MOLOCO

2025 State of Mobile Gaming

In-App Purchase Trends of Leading Apps

REPORT

Contents

Introduction

The mobile gaming industry is evolving and entering a new phase of growth. After a period of rapid expansion during the pandemic, followed by corrections over the past few years, developers and app marketers are refining their monetization, retention, and user acquisition strategies to build sustainable success.

While industry headlines often highlight challenges, they don't tell the full story. Beneath the surface, forward-thinking leaders are uncovering new ways to drive profitability. A key driver of this shift is the diversification of monetization models, with hybrid In-App Ads (IAA) and In-App Purchase (IAP) strategies estimated to have grown by 20% in 2024[1]. At the same time, genre boundaries are blurring as developers blend the accessibility of casual games with immersive IAP-driven experiences, making them more appealing to a wider audience.

Moreover, the mobile gaming industry continues to expand with overall IAP revenue growing by 4% in 2024[2]. This report explores how top games are adapting, where the most effective User Acquisition (UA) strategies are emerging, and what sets high-performing apps apart as they compete for a mobile gaming audience that is expected to grow to over 2.3 billion players by 2028[3].

These insights aim to equip marketers with the data and strategies needed to navigate this shifting landscape—one where long-term value, adaptability, and strategic execution matter more than ever.

The data

To understand how the mobile gaming landscape is evolving, we analyzed IAP revenue and user trends from 100 of Moloco's largest gaming advertisers. In addition, we have used Sensor Tower IAP revenue estimates to illustrate broader industry trends.

This dataset spans 24 months and includes data from both organic and paid sources, attributed and unattributed to Moloco.

↑ Source:
[1] AppsFlyer State of App Monetization 2024
[2] SensorTower State of Mobile 2025
[3] Statista Market Insights 2025

Key Findings

EVOLUTION

With install volume flat, growth is driven by higher payer conversion rates and improved LTV

Over the past year, total installs are down just 0.2%, but leading apps are seeing a 6% increase in install-to-payer conversion rates and ARPPU increases of 3% at D30 and 6% at D90.

GROWTH

Casual experiences with deep IAP mechanics are reshaping the industry

Games that have successfully blended casual experiences that appeal to broad audiences with deep IAP mechanics (most notably in Strategy, Puzzle, Simulation, and Social Casino) have had outsized revenue growth of 6% year-over-year.

GROWTH

iOS users are responsible for the majority of revenue and payer growth

iOS has overtaken Android, generating 55% of global IAP revenue in 2024. In the U.S., the top 5% of iOS payers—just 0.02% of global installs—now generate 20% of global gaming revenue across iOS and Android.

ACQUISITION

There is increasing competition for the highest-value users

Across the industry, median winning bid prices have remained relatively stable; however, the top 1% of iOS winning bids have risen 140% over the last year indicating fierce competition for the most important users.

ACQUISITION

Global expansion provides new opportunities

Leading app marketers are expanding beyond the U.S. and other mature markets to less competitive regions, acquiring valuable users at a more efficient cost. The top 5 advertisers, for example, spend 20% more outside of the U.S. compared to others in the top 100.

STRATEGY

The top 5 advertisers have differentiated paid acquisition strategies

Compared to others in the top 100, the Top 5 advertisers stand out through increased use of interactive and playable creatives (5x), focus their budgets primarily on ROAS optimization (+19%), and leverage re-engagement strategies that prioritize app opens (3x).

Methodology

This analysis is based on an anonymized dataset from 100 leading global mobile gaming apps who primarily monetize through in-app purchases (IAP), including those using hybrid monetization models.

The dataset spans 24 months and includes data from both organic and paid sources, attributed and unattributed to Moloco. In addition, Sensor Tower IAP revenue estimates have been used to illustrate broader industry trends.

60B
bid requests

4B
installs

65M
in-app purchase events

100
mobile gaming publishers

~50%*
of global IAP revenue

$8B
in-app purchase revenue (D90)

✱

Sensor Tower estimated advertiser share of global IAP revenue

→ Methodology continued

To analyze payer, revenue, and user acquisition trends, we categorized markets as follows:

- **United States:** Largest global gaming market by revenue ✳ **45%** of global IAP revenue

- **Tier 1 markets:** Large number of paying users, combined with high average revenue per paying user (ARPPU): South Korea, Taiwan, Japan, Australia, Canada, France, Germany, United Kingdom ✳ **32%** of global IAP revenue

- **Emerging markets:** Large Install volume, but low number of payers and low ARPPU: India, Brazil, Mexico, Indonesia ✳ **3%** of global IAP revenue

- **Rest of World (ROW) markets:** All other countries not listed above ✳ **19%** of global IAP revenue

Outliers have been removed to ensure consistency when comparing trends (for example, in-app purchases exceeding $120). The dataset includes Social Casinos but excludes Real Money Gaming (RMG). Genre classifications follow Sensor Tower definitions.

U.S.

