **Language & copy** tuned to local expectations (simple, reassuring wording rather than dense legalese).
- Localised **forms and field ordering**, which reduces abandonment on mobile.
- Designed support for **asynchronous local methods**, such as QR wallets (e.g. **MoMo in Vietnam**), with clear “payment pending” and confirmation states.

Platforms like Airwallex expose these local flows in a consistent way, but it is still on the studio to make the UX obvious and trustworthy.

## Lean into one-tap, tokenisation, and risk-smart security

Across 2025, games that aggressively adopt one-tap and tokenised payments typically report:

- **15–30% reductions** in checkout abandonment compared with full card re-entry.
- Smoother repeat purchases during events or season resets.

- Enabling **Apple Pay, Google Pay, and major local wallets** wherever available.
- Using **tokenisation** so returning payers only need a confirmation tap.
- Applying **3-D Secure / SCA selectively**, based on risk, instead of bluntly forcing extra steps on every low-risk transaction.

Under the hood, **idempotent webhooks and retry logic** matter as much as UX. Providers like Airwallex invest heavily here, with published uptimes around **99.99%**, so a packet loss or regional network blip does not become a lost sale or a duplicate charge.

## Treat approval rate as an LTV lever

In IAP-heavy economies, a few percentage points of **authorisation uplift** can beat weeks of UA optimisation. Practical tactics include:

- Routing by **BIN, region, and issuer** to the best available path.
- Prioritising **trusted LPMs** in markets where card decline rates are structurally higher.
- Analysing **approval by cohort**, for example, noting that iOS “whale” cohorts may average **US\$15 per transaction**, vs **US\$7** on some Android segments, & tuning routing and risk thresholds accordingly.

Following the **Epic Games v. Apple** ruling, US developers using external web or alternative gateways can avoid the **30% commission on those flows**, but most successful hybrids still keep **native in-app purchase flows** for trust and UX, while using routing intelligence to chase an additional **5–10% approval uplift** in high-value puzzles and strategy segments that have seen around **37% IAP growth**.

## Optimise the post-purchase moment

The flow does not end at “Payment successful”. Best-in-class examples:

- Instant, visible entitlements, no ambiguity about whether the purchase “worked”.
- Softupsellnudges, such as **limited-time add-on discounts (“20% off extra gems now?”)** that respect player attention.

A notable example: casual titles similar to **Color Block Jam** reported that tightening these flows and layering in upsells contributed to **doubling revenue between Q4 2024 and Q1 2025**. In many cases, that growth stacked on top of platform-level improvements like Apple’s new offer codes and Google’s **anti-churn tools** (benefit highlights, grace periods) announced at I/O.

### Key Strengths

For Vietnamese studios, event-driven campaigns, such as **Tet-themed bundles**, are also a proven lever, with case studies suggesting **~15% increases in purchase frequency** during well-timed local campaigns.

## Optimize Margin, Protect Every Basis Point



### Key idea

Once you have volume, basis points matter. The combination of payment method mix, FX handling, and fee structure can add 2–5% to net margin without touching game design.

## Default to local methods by market, keep cards as a resilient backup

Patterns we see among successful IAP-first and hybrid titles:

- **US and core Western markets:** card rails plus wallets and major pay-later options (e.g. Affirm).
- **EU:** strong use of **account-to-account (SEPA and similar)** alongside cards.
- **APAC:** **bank QR and mobile wallets** (e.g. GCash, MoMo, GrabPay) are often the first choice.

Aggregating these under a single provider with **160+ LPMs**, rather than managing separate contracts and integrations, can yield an estimated **~10% uplift in acceptance** driven by giving players the method they trust most.

## Use multi-currency presentation and like-for-like settlement to stop FX bleed

Two of the most common leaks in cross-border IAP are:

- Charging players in one currency but settling in another, and
- Forcing funds back into a single “home” currency even when local balances would be more efficient.

Switching to MCP and like-for-like settlement:

- Eliminates **1–3% FX spread** on many flows.
- Simplifies reconciliation and **reduces disputes by around 25%** when combined with refunding in the original payment currency.

Given that **D2C disputes have climbed by roughly 12%**, using currency-correct refunds and clear statements is becoming less optional and more table-stakes.



## Model full unit economics and respond to regulation

Granular dashboards by method, country, and product line allow you to:

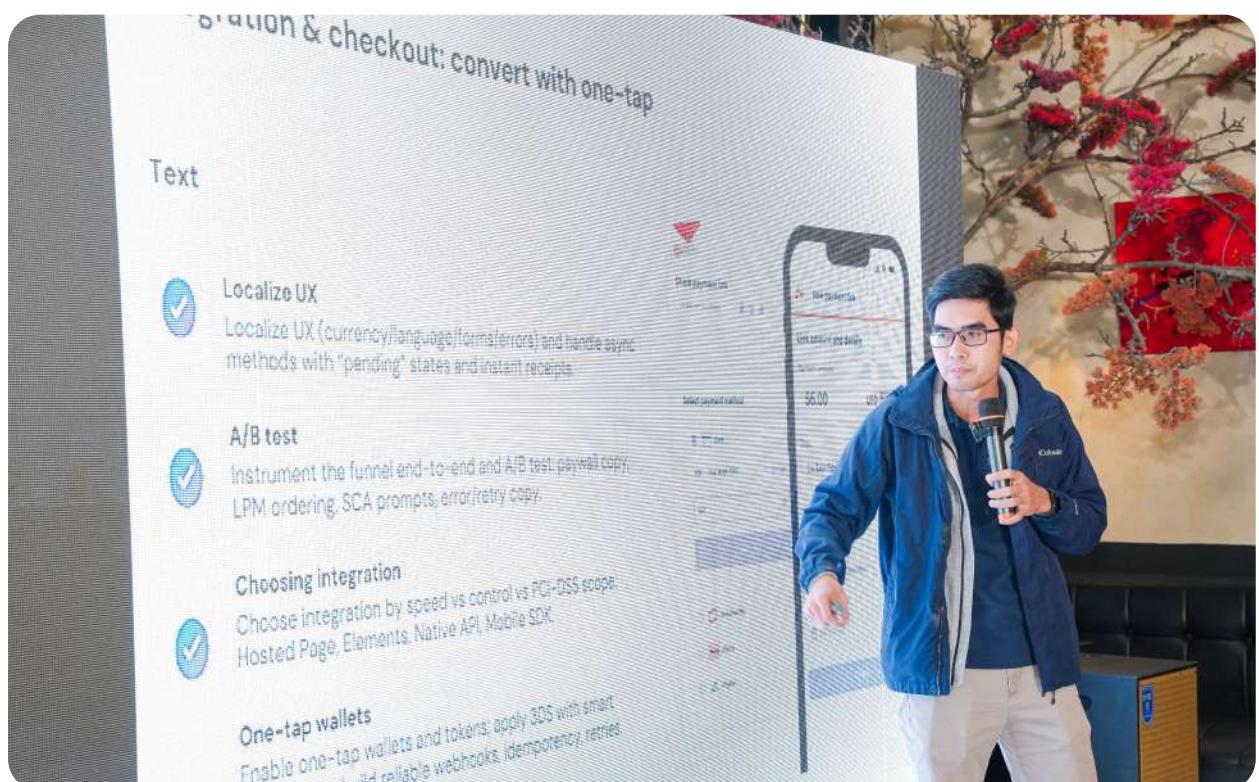
- Include **3DS/SCA costs (often 1–2%)**, expected dispute rates (hybrids often sit around **0.5%** with strong descriptors), and any platform or marketplace fees.
- Run **A/B tests on surcharging** where legal, being mindful that even modest surcharges can create **5–10% conversion drops** in some segments.

Regulatory changes in 2025 have opened and shifted economics further:

- Apple's response to the **EU Digital Markets Act (DMA)** has created **tiered commissions around 10–13%** for smaller developers, plus a separate core technology charge.
- Google has signalled reductions toward **~3% fees on some non-Play acquisitions**.
- Strategy games, leaning heavily on IAP and often on hybrid monetisation, have grown revenue by roughly **25.6% to US\$13.5B**.

Within this environment, hybrids that effectively use SDK-based monetisation and direct payments have shown **~48% ARPU lifts**, with the **top ~32% of payers ("whales") crossing US\$100 in lifetime spend**.

On the infrastructure side, tools like **Airwallex's PHP Global Accounts** help consolidate APAC flows. For example, studios moving funds between Vietnam and Japan report potential **1.5% savings** in certain corridors when FX and local clearing are optimised. **MENA and LATAM** markets, where IAP revenue growth has been tracked in the **~13–18%** range, also benefit from the ability to **lock FX rates** before volatility spikes around local events or macro news.



## Sustainability, Build for Long-Run Operations



### Key idea

**Healthy IAP systems are built to survive fraud waves, policy shocks, and team changes.**

The most resilient studios treat fraud, disputes, finance ops, and launch processes as first-class disciplines.

## Put structured fraud and risk controls in place

A robust baseline includes:

- **Velocity checks** by card, device, IP, and account.
- **BIN and geo rules** for higher-risk segments.
- Carefully tuned **3DS/SCA levels** to balance fraud prevention and conversion.
- Where available, **ML-informed routing and decisioning** to reduce false declines.

Well-run setups commonly aim for **sub-1% chargeback rates**, and studies point to **~10% of previously declined volume being recoverable** by better routing and risk tuning alone.

## Standardise disputes & refunds around a clear playbook

Components of an effective playbook:

- **Readable payment descriptors** players can recognise.
- **Instant receipts** with clear itemisation.
- Pre-packaged **evidence bundles**, logs, entitlement history, geo/IP traces, ready for banks.
- SLAs and templates so that frontline teams can respond quickly.

Hybrid IAP/IAA games that invest here are keeping dispute rates **around 20% lower** than pure-IAP peers, which translates directly into protected margin and less distracted support and finance teams.

## Align go-live checklists and finance operations

Before each major market launch or monetisation change, leading studios run a structured checklist:

- Confirm **markets, currencies, and LPMs** to be enabled.
- Validate **tax calculation and receipt content** against local rules.
- Test **webhooks, retries, alerts, and SCA fallbacks** end to end.
- Ensure dashboards and alerts are ready for both **product/UA** and **finance** teams.

On the back office side, they:

- Maintain a clean **chart of accounts** for gross revenue, fees, FX, chargebacks, and liabilities.
- Align on **recognition policies** (immediate for consumables, deferred for subs, with clear treatment of breakage).

This becomes more important as the ecosystem changes. In 2025 alone:

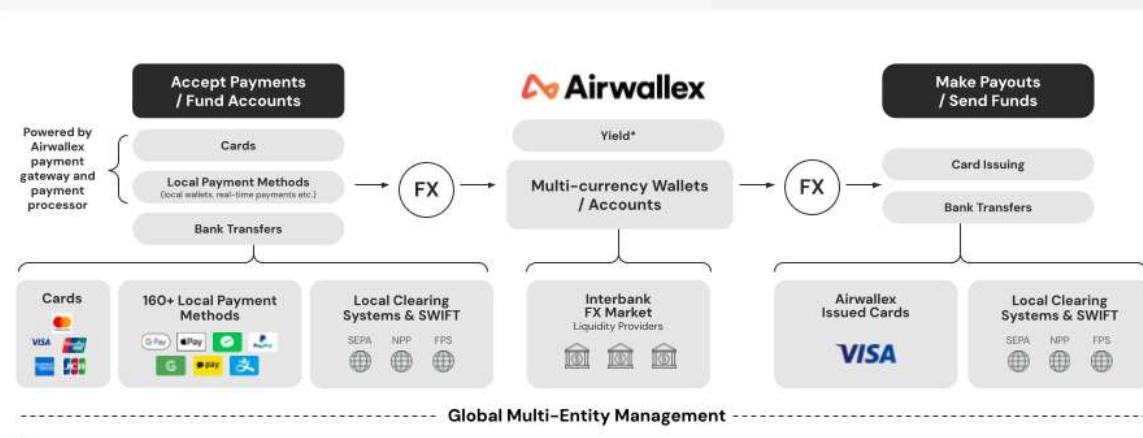
- Apple's **November AI-related guideline update** increased scrutiny around data use and fraud.
- D2C growth of **around 46%** has come with **roughly 12% more reconciliation load** tied to SDKs and multiple billing channels.
- The broader mobile gaming market has seen a **~43% drop in new titles**, making operational excellence a key differentiator between studios that endure and those that fade.

Providers like Airwallex help here via **SWIFT + local clearing** coverage, handling complexities such as **Brazil's 10% CIDE tax** in a "tax as a feature" model, and by automating more of the reconciliation work with AI-driven tooling.



## What Airwallex Enables Out-of-the-Box

Our infrastructure covers the entire lifecycle of money movement



**Airwallex**

All of the above is easier, and faster, when the underlying payment infrastructure is designed for global, multi-method IAP from day one. Airwallex's stack is built to cover the full money-movement lifecycle under a unified, compliant umbrella:

**Accept payments** via cards and **160+ local payment methods**, including the QR wallets and bank schemes that dominate many APAC markets.



**Hold and manage funds in multi-currency wallets/accounts**, enabling local-currency presentation and like-for-like settlement to reduce FX leakage by **2–3 percentage points**.



**Move funds via interbank FX, local clearing systems, and SWIFT**, optimising cost and speed for cross-border flows.



**Pay out & issue cards**, supporting creator programs, affiliate payouts, or cross-border team expenses.



## We offer a full suite of card options to meet your needs

### Virtual cards



Issue cards instantly and make online debit card payments

### Physical cards



Issue physical cards to use in person or online

### Google Pay



Make payments effortlessly using your Android phone

### Apple Pay



Make payments seamlessly on your Apple iPhone



Set rules around merchant category and transaction limits



Options to create **corporate** or **individual** cards



On top of that infrastructure, 2025 product and expansion steps add more leverage for game studios:



**PHP Global Accounts and fee netting** to simplify reconciliation and reduce banking overhead across APAC.



The **OpenPay acquisition**, bringing AI-driven billing capabilities that rival traditional subscription platforms.



Presence in **12+ new markets** (including **Vietnam, Brazil, and Malaysia**), with around **US\$1B+ in annualised revenue (+90% YoY)** and **US\$235B in processed volume (+100% YoY)** running through the platform.



Support for **US external payment links** that can avoid the traditional **30% app-store fee**, making IAP margins in those flows significantly healthier when combined with first-party web stores.

For Vietnamese studios specifically, this means:

**01**

You can **launch pilots in 1–2 core markets** using hosted checkout and a small SKU ladder, backed by local rails.

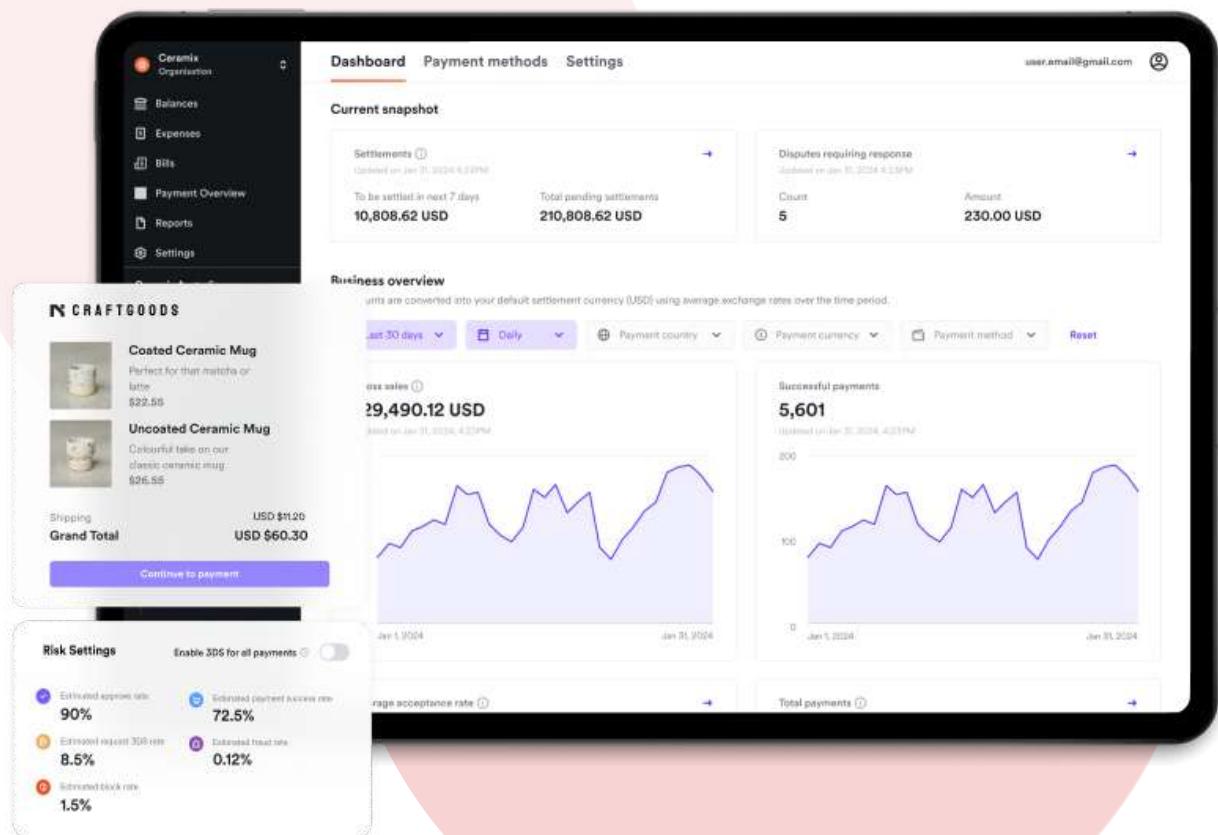
**02**

As you see traction, you can **add methods, enable one-tap wallets, turn on MCP, and expand into new regions** with configuration rather than new vendor projects.

**03**

You can scale from Vietnam to the US and other high-value markets with an eye on both **top-line growth and basis-point savings**, for example, squeezing out a further **~2% in FX savings** on major corridors when flows are fully optimised.

In short, you bring the game design, content, and UA engine. A system built on these pillars, run on Airwallex infrastructure, turns that effort into data-backed, margin-aware, and globally scalable IAP revenue.



2025

## TikTok Creatives Trend for Hybrid Casual

### 2025 gaming creative trends on TikTok

**Based on [Mega Digital's research and empirical observations derived from the deployment of multiple TikTok campaigns across diverse industries](#),**

TikTok remains a dominant platform influencing digital culture, user behavior, and performance-driven marketing on a global scale. With over 1.7 billion monthly active users, TikTok has transitioned from a social entertainment platform into a strategic channel that requires systematic understanding and structured execution to remain effective in 2025.



**Findings from implemented projects suggest that [performance on TikTok is not primarily driven by trend participation volume](#),**

but by the precision with which trends are selected, interpreted, and activated. TikTok trends exhibit rapid formation and short life cycles; consequently, only content that aligns with the temporal dynamics of trend emergence, maturation, and saturation is able to achieve consistent reach and engagement. This shifts the core challenge for brands from content production capacity to decision-making accuracy.



#### Mega Digital report

This report consolidates insights synthesized from Mega Digital's campaign-level data across the gaming, application, and e-commerce sectors. It identifies the most impactful TikTok trends observed in 2025, examines the underlying mechanisms contributing to their effectiveness, and outlines actionable implications for brand and business application. Analysis across campaigns indicates that music and sound remain primary drivers of content discoverability and virality, while structured, weekly trend monitoring is a critical factor in sustaining relevance and performance over time.