U.S.   45%

TIER 1

South Korea   Taiwan   Japan

Australia   Canada   France

Germany   UK   32%

EMERGING

India   Brazil   Mexico

Indonesia   3%

ROW

all the other countries   19%
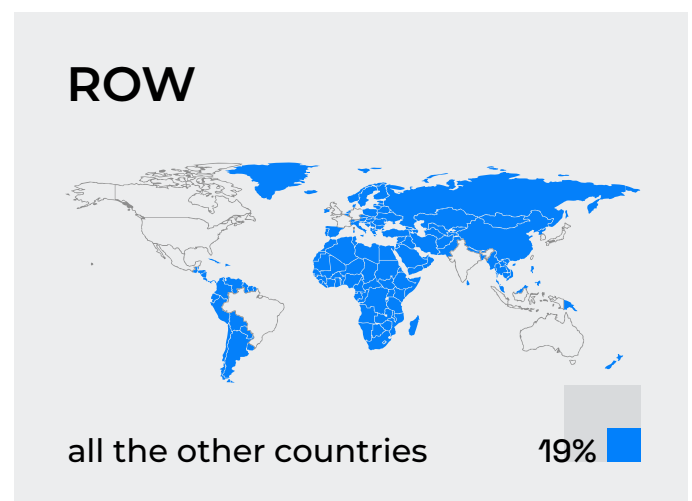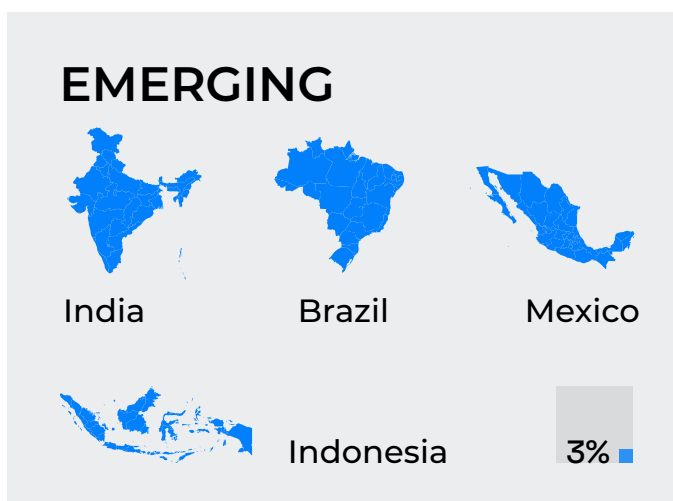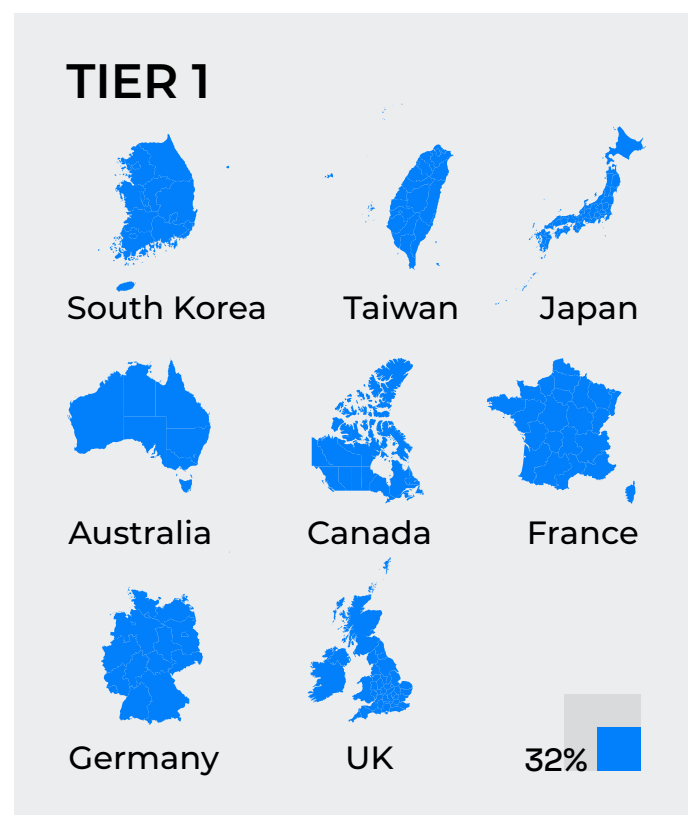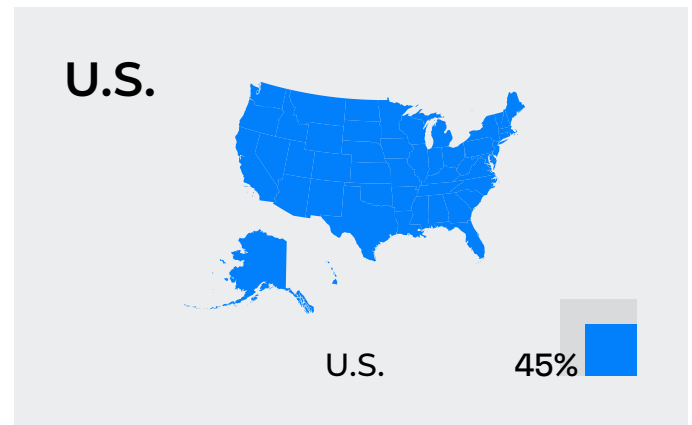
Maximizing Value Across the User Journey

Maximizing Value Across the User Journey

Leading gaming apps are prioritizing monetization and retention strategies that increase the lifetime value (LTV) of their users. Many are finding success by creating experiences that appeal to broad audiences while driving long-term engagement and repeat purchases—evidenced by growth in both payers and average revenue per paying user (ARPPU). Although global install growth has slowed, top apps are accelerating installs in higher-value markets, especially on iOS in the U.S. and ROW.

Established titles have grown their relative share of overall gaming IAP revenue, with apps older than six years contributing 50% of IAP revenue in 2024—up from 23% in 2020[4]. However, recent revenue growth is driven by both established titles and new releases, proving there's still significant opportunity for new launches. Whether apps are new or established, monetization success is being shaped by the same factors: a focus on improved player experiences, diversified monetization models, engaging in-app mechanics, and strategic user acquisition.

↑ Source:
[4] SensorTower State of Mobile Gaming 2025

> It's exciting to see the industry increasingly focus on **long-term value** — a mindset that's guided our approach to marketing, monetization, and product design at MobilityWare from the beginning.
>
> Corvin Ampleev, Director of User Acquisition, MobilityWare

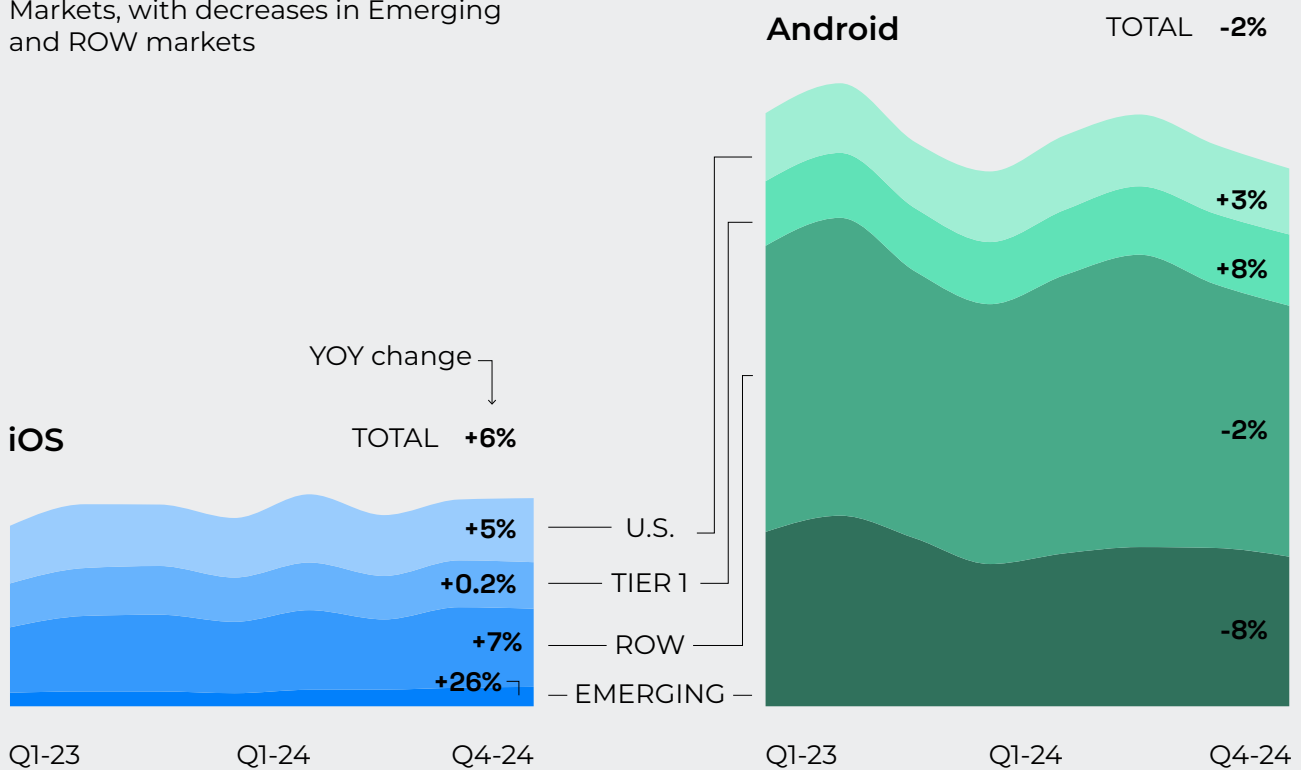## Install trends are more dynamic than they might appear

While global gaming app installs have remained relatively stable—down just 0.2% year-over-year—there are notable differences across operating systems (OS) and regions. In the U.S., both iOS and Android installs are growing; outside of mature markets, iOS installs are on the rise, suggesting that leading advertisers are uncovering new opportunities in smaller markets with strong revenue potential (see Moloco's Beyond Borders report for more detailed information). Meanwhile, in key emerging markets—such as Mexico, Indonesia, Brazil, India, and Malaysia—Android installs are declining, offsetting gains in other regions and dragging down the global average.