## Emotional Value Takes Priority: From “Entertainment” to Emotion-Driven Commerce

One of the most notable market shifts is the transition from attention-grabbing content toward emotionally resonant content that connects with users within the first 2–3 seconds.

User behavior research on TikTok indicates that:

**73% of users**

Decide whether to continue watching or skip a video within the first three seconds.

**37% higher watch-through rates**

Creatives built around emotional pain points (e.g., failure → lack of resources → need to spend) achieve 37% higher watch-through rates compared to creatives that merely showcase gameplay.

Within this context, several key trends have emerged:

**Micro storytelling (6-10s)**

Delivering a concise narrative with a clear emotional peak.

**Emotion-trigger scenes**

Emphasizing “loss → need to pay → comeback” rather than feature highlights alone.

While these creatives do not necessarily produce lower CPI, they significantly stimulate **impulse purchases** — a critical driver in IAP-focused campaigns.

## From “Playable-First” to “Experience-First”

Playable Ads are no longer limited to providing a preview before install. In 2025, studios are refining playables with a stronger focus on experiential depth by:

**Minimize**

Minimizing friction in the trial experience

**Emphasize**

Emphasizing decisional friction that requires strategic player choices

**State**

Ending playables at an “incomplete” state, creating demand for in-game purchases in the full version

Data collected from localized campaigns shows that:

### Playable Ads

Playable Ads deliver 20–40% higher payer ROI compared to standard video ads.

Users who install after engaging with a playable demonstrate a 1.8x higher likelihood to pay than users acquired through video-only formats.

This trend reflects a behavioral principle: when players engage deeply with gameplay prior to installation, they form clearer value expectations, laying a stronger foundation for IAP monetization.

## UGC & Authentic Storytelling

### – The “Real Players, Real Stories” Model

TikTok’s growth is rooted in its tolerance for imperfection; users prioritize content that feels authentic rather than overly polished. In gaming, this translates into:

User-generated  
gameplay reviews

&

Experiential  
POV content

&

Real failure-and-  
success narratives

These formats perform effectively because they satisfy two key conditions:

#### Social proof

viewers see that others have played, paid, and derived value from the game

#### Reduced cognitive friction

spending becomes more acceptable once users observe others doing the same.

According to SEA campaign benchmarks:

**42%**

UGC-style creatives generate 42% higher engagement rates than traditionally produced creatives.

**31%**

Within UGC-exposed cohorts, payer rates are 31% higher.

These findings highlight a clear shift: studios must move from broadcast messaging toward peer-like experiential communication.

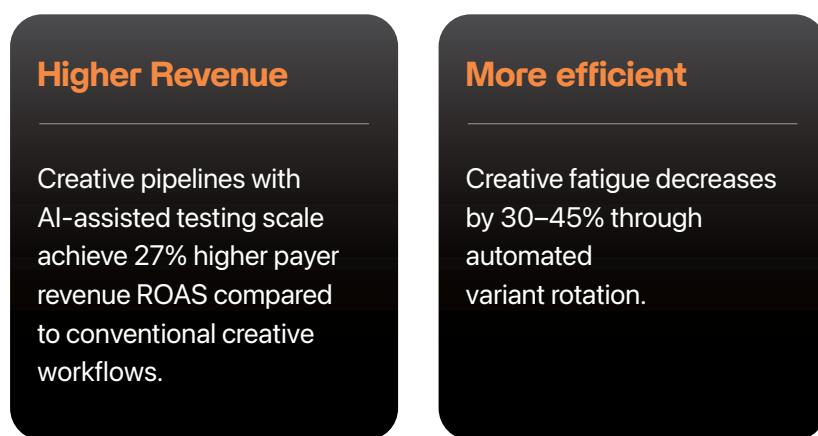
## AI-Assisted Creative Optimization – Data-Driven Creative Production

In 2025, creative production has undergone a structural transformation. With AI integration, creatives are no longer static outputs but part of a continuous experimentation loop.

AI systems now extend beyond asset generation to:

- Evaluate hook effectiveness within the first three seconds
- Classify creatives based on propensity-to-pay signals
- Automatically recommend optimized variants based on **revenue KPIs**, not just CTR

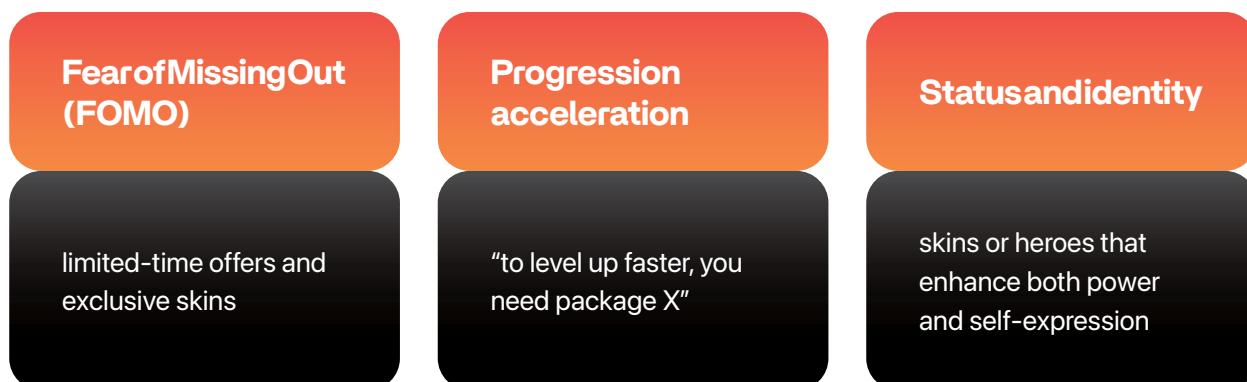
**Global analysis indicates that:**



These results suggest that AI's true value lies not in creation alone, but in its ability to translate market feedback into structured creative iteration optimized for IAP outcomes.

## Narrative Anchoring – Aligning Creatives with Spending Triggers

The most effective creatives over the past year share a common trait: they anchor narratives to themes directly associated with spending decisions. Analysis of millions of impressions and behavioral data identifies several dominant anchors:

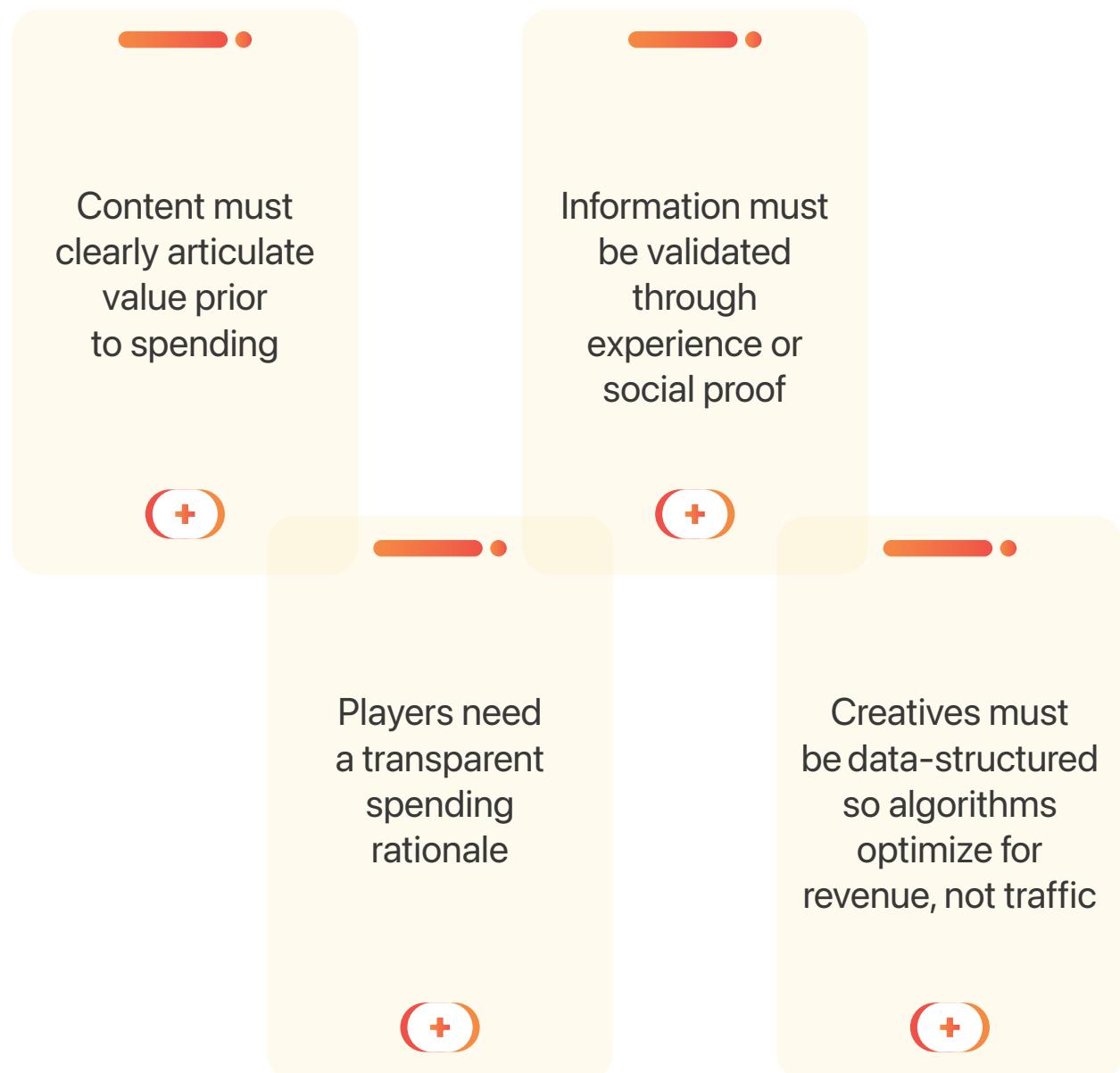


TikTok's recommender system evaluates creatives not only through CTR, but also through **behavioral affinity signals**—indicators of higher purchase intent rather than mere content interest.