Leading advertisers are finding growth in installs on iOS

2023-2024 Install Trends

iOS has seen significant install growth across markets; on Android, install growth is seen in the U.S. and Tier 1 Markets, with decreases in Emerging and ROW markets

Android   TOTAL   **-2%**

+3%

+8%

-2%

-8%

YOY change

TOTAL   **+6%**

iOS

+5% ——— U.S.

+0.2% ——— TIER 1

+7% ——— ROW

+26% — EMERGING —

Q1-23   Q1-24   Q4-24   Q1-23   Q1-24   Q4-24

↑ Installs (paid and organic) | Top 100 Moloco Mobile Gaming Advertisers

## Improved long-term monetization is driving revenue growth

While leading gaming apps have long prioritized converting installs into payers and maximizing long-term revenue, new trends are shaping how they achieve these goals. Innovations across in-app experiences, live-ops strategies, and user acquisition strategies have contributed to a 6% increase in install-to-payer (D7 I2P) conversion rates in 2024.

While rapid payer growth can sometimes reduce ARPPU, the Top 100 gaming advertisers are seeing improved long-term user value. Although D7 ARPPU has decreased slightly, ARPPU is rising at D30 and D90, signaling a shift from short-term revenue to sustained monetization. This suggests that leading advertisers are successfully keeping users engaged and spending over longer periods of time.

D30 and D90 ARPPU improvements are reflective of changing monetization trends

ARPPU at D7, D30, and D90

Leading apps are not only seeing increased payer volume (+6%), but are also seeing significant increases in LTV at D30 and D90

YOY change

D90
+6%

D30
+3%

D7
-3%

Jan 23   Jan 24   Dec 24
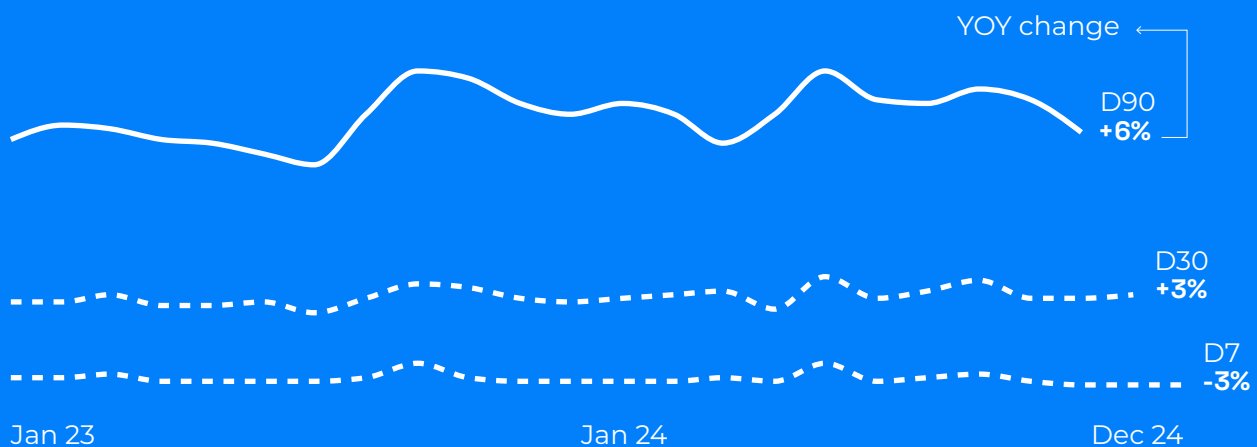
↑ Average Revenue per Paying User (ARPPU), Organic and Paid | Top 100 Moloco Mobile Gaming Advertisers | Latest possible D30 and D90 trends shown given postback availability

Casual games with IAP mechanics are seeing standout momentum

The rise of casual games has significantly shaped the mobile gaming industry in recent years as leading apps find new ways to balance long-term engagement with broad audience appeal. Publishers are increasingly taking note, recognizing that these games effectively attract wide audiences while also being key platforms for long-term user monetization. By blending engaging gameplay with structured reward systems and content depth, casual and hybrid casual titles are creating new opportunities for both user acquisition and retention.

2024 IAP Revenue Estimates ($B USD) | Sensor Tower

YOY change

		YOY change
MID-CORE	$45.9	+0.2%
CASUAL	$32.4	+6%
HYBRID CASUAL	$3.1	+37%
HYPERCASUAL	$0.3	+74%
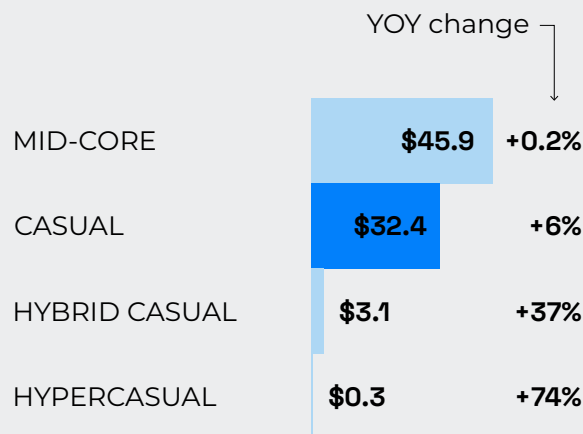
↑ Sensor Tower State of Mobile Gaming 2025

Genres that blend casual experiences with IAP features are driving industry growth

2024 vs. 2023 Estimates of IAP Revenue & Install Growth | Sensor Tower Estimates

Puzzle, Strategy, Simulation and Casino are the main winners of the past year. RPG remains the second-largest genre by revenue, but has seen significant declines as growth consolidates around casual experiences
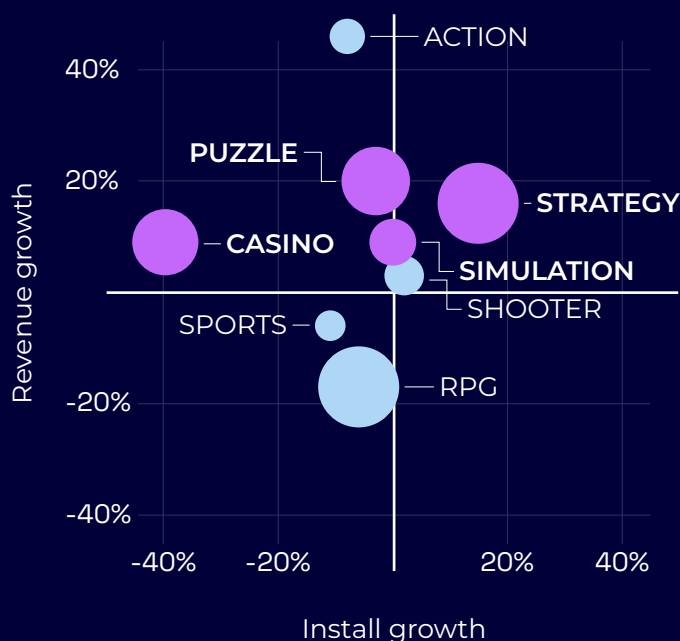
↑ Sensor Tower State of Mobile 2025 | Bubble size relative to IAP revenue share
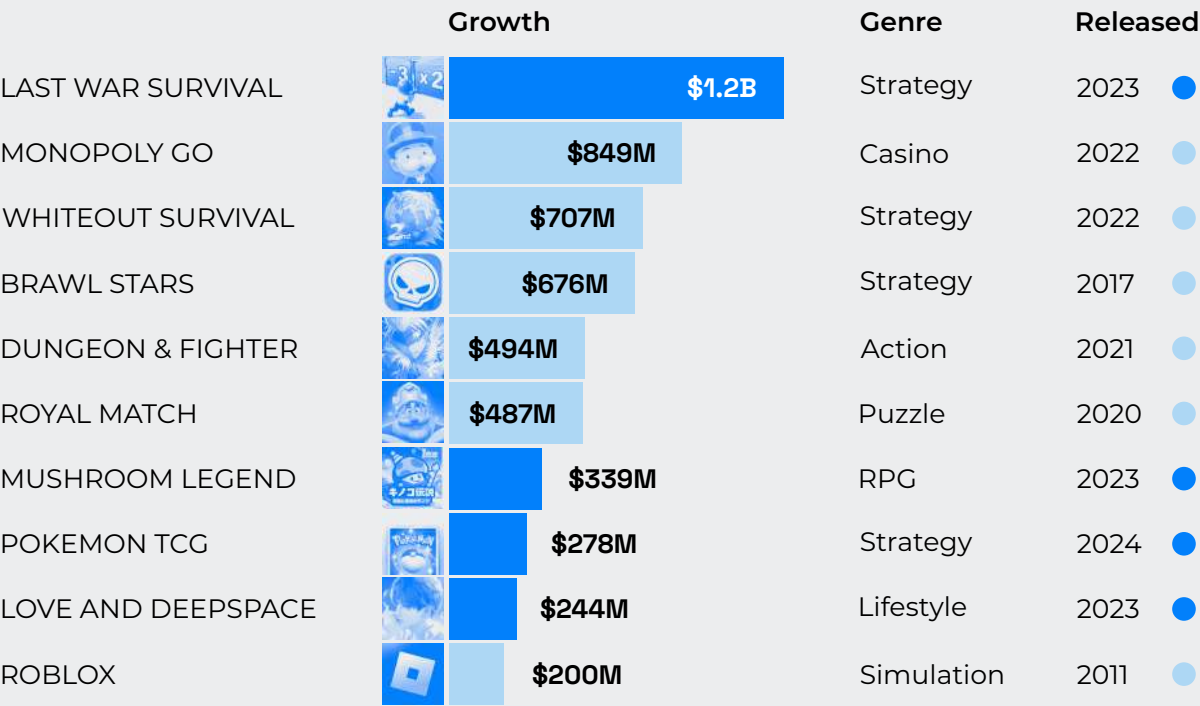
Puzzle, Strategy, and Simulation games are experiencing strong revenue growth, driven by successful new releases and the continued popularity of established titles. While RPG remains the second-largest genre, many developers have struggled to adapt to the rise of hybrid casual trends as effectively as their Strategy counterparts. However, the success of casual RPGs suggests that there is still room for growth by making RPGs more accessible to a wider audience while preserving some of the deeper gameplay loops that define the category.