This approach elevates creative from an attention-capture tool to a **transaction-driving mechanism**.

## From traffic to transaction

Creative trends in TikTok game advertising in 2025 extend beyond format and execution. The market has entered a phase where:



If TikTok was previously viewed as a channel for low-cost installs, from 2025 onward it is evolving into a revenue-generation platform, where creatives serve as the bridge between attention and payment behavior.

User behavior has changed. Algorithmic expectations have shifted. Consequently, game studios must transition their creative strategy from traffic acquisition to payer value activation in order to achieve sustainable growth in an increasingly competitive market.



## Ads Formats That Drive Payer Conversion

### Why “using the right format” is no longer sufficient

For many years, game advertising effectiveness has been primarily evaluated based on the ability to generate installs at a low cost. CPI became the central performance metric, while creatives and ad formats were largely treated as traffic optimization tools. However, as the IAP model has become dominant and user acquisition costs continue to rise, this approach has revealed clear limitations: installs increase, but revenue does not scale proportionally.

Analysis of TikTok Gaming campaign data across Southeast Asia highlights a critical insight:

**Revenue differences are not driven by which format is used, but by whether that format is deployed according to its correct role within the player's spending decision journey.**

Using the same ad format, different studios can observe payer rate discrepancies of 2–3x and D7 ROAS gaps ranging from 40–70%. This chapter examines why these disparities occur and what is required for TikTok ad formats to function as genuine revenue levers rather than mere traffic-generation tools.

### Ad formats and their mechanisms in payer creation

1

#### Spark Ads

Normalizing Spending Behavior Through Social Context

Spark Ads represent the most consistently impactful format for payer conversion within the TikTok Gaming ecosystem- when used for the correct purpose. Industry data indicates that game campaigns utilizing Spark Ads typically experience CPI increases of 10–25%, but achieve payer rates that are 30–70% higher than non-Spark formats.

content originates from real players or creators, the spending decision is no longer a direct response to marketing persuasion; it becomes a socially validated choice. This mechanism is particularly critical for IAP-driven games, where the primary barrier is not price sensitivity, but skepticism regarding post-payment value.

To unlock the full effectiveness of Spark Ads, studios must redefine their content objectives. Spark Ads should not be used to convince users that “this game is good,” but to help players understand when and why spending becomes necessary. The most effective campaigns focus on validating value-for-money rather than showcasing gameplay. When player expectations are properly calibrated before entering the game, early churn decreases and the probability of transactions within the first 72 hours increases significantly.

The underlying driver is not the visual format itself, but a shift in the source of trust. When ad



## 2

## Playable Ads

### Behavioral Filtering for High-Quality Payers

Playable Ads are often misjudged due to their higher CPI. However, data suggests that elevated CPI in playable formats is not a flaw, but a byproduct of self-selection.

Users who proceed to install after interacting with a playable typically demonstrate **payer conversion rates 1.5–2x higher than those acquired through standard video ads.**

Playable Ads are effective because they transfer value assessment from the advertisement to the user. Rather than being persuaded, players independently decide whether the gameplay is worth their time—and subsequently, their money. **From a behavioral**

**perspective, prior interaction creates a level of cognitive commitment, increasing the likelihood of spending in later stages.**

That said, playable ads only perform optimally when studios are willing to sacrifice volume. Overly simplified or excessively “friendly” playables tend to attract curiosity-driven users—those with the lowest payer rates. In contrast, effective playables often end before goal completion, generating a controlled sense of incompleteness. This psychological tension forms the foundation for first-purchase behavior once players enter the full game experience.



## 3

## POV Short-Form Video

### Triggering Immediate Spending Reflexes

Among TikTok ad formats, POV short-form videos (6–10 seconds) exert the most direct influence on the moment of spending decision. Data from IAP-focused campaigns indicates that while POV ads may not optimize CPI, they generate **first-purchase rates that are 20–40% higher within the first 72 hours post-install.**

The effectiveness of POV ads lies in their ability to recreate familiar player emotions: failure, frustration, progress blockage, followed by resolution through purchase. In-game spending decisions are rarely the result

of rational analysis; they are emotional reflexes. POV videos succeed by accurately simulating this reflex within an extremely short time frame, aligned with TikTok's content consumption behavior.

To maximize impact, **studios must focus on the moment before spending**, not the victory after purchase. Videos that only highlight post-purchase success tend to weaken emotional tension. In contrast, POVs that clearly depict constraints and frustration prior to payment are far more effective at triggering spending behavior.



## 4

**Creator-Led Review Ads**

## Shaping Willingness to Pay

As transaction values increase—particularly among mid-spenders and high-spenders—spending behavior becomes more deliberate. At this stage, creator-led review ads function as an independent validation mechanism. Analysis shows that campaigns using creator-led formats may not significantly increase payer rate, but can raise ARPPU by 15–35%, especially in RPG and SLG titles.

Using creator-led formats can raise ARPPU by

**15–35%**

Effectiveness is driven not by creator popularity, but by the degree of authenticity permitted within the content. When creators are allowed to openly discuss what is worth spending on—and what is not—they help players establish value frameworks rather than merely amplifying emotion.

**For high-spending segments, this clarity is often the deciding factor that converts intent into action.**



Source: @richardsalesofficial

## 5

**Premium Impact Formats**

## Psychological Foundations for High-Value Spending

Premium formats such as TopView and Pulse rarely generate immediate transactions, yet they exert a measurable impact on monetization depth. Data shows that games deploying premium formats during major feature launches or competitive events often achieve 20–30% higher average transaction values in subsequent retargeting campaigns.

**20–30%**

Avg. Transaction Value with Premium Formats

The role of premium formats lies in positioning the game as a large-scale, credible ecosystem worthy of long-term investment. When players perceive that they are participating in a substantial and legitimate environment, spending—particularly on high-value packages—becomes psychologically justified.



Source: neads.co

# From Ad Formats to Revenue Structure

Analysis of TikTok Gaming ad formats leads to a core conclusion: there is no universally “best” format. Each format is only effective when deployed according to its specific role within the spending decision journey—whether that role is trust-building, intent filtering, emotional activation, or value positioning.

## There is no universally “best” format

Studios that underperform often attempt to force a single format to fulfill multiple objectives simultaneously, resulting in low CPI but stagnant revenue. In contrast, successful studios treat ad formats as structural components of their revenue model, with each format addressing a distinct psychological barrier on the path to payer conversion.

As TikTok continues to play a central role in ROAS-first and LTV-first growth models, the strategic question is no longer “Which format should we use?” but rather “Which spending barrier is each format being used to solve?”

Which format  
should we use?

Which spending  
barrier is each  
format being  
used to solve?

## TikTok's role in shifting games from CPI to ROAS-driven models



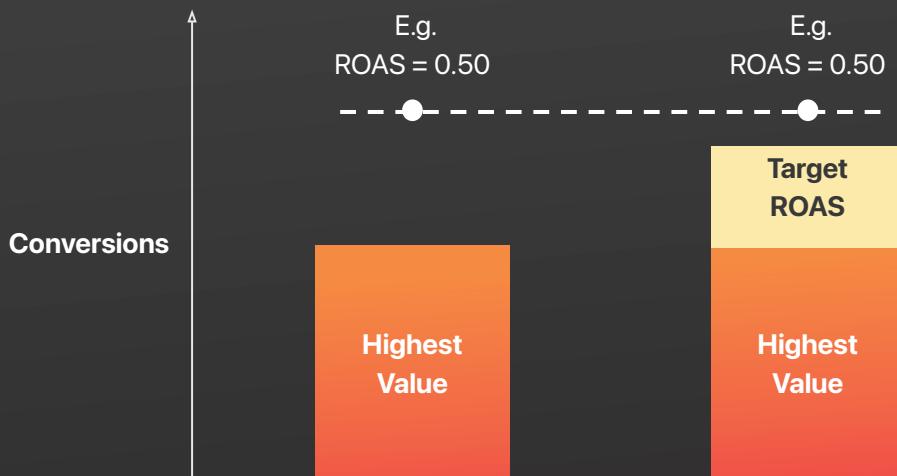
### Explore Smart+ Target ROAS Designed to Enhance Performance

Learn how to unlock sustainable growth and maximize performance by incorporating Goal-based bidding strategies to seize new opportunities

#### Common Advertisers Approach



#### TikTok's Better Together Approach



If your business primary goal is **Return on Ad Spend (ROAS)**, here's our recommended approach for common challenges advertisers face.



## Smart+ Target ROAS Fundamental Best Practices

### Step One: Pre-Campaign Checks

- Define your reporting source of truth (e.g., MMP, internal BI, SKAN for iOS).
- Monitor the discrepancy between TikTok Ads Manager and your chosen reporting source.
- Ensure signal readiness: iOS apps should be eligible for iOS real-time reporting.

### Step Two: During Campaign Setup

- **Daily Budget:** Set  $\geq 5 \times$  your average Cost-per-Purchase (CPP) from last 7 days\*
- **Target Bid:** Enter your average D0 Purchase ROAS from the last 7 days\*
- **Creative Volume:** Start with minimum 6

\*Note: For iOS, use iOS real-time reporting results. For Android, use TikTok Ads Manager reporting results.

## Smart+ Target ROAS Advanced Best Practices

Once your goal-based bidding campaigns are set up for success, use these additional management tips to keep performance on track.

### Let campaigns complete the learning phase

Allow your Smart+ Target ROAS campaign to run for at **least 7 days**.