Growth is driven by both fast-scaling new releases and established titles

Top 10 Gaming Apps by estimated IAP Growth 2024 vs. 2023 | Sensor Tower Estimates

These apps succeed through superior acquisition, retention, and monetization that appeal to the broadest possible audiences

	Growth	Genre	Released
LAST WAR SURVIVAL	$1.2B	Strategy	2023 ●
MONOPOLY GO	$849M	Casino	2022 ●
WHITEOUT SURVIVAL	$707M	Strategy	2022 ●
BRAWL STARS	$676M	Strategy	2017 ●
DUNGEON & FIGHTER	$494M	Action	2021 ●
ROYAL MATCH	$487M	Puzzle	2020 ●
MUSHROOM LEGEND	$339M	RPG	2023 ●
POKEMON TCG	$278M	Strategy	2024 ●
LOVE AND DEEPSPACE	$244M	Lifestyle	2023 ●
ROBLOX	$200M	Simulation	2011 ●

● Latest releases (2023, 2024)   ● Established titles

↑ Sensor Tower State of Mobile Gaming 2025

Retention-focused gameplay experiences are key for top-performing titles

Despite differences in genre and monetization models, the 10 fastest-growing gaming apps in 2024 share a common approach: they prioritize long-term player engagement and invest in maximizing monetization across a wide range of user cohorts. These apps are not just acquiring users—they're building ecosystems that keep players engaged and spending over time.

01

Diverse Monetization

Many apps combine multiple monetization methods—such as battle passes, subscriptions, gacha mechanics, strategically priced starter offers—to quickly convert installers into payers and maximize value from more varied user cohorts.

02

Frequent Live-Ops Events

Regular live events, seasonal content, and time-limited promotions keep players engaged well beyond onboarding, encouraging repeat visits and in-game purchases over time.

03

Social and Competitive Mechanics

Features like guilds, PvP battles, leaderboards, and referrals foster strong community dynamics, increasing retention and encouraging ongoing player investment.

04

Progression with Dynamic and Personalized Rewards

Transparent progression paths combined with dynamic, personalized rewards and targeted monetization offers motivate continuous player spending.

These trends emphasize the importance of balancing broad appeal with deep engagement models to drive both payer growth and long-term value.

To better understand how these factors interact, let's take a closer look at the relationship between payer, revenue, and user acquisition trends.

Payer and Revenue Growth Trends

Payer and Revenue Growth Trends

iOS users are playing an increasingly significant role in mobile gaming monetization, driving both payer and revenue growth. In 2024, iOS surpassed Android, contributing to a 14% increase in payers and an 10% increase in IAP revenue compared to 2023. While the U.S. remains the largest revenue market, iOS monetization is also expanding in Emerging and ROW markets, creating new opportunities for revenue diversification.

iOS has overtaken Android in terms of payer and revenue contribution
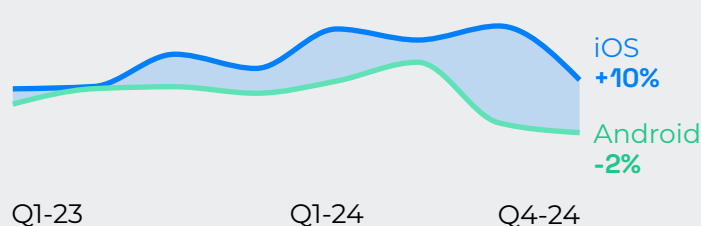
D7 Revenue and Payer Growth by OS

In 2024, the number of iOS payers increased by 14%, contributing to a 10% rise in total revenue. iOS has now overtaken Android in terms of both payers and revenue

Payers

Android
+0.3%

iOS
+13%

YOY change

Revenue

iOS
+10%

Android
-2%

Q1-23   Q1-24   Q4-24
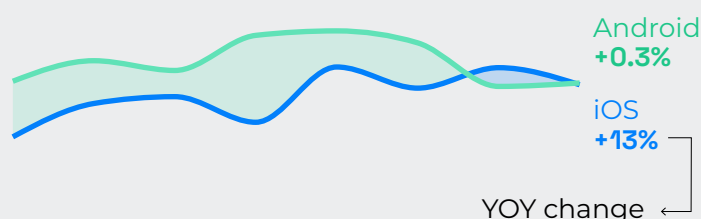
↑ D7 Revenue and Payers (Unattributed and Attributed to Moloco) | Top 100 Moloco Mobile Gaming Advertisers

iOS is leading payer and revenue growth, led by the U.S. and ROW markets

The U.S. continues to be a key driver of iOS growth, with revenue up 11% year-over-year in 2024. But the growth doesn't stop there— ROW markets saw a 19% increase and Emerging markets grew 31%. This global momentum reflects the growing importance of iOS users across the world and presents an opportunity for advertisers to scale revenue across diverse regions.
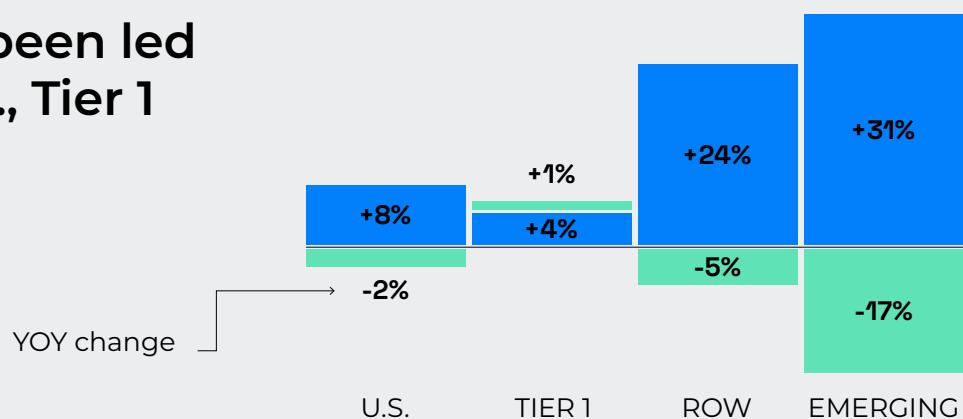
U.S. and iOS are in a dominant position in 2024; however, Android still represents just under half of global IAP revenue

2024 Share of D7 IAP Revenue by Region and OS
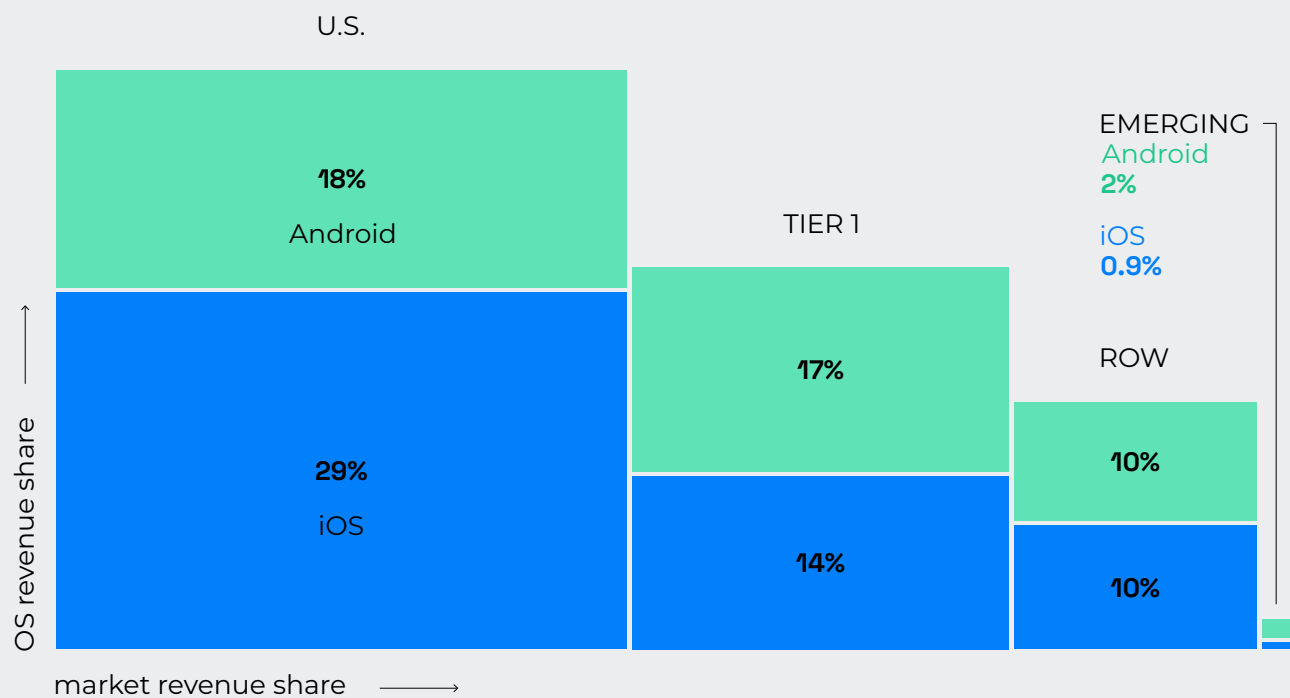
Growth has been led by iOS in U.S., Tier 1 and ROW

D7 Revenue Growth (%)
2024 vs 2023

↑ D7 Revenue, Attributed and Unattributed to Moloco | Top 100 Moloco Mobile Gaming Advertisers

Increasing Competition for High-Value Users

Increasing Competition for High-Value Users

As iOS captures a larger share of gaming revenue, a small group of high-value users is driving a disproportionate portion of overall revenue, intensifying competition among advertisers. With more than half of installs coming from paid sources[5], advertisers and UA platforms are aggressively bidding on a select segment of users—those generating over $100 in D7 revenue and accounting for nearly half of all IAP revenue.