During this period, **avoid making major changes** such as:

- Pausing the campaign
- Adjusting budgets (up or down)
- Changing bids
- Altering targeting

### Evaluate campaign performance after learning phase

- Success is typically defined as achieving a **ROAS billing ratio (Target ROAS ÷ Delivered ROAS) of less than 1.2**, meaning your Delivered ROAS reaches at least 80% of the target ROAS.
- Assess the billing ratio using **report data from TikTok Ads Manager**, as these are the data points the system uses to optimize campaign performance.

### Optimise and Scale Campaign Delivery

- Some **fluctuation in daily spend and ROAS delivery is normal**, so we recommend **monitoring performance over a 5–7 day period** rather than day by day.
- If you want to scale effectively when performance is strong:
  - **Increase daily budget by 20%** when delivered ROAS is close to target and budget utilization is above 80%.
  - Ensure that this is done gradually so as to maintain stable performance.
- If you experience campaign underdelivery (<20%) or poor delivered ROAS:
  - **Lower your target ROAS** slightly to encourage system exploration
  - **Add more creatives** to support the exploration of new ads
  - Consider **pausing creatives rather than deleting** them to retain valuable performance insights

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### Q: What should I do if there's a gap between my desired ROAS and current ROAS?

**A:** If your existing TikTok campaigns are unable to meet your expected KPI, we recommend launching a Smart+ Target ROAS campaign. Set the target ROAS based on your ideal KPI, then refine and adjust according to actual campaign performance by following the advanced best practices outlined above.

#### Q: What is the difference between fundamental best practices & advanced best practices?

**A:** Fundamental best practices are strongly recommended as they are essential for ensuring your Smart+ Target ROAS campaign runs successfully. Validated through Alpha and Beta tests, they provide a solid foundation to get started with confidence. Advanced best practices build on this foundation, offering additional guidance to help you manage, optimize, and maximize campaign performance more effectively.



# Case Studies adapting to **IAP-driven Creative Strategy**

## iOS - D0 tROAS

### Gamota Football Arena

Genre:  
Sports

Market:  
Vietnam

OS:  
iOS



#### Success Story

GAMOTA, a leading game publisher based in Vietnam with over 10 years of hands-on experience in the mobile gaming industry.

In May 2025, GAMOTA partnered with TikTok to test its latest AI-powered solution, Smart+ App Campaign, to promote Football Arena for iOS. The campaign was optimized for Value Optimization using Day-0 ROAS bidding, with the goal of acquiring high-value players from the start.

The results were outstanding: GAMOTA achieved an 11x higher Day-0 ROAS compared to their original target, demonstrating the strong performance and efficiency of TikTok's Smart+ Day-0 target ROAS solution.

#### Featured Products

- Smart+ iOS Campaign
- Value Optimisation
- Day-0 Target ROAS bid

#### Advertiser KPI

Day-0 Return on Ad Spend (ROAS)



#### Key Results\*

#### 11X Day-0 ROAS Achievement\*



Scan to watch  
the video.



\*Data period: As of 17 June 2025

\*Smart+ tROAS Campaign - Actual D0 ROAS / Bid ROAS

# iOS - D0 tROAS

**Voodoo**

## Epic Plane Evolution

**Genre:**  
Simulation

**Market:**  
US

**OS:**  
iOS



### Success Story

Voodoo is a global tech company that entertains the world through iconic apps and games.

In May 2025, Voodoo participated in testing TikTok's latest AI-powered solution, Smart+ App Campaign, to promote Epic Plane Evolution for iOS. The campaign was optimized for Value Optimization using Day-0 ROAS bidding, with the goal of acquiring high-value players from the start.

The results were impressive: Voodoo achieved 1.9x of their Day-0 ROAS target and overachieved their KPI by 90%, demonstrating the strong performance and efficiency of TikTok's Smart+ Day-0 target ROAS solution.

### Featured Products

- Smart+ iOS Campaign
- Value Optimisation
- Day-0 Target ROAS bid

### Advertiser KPI

Day-0 Return on Ad Spend (ROAS)

### Key Results\*

**1.9X Day-0 ROAS Achievement\***  
**+90% Over KPI**



Scan to watch  
the video.

\*Data period: As of 1 July 2025

\*Actual D0 ROAS / target Bid ROAS



# iOS - D0 tROAS

## Candywriter

### BitLife - Life Simulator

Genre:  
Simulation

Market:  
US

OS:  
iOS



#### Success Story

Candywriter is a U.S.-based mobile gaming company dedicated to creating games that embody its motto, "fun is in our DNA."

In May 2025, Candywriter participated in testing TikTok's latest AI-powered solution, Smart+ App Campaign, to promote BitLife Life Simulator for iOS. The campaign was optimized for Value Optimization using Day-0 ROAS bidding, with the goal of acquiring high-value players from the start.

The results were impressive: Enigma achieved 1.1x of their Day-0 ROAS target, demonstrating the strong performance & efficiency of TikTok's Smart+ Day-0 target ROAS solution.

#### Featured Products

- Smart+ iOS Campaign
- Value Optimisation
- Day-0 Target ROAS bid

#### Advertiser KPI

Day-0 Return on Ad Spend (ROAS)

#### Key Results\*

**100% Day-0 ROAS Achievement\***

\*Data period: As of 1 July 2025

\*Actual D0 ROAS / target Bid ROAS



Scan to watch the video.



# Android - D0 tROAS

## Besitos Corporation Kashkick

Genre:

Rewarded Gaming

Market:

US

OS:

Android



### Success Story

Besitos Corporation's KashKick is a premium mobile gaming, surveys, and brand discovery platform with over 3.5+ million U.S. users.

In May 2025, Besitos Corporation participated in testing TikTok's latest AI-powered solution, Smart+ App Campaign, to promote Kashkick in the US. The campaign was optimized for Value Optimization with Day-0 ROAS bidding, to achieve their main KPI.

The results were impressive: Kashkick achieved actual D0 ROAS of 1.4x their KPI target, demonstrating the effectiveness of Smart+ Day-0 target ROAS solution.

### Featured Products

- Smart+ Android Campaign
- Value Optimisation
- Day-0 Target ROAS bid

### Advertiser KPI

Day-0 Return on Ad Spend (ROAS)

### Key Results\*

**1.4X Day-0 ROAS Achievement\***



\*Data period: As of 25 July 2025

\*Actual D0 ROAS / target Bid ROAS



## Android – D0 tROAS

### MY.GAMES Castle Duels

Genre:  
Strategy

Market:  
Worldwide

OS:  
Android



#### Success Story

MY.GAMES is a leading European gaming company based in Amsterdam, with various genres – from casuals to shooters.

MY.GAMES kicked off the new Smart+ D0 target ROAS (tROAS) solution for Android app to identify new opportunities to achieve D0 ROAS and eventually improve D7 ROAS as their main KPI

Overall, this new solution managed to achieve +68% D7 ROAS increase and +122% Predicted D540 ROI increase

#### Featured Products

- Smart+ Android App Campaign
- Value Based Optimisation
- D0 Target ROAS (tROAS) Bidding

#### Performance KPI

- Day-7 Return on Ad Spend
- Predicted Day-540 ROI

#### Key Results\*

**+68% D7 ROAS increase**  
**+122% Predicted D540 ROI increase**



Scan to watch  
the video.



Data period: 3-29 March 2025

\*Sourced from Client's Internal Reporting

# Android - D0 tROAS

**Sandsoft**

## Pocket Necromancer

**Genre:**  
RPG

**Market:**  
US

**OS:**  
Android



### Success Story

Pocket Necromancer is an action-packed RPG set in a modern fantasy universe brimming with humor, adventure, and demonic battles developed by Sandsoft.

Sandsoft joined our new Smart+ D0 target ROAS (tROAS) solution to identify new opportunities to achieve D0 ROAS as main KPI. TTCC creatives were used to power up the test.

Comparing to Smart+ VBO Highest Value, D0 tROAS solution was able to deliver exceptional 79% higher ROAS and met overall KPI.

### Featured Products

- Smart+ Android App Campaign
- Value Based Optimisation
- D0 Target ROAS (tROAS) Bidding

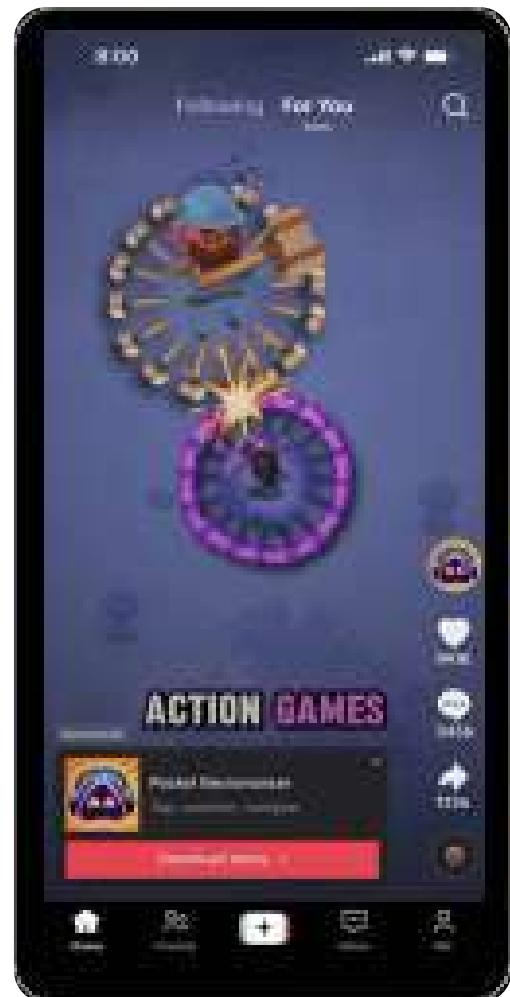
### Performance KPI

Day0 Return on Ad Spend

### Key Results\*

**+79% Higher ROAS driven by VBO D0 tROAS vs Highest Value**

**+100% D0 ROAS target Achieved from Smart+ VBO D0 tROAS**



Scan to watch the video.



\*Data period: 23-29 January 2025  
Sourced from TikTok Ads Manager

# Android – D0 tROAS

## AppQuantum Gold & Goblins

**Genre:**  
Idle Games

**Market:**  
US

**OS:**  
Android



### Success Story

Gold & Goblins is an exciting mobile idle game that combines the best of tycoon merge games and mining clicker games.

The advertiser started to run TikTok's latest AI-powered Smart+ app promotion campaign in Feb 2025 with the main objective to drive higher D0 Purchase Return on Ad Spend (tROAS).

### Featured Products

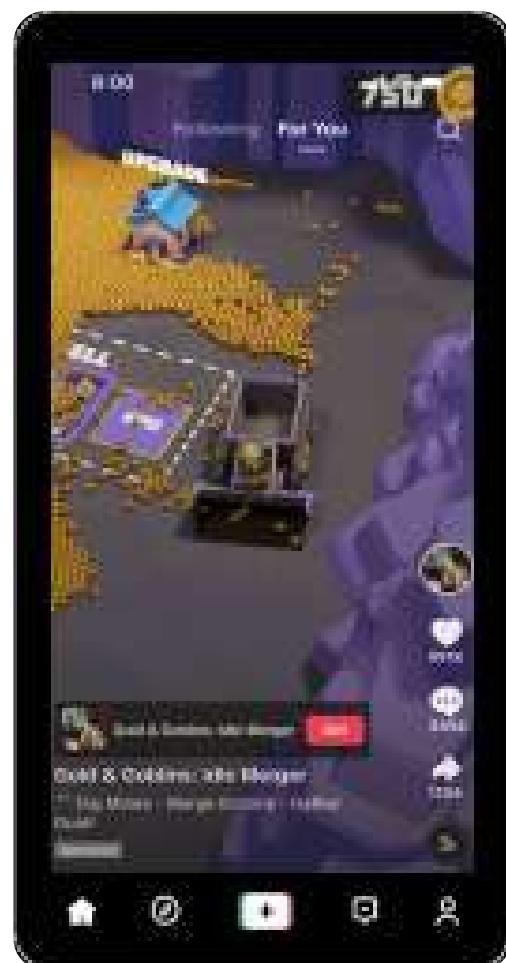
- Smart+ Android App Campaign
- Value Based Optimisation
- D0 Target ROAS (tROAS) Bidding

### Client's Feedback

*"The test was valuable for our product, and we liked the performance – we will keep using it."*

### Key Results\*

**+11X Higher D0 Purchase ROAS vs Highest Value**  
**+200% D0 ROAS target Achieved from Smart+ VBO DO tROAS**



Scan to watch the video.



\*Data period: Feb 2025 Alpha Test results

# Android - D0 tROAS

## Enigma Demon Hunter

Genre:  
RPG

Market:  
US

OS:  
Android



### Success Story

Enigma, a Vietnam-based indie game studio, is dedicated to crafting immersive gameplay experiences.

In May 2025, Enigma participated in testing TikTok's latest AI-powered solution, Smart+ App Campaign, to promote Demon Hunter in the U.S. market. The campaign was optimized for Value Optimization with Day-0 ROAS bidding, to achieve their main KPI.

The results were impressive: Enigma achieved 100% of their Day-0 ROAS target, demonstrating the effectiveness of Smart+ Day-0 target ROAS solution.

### Featured Products

- Smart+ Android Campaign
- Value Optimisation
- Day-0 Target ROAS bid

### Advertiser KPI

Day-0 Return on Ad Spend (ROAS)

### Key Results\*

**100% Day-0 ROAS Achievement\***



Scan to watch  
the video.

\*Data period: As of 17 June 2025  
\*Actual D0 ROAS / target Bid ROAS



## Android – D0 tROAS

**Multicast**

### Crime Syndicate Empire Builder

**Genre:**  
Action

**Market:**  
RoW

**OS:**  
Android



#### Success Story

Multicast, a Cyprus-based game studio, is dedicated to crafting immersive gameplay experiences.

In May 2025, Multicast participated in testing TikTok's latest AI-powered solution, Smart+ App Campaign, to promote Crime Syndicate Empire Builder in RoW. The campaign was optimized for Value Optimization with Day-0 ROAS bidding, to achieve their main KPI.

The results were impressive: Multicast achieved actual D0 ROAS of 1.5x their KPI target, demonstrating the effectiveness of Smart+ Day-0 target ROAS solution.

#### Featured Products

- Smart+ Android Campaign
- Value Optimisation
- Day-0 Target ROAS bid

#### Advertiser KPI

Day-0 Return on Ad Spend (ROAS)

#### Key Results\*

### 1.5X Day-0 ROAS Achievement\*



Scan to watch the video.



\*Data period: As of 7 July 2025  
\*Actual D0 ROAS / target Bid ROAS



# iOS VBO - D0 Highest Value

## SohaGame Pet Samkok

Genre:  
Strategy

Market:  
Vietnam

OS:  
iOS



### Success Story

SohaGame, one of Vietnam's leading mobile gaming company, is dedicated to creating games that resonate with players worldwide.

In May 2025, the team tested TikTok's AI-powered Smart+ app promotion, aiming to boost Day 0 Return on Ad Spend (ROAS). They compared Value Optimization (Highest Value bidding) with AEO Purchase optimization to determine which strategy would drive better performance.

The results showed that Smart+ with Value Optimization outperformed, delivering a 23% increase in D0 ROAS compared to the AEO Purchase optimization campaign.

### Featured Products

- Smart+ iOS Campaign
- Value Optimisation (Highest Value)
- AEO Purchase (Maximum Delivery)

### Key Results\*

**+23% D0 ROAS increase**

**-23% Cost Per Purchase**

**-28% Cost Per Registration**



Scan to watch  
the video.

\*Data period: As of 12 June 2025

\*\*Smart+ AEO and Smart+ VBO compared to Manual AEO



# AEO & VBO - Better Together

## Triumph

**Genre:**  
Rewarded Gaming

**Market:**  
US

**OS:**  
iOS



### Success Story

Triumph is a rewarded gaming app that lets players compete in skill-based games for cash prizes. With a variety of games, it offers an exciting way to test player's skills and earn rewards.

The advertiser started to run TikTok's latest AI-powered Smart+ app campaign optimised towards purchase followed by iOS Advanced Dedicated Campaign with value optimisation to optimise Return on Ad Spend (ROAS). These two campaigns ran in tandem to drive both purchase volumes and ROAS. TikTok One creatives were utilised to power up both campaigns and avoid creative fatigue.

Overall more than 46%+ positive ROAS lift and 36% Cost per unique purchase improvement were achieved.

### Featured Products

- Smart+ Campaign - AEO Purchase
- iOS Advanced Dedicated Campaign (ADC) -
- Value Optimisation

### Performance KPI

- Return on Ad Spend
- Cost per Purchase

### Key Results\*

**+46% D0 ROAS increase**   **+48% Projected D90 ROAS increase**

**-36% Lower Cost per Unique Purchase**



Scan to watch the video.



\*Data period: Jan-March 2025 / Sourced from internal advertiser data  
This is a TikTok case study and is solely for informational purposes. Past performance does not guarantee or predict future performance.

# iOS + Android - AEO Together

**Gameduo**

## The Demonized

**Genre:**  
IDLE RPG

**Market:**  
World-wide

**OS:**  
Android & iOS



### Success Story

The Demonized is a pixel art idle RPG where players wield the devil's power to battle evil, combining strategic idle mechanics with dynamic combat.

Gameduo scaled its TikTok campaigns by combining Smart+'s AI-driven automation and efficient campaign setup with TTCC's unlimited creative supply. Rapid iteration and test with creatives were continuously done to identify and scale winning creatives.

This agile strategy enabled seamless campaign scaling while boosting performance, leading to an 18% rise in ROAS.

### Featured Products

- Smart+ Campaign
- In-app Event Optimization x Purchase
- TTCC

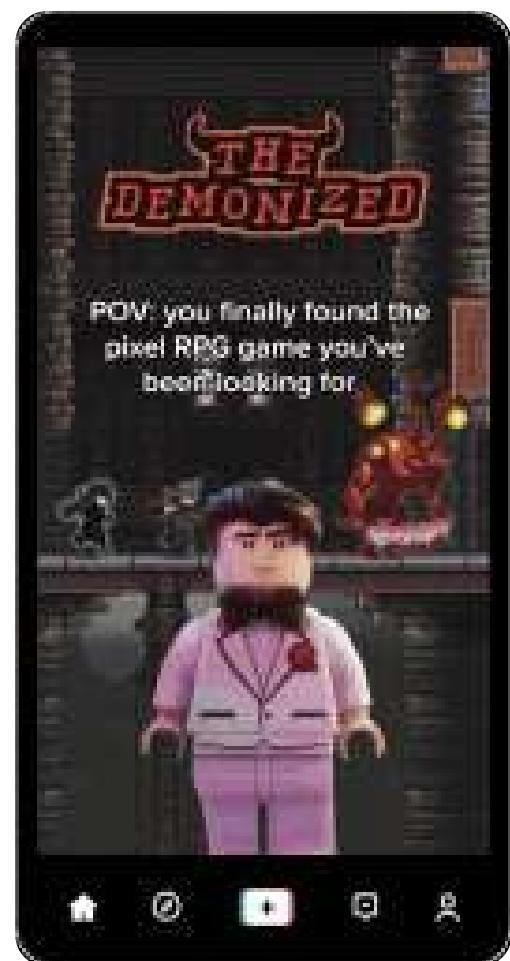
### Performance KPI

Return on Ad Spend

### Key Results\*

**+18% ROAS increase**

**-65% CPI decrease**



\*Data period: Sep 12-Feb 17 2025  
Sourced from internal advertiser data



## Android AEO - Max Delivery

### Heroes of History Epic Empire

Genre:  
Strategy

Market:  
EUI

OS:  
Android



#### Success Story

Heroes of History: Epic Empire is a popular strategy game with over 100K+ downloads by InnoGames. They participated in the TikTok Smart+ test to determine if their Cost Per Purchase could be improved.

The advertiser set up the test campaign using identical ad group settings and creatives, against a non-Smart+ campaign. As a result, the Smart+ campaign drove both higher ROAS and lower Cost Per Purchase.

#### Featured Products

- Smart+ Campaign
- In-app Event Optimization x Purchase
- Maximum Delivery Bidding
- Multilingual Feature Toggle On

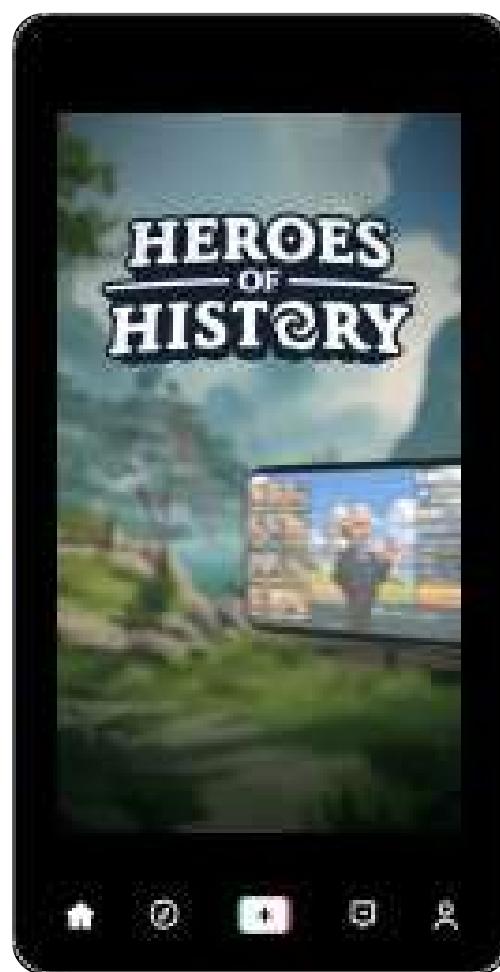
#### Performance KPI

Cost Per Purchase

#### Key Results\*

**-62% Cost Per Purchase**

**+34X Return Of Ad Spend**



\*Data period: Oct 2024 / Monetization Type: Hybrid



## iOS - AEO

### SciPlay Jackpot Party

Genre:  
Social Casino

Market:  
US

OS:  
iOS



#### Success Story

SciPlay is a social gaming powerhouse founded in 1999, specializing in social casino games. These games are free to play with in-app purchases and are restricted to players aged 21+.

SciPlay started to run TikTok's latest AI-powered Smart+ app promotion campaign from November 2024. The main objective was to drive higher Return on Ad Spend (ROAS) for Jackpot Party, a social casino game developed and operated by SciPlay.

Powered with multiple ad creatives, the new Smart+ App campaign resulted in overall positive ROAS uplift.

#### Featured Products

- Smart+ Campaign
- In-app Event Optimization x Purchase
- Maximum Delivery Bidding

#### Performance KPI

Return on Ad Spend

#### Key Results\*

**+26% Increase in D7 ROAS**

**+46% Increase in D30 ROAS**



\*Data period: Jan 2025 compared to Nov 2024 data  
Sourced from internal advertiser data



## iOS - AEO

### Benjamin

**Genre:**  
Rewarded Gaming

**Market:**  
US

**OS:**  
iOS



#### Success Story

Benjamin is a cash rewards app that helps users earn money by playing games, making purchases, doing surveys, watching videos and turning everyday activities into extra cash. To drive better Return on Ad Spend (ROAS), they initiated a Smart+ app promotion campaign in Feb 2025, leveraging TikTok's AI-powered platform. The primary objective of this test was to assess how different creative quantities and variations influence lower-funnel performance within Smart+ iOS campaigns.

Among the three campaign variations, the one featuring 9 creatives demonstrated the most significant impact, driving higher traffic, lower CPI, and superior ROAS when compared to campaigns with fewer creatives (6 or 3). Achieved D3 ROAS significantly outperformed the target KPI with more than 100% increase.

To maximize results, S+ iOS app campaigns were run consistently in an always-on approach, ensuring continuous optimization and sustained performance.

#### Featured Products

- Smart+ Campaign
- In-app Event Optimization x Purchase
- Maximum Delivery Bidding

#### Performance KPI

Day-3 Return on Ad Spend



#### Key Results\*

**+150% D3 ROAS increase**

**+1.7X Increase in Installs**

**-60% Decrease in costPerInstall**

\*Data period: Feb 2025

Sourced from internal advertiser data

# iOS - AEO

## Bytro Labs Conflict of Nations

Genre:  
Strategy

Market:  
US

OS:  
iOS



### Success Story

Conflict of Nations is a free-to-play browser-based strategy game, where modern global warfare is waged in real-time against dozens of other players, in campaigns spanning days or even weeks.

Bytro Labs started to run TikTok's latest AI-powered Smart+ app campaign optimised towards purchase with the main objective to increase Return of Ad Spend (ROAS).

Overall, Smart+ campaign delivered 4X+ positive ROAS lift with improvement in both install to pay and cost per install in comparison with similar past Non-Smart+.

### Featured Products

Smart+ Campaign - AEO Purchase

### Performance KPI

Return on Ad Spend

### Key Results\*

**+4X ROAS increase**

**+10% Install to Pay rate % increase**

**-41% Lower Cost per Install**

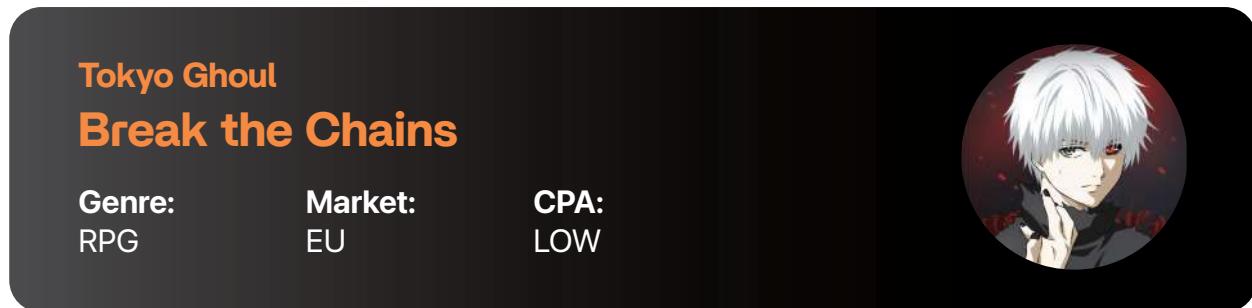


Scan to watch  
the video.



\*Data period: 1-31 Dec 2024 | Sourced from internal advertiser data  
This is a TikTok case study and is solely for informational purposes. Past performance does not guarantee or predict future performance.

## iOS - AEO



### Featured Products

- Advanced Dedicated Campaign
- Smart+App Event Optimisation (AEO)
- Maximum Delivery Bidding

### Primary Objective

In-app purchases, ROAS

### Featured Products

- Daily budget : campaign initial budget > 5\*CPA
- Creative: 10-15
- Location: only EU
- Audience: loose-knit audience-targeting strategy
- Add-on: Download card

### Key Results\*

**-29.1% decrease in Cost per Purchase (SKAN)**

**+18.2% increase in CTR**

**+74.3% increase in ROAS(SKAN)**



# iOS - AEO

## キノコ伝説 勇者と魔法のランプ

Genre:  
RPG

Zone:  
JP

CPA:  
High



### Success Story

The client ran an Smart+Campaign on AEO (Purchase optimization) in Oct 2024 for Test with the aim to get higher purchase conversions. JP was chosen as ad targeting market based on past successful campaign.

Through the A/B test was done, the Smart+ Campaign drove significantly lower SKAN CPI and SKAN CPP, also higher CTR and CVR than the regular AEO Campaign.

### Featured Products

- Advanced Dedicated Campaign
- Smart+ App Event Opt (AEO)
- Maximum Delivery Bidding

### Primary Objective

CPP(SKAN) / ROAS

### Key Results\*

- 47% decrease in Cost per App-purchase (SKAN)**
- 25% decrease in Cost per Install (SKAN)**
- +22% increase in CTR**
- +100% increase in CVR (SKAN)**



## iOS + Android - MAI

### SilverAI Snap Edit

Genre: Rewarded Gaming

Market: US

OS: iOS



#### Success Story

SnapEdit, a photo editing app developed by SilverAI, leverages AI technology to simplify and enhance users' photo editing experience.

In March 2025, the advertiser launched TikTok's latest AI-powered Smart+ app promotion campaign, aiming to optimize Cost per Install (CPI) and also to increase Return on Ad Spend (ROAS)

To fully harness the potential of the Smart+ solution, the SilverAI team participated in our Smart+ Creative Diversity Test. As a result, incorporating 9 creatives at the beginning led to significantly improved performance for their Smart+ campaigns.

#### Featured Products

- Smart+ Campaign
- Mobile App Install
- Maximum Delivery Bidding

#### Performance KPI

- Return on Ad Spend
- Cost per Install

#### Key Results\*

**-31% Decrease for Cost per Install**

**+99% Increase in Purchase ROAS**



\*Data period: Mar 2025  
Sourced from internal advertiser data



Studio Spotlight:

# Falcon Game Studio - Pioneering Vietnam's Shift to IAP and Hybrids

## About Falcon Game Studio

[Falcon Game Studio](http://falcongames.com) (falcongames.com), founded in 2017 and based in Hanoi, has become one of Vietnam's most consistent mobile gaming success stories. With a track record of launching titles that rack up tens of millions of downloads while steadily building IAP revenue, Falcon represents the pragmatic, iteration-driven approach that defines many Vietnamese studios.

At the end of 2025, our editorial team had the opportunity to sit down with Falcon's leadership for an open conversation about their ongoing transition from IAA-heavy models toward IAP and hybrid casual. Their answers were refreshingly candid, offering a realistic view of the challenges and opportunities facing studios in Vietnam today.



**LIFE IS A GAME,  
WE CHOOSE TO  
CREATE TOGETHER**

## On the drive toward IAP and hybrids

Falcon highlighted two core motivations:

"IAA is heavily dependent on market conditions, lacking revenue stability. IAP allows games to be deeper, with longer lifecycles."

This stability-versus-depth trade-off is a recurring theme for teams moving beyond pure ad monetization.

## The biggest pain points with IAA

When asked to pinpoint the toughest issues, the answer was immediate:

"High UA costs & unstable retention."

Rising CPIs in Tier-1 markets combined with ad fatigue make it increasingly difficult to maintain predictable economics under an ad-only model.

## The hardest part of adding IAP

Redesigning the core loop proved the most challenging: "The hardest part is definitely meta/progression. To validate changes, we try multiple approaches and A/B test them over a long period."

This emphasis on extended testing reflects Vietnam's strength in rapid iteration - but applied to deeper, longer-term systems.

## Current IAP catalog approach

Falcon keeps things focused: Gold packs, Bundles, Ad-removal, Starter packs & Creative sale formats.

Localization is still in early stages - pricing uses flat currency conversion rather than full purchasing-power-parity adjustments.



## Surprising player insights

One observation stood out:

"The best players aren't necessarily the payers. Players usually pay during levels. Once a player spends money, they tend to stick with the game longer than those who only watch ads."

IAP and hybrid titles also benefit from higher overall quality, creating a more comfortable experience that naturally boosts retention compared to pure IAA games.

## Why hybrids fit Vietnam so well?

"For the Vietnamese market, hybrid casual is more suitable than pure IAP right now, leveraging prior IAA experience. We've tried many hybrid forms like meta, battle passes, and more."

Hybrids allow studios to capitalize on existing UA expertise and development speed while gradually building monetization depth - a pragmatic bridge rather than an abrupt leap.

## Key KPIs and benchmarks

For puzzle games, the studio prioritizes retention and payer rate, targeting:

- **D1 retention: 60–70%**
- **Global payer rate: 3–5%**

## Payment realities

Challenges remain on the payment side: missing local methods in some markets, high FX fees, and platform commissions that squeeze margins.

Improving approval rates and overall profitability is a top roadmap priority.

## New roles required for the shift

The transition exposed skill gaps:

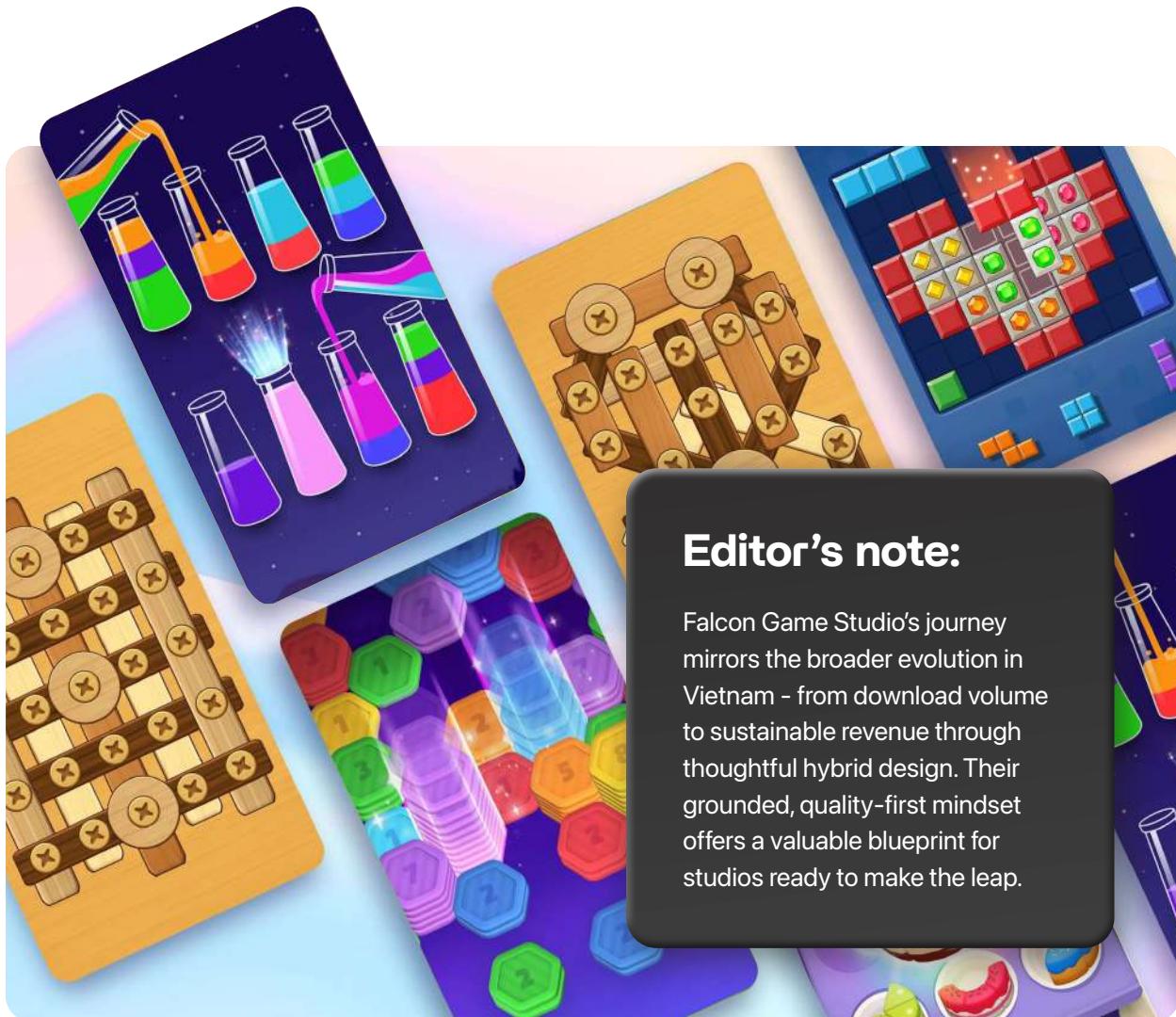
“Economy/progression design, data analyst, and live-ops roles.”

These are capabilities less critical in traditional IAA workflows.

## Advice for studios still 100% IAA

Falcon's closing message was clear and direct:

“When moving to IAP or hybrid, focus on significantly improving product quality. It's not just about adding more sale packages to boost IAP.”



# Building a Thriving Future for Vietnamese Mobile Gaming

As we wrap up this 2025 edition, one truth stands out clearer than ever: the Vietnamese mobile gaming industry is no longer just a download powerhouse - it's on the cusp of becoming a global revenue leader. The shift from pure IAA to thoughtful hybrid and IAP-driven models isn't just a trend, it is the strategic evolution that will empower studios to create deeper, more engaging experiences, capture higher LTV, and build sustainable businesses that can compete - and win, on the world stage.

This transformation demands more than great games. It requires reliable partners who understand the unique challenges of scaling globally from Vietnam: navigating complex payments across currencies, optimizing UA in a privacy-first world, measuring performance with precision, uncovering market insights, and reaching players efficiently.

We're deeply grateful to the exceptional partners who made this magazine possible and who stand shoulder-to-shoulder with Vietnamese studios every day:

- **Airwallex:** Airwallex is a leading financial platform building the future of global banking for modern businesses. By combining proprietary infrastructure with software and AI, Airwallex is reimagining how businesses manage accounts, access capital, control spend, and embed financial services. Designed to replace fragmented, legacy systems, Airwallex offers a unified platform for global financial operations—providing everything from multi-currency business accounts to payments to spend management and embedded financial products.
- **Mega Digital** is a trusted growth partner for app and game developers, delivering performance-driven marketing to maximize installs, engagement, and ROI. As a leading TikTok Marketing Partner, we provide a competitive edge through early access to new features, exclusive betas, scalable creative solutions, and fast-track ad approvals — driving data-led, sustainable growth.
- **Adjust:** Delivering attribution, fraud prevention, and actionable analytics that cut through privacy noise to optimize campaigns with confidence.
- **Sensor Tower:** Sensor Tower is the leading source of mobile app, digital advertising, retail media, and audience insights for brands and app publishers across the globe. Founded in 2013, Sensor Tower's mobile app insights have helped marketers, app, and game developers demystify the mobile app ecosystem with visibility into usage, engagement, and paid acquisition strategies. Today, Sensor Tower's digital market insights platform has expanded to include Audience, Retail Media, and Pathmatics Digital Advertising Insights, helping brands and advertisers understand their competitor's advertising strategies and audiences across web, social, and mobile.
- **GameGeek:** Connecting developers with engaged audiences through authentic content, community building, and targeted promotion in the Vietnamese and Southeast Asian ecosystem.

Together, these partners represent the full-stack support system that turns ambitious ideas into lasting success.

A heartfelt thank you to every studio, developer, and team member who continues to push boundaries and put Vietnam on the global gaming map. Your creativity, resilience, and data-driven execution inspire us all.

Here's to 2026: deeper games, stronger monetization, predictable profits, and Vietnamese studios leading the next wave of mobile gaming worldwide.

The best is yet to come.

**The Editorial Team**

Gaming Magazine 2025, by Airwallex, Mega Digital, Adjust, Sensor Tower, and GameGeek

ADJUST



MEGA  
DIGITAL

Airwallex

Sensor Tower

# THANK YOU