↑ Source:
[5] Singular Quarterly Trends Report: Q1 2025

Top 5% of U.S. iOS payers drive 20% of global revenue across Android & iOS

Just 0.02% of global installs from U.S. iOS high-value payers (D7 spend of $100+) are driving 20% of global revenue
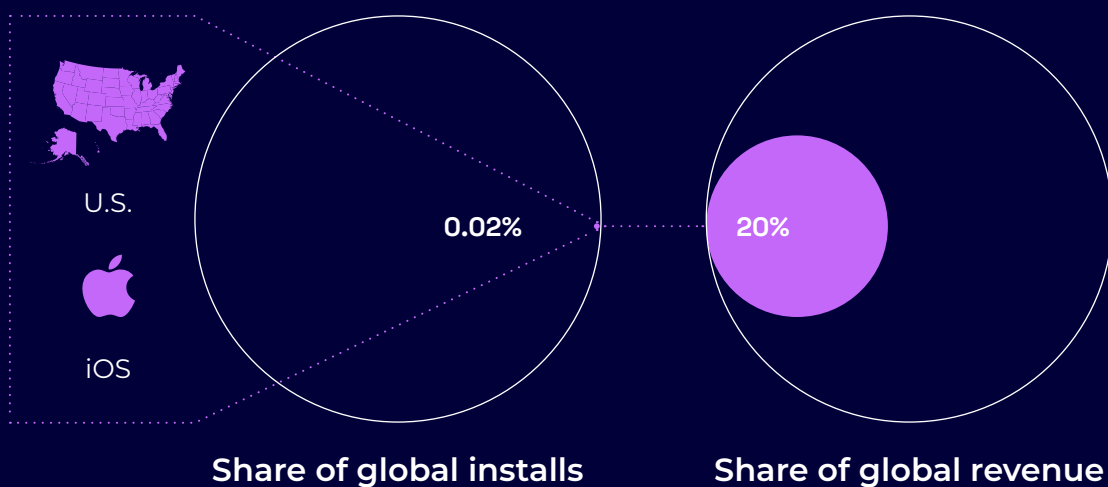
U.S.

iOS

0.02%

20%

Share of global installs   **Share of global revenue**

↑ D7 Revenue, Attributed and Unattributed to Moloco | Top 100 Moloco Mobile Gaming Advertisers

High-value user dynamics remain consistent

The top 5% of paying users contribute 48% of total gaming revenue—a trend holding steady in the U.S. and Tier 1 markets.

However, Emerging and ROW markets are seeing growing revenue concentration among high-value users, signaling a shift in monetization dynamics. For marketers, identifying and engaging these users across regions is critical to sustaining long-term growth.
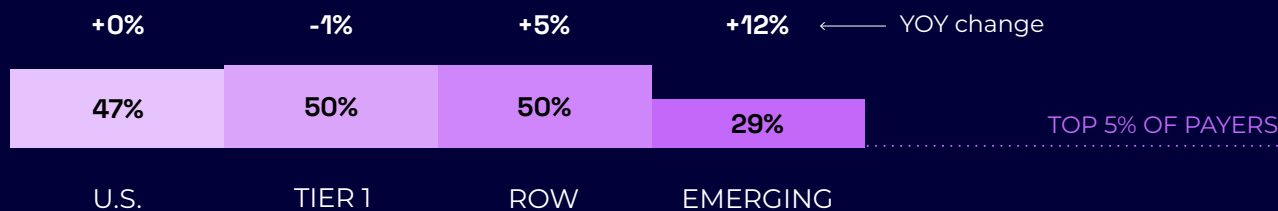
The Top 5% of payers contribute 48% of revenue

% IAP Revenue by Payer Cohort

top 10%
64%

top 25%
77%
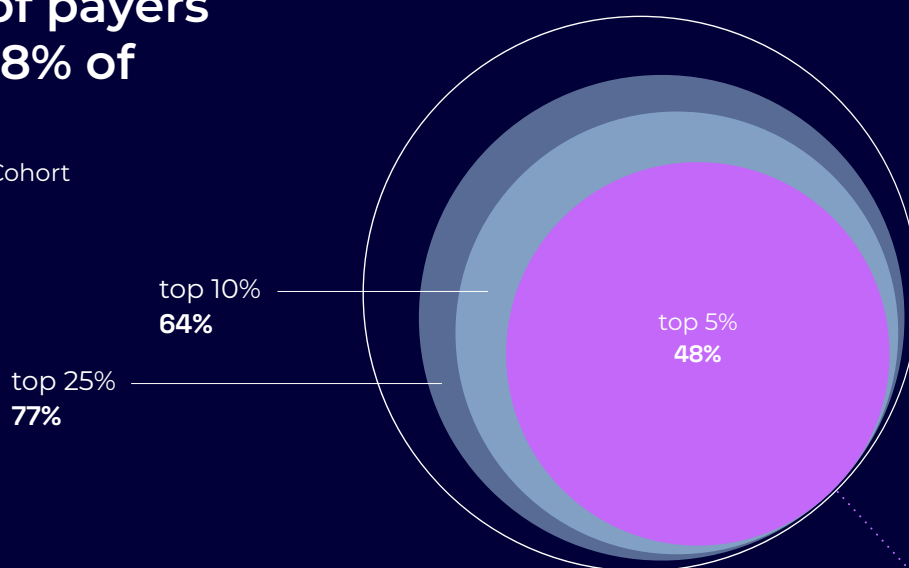
top 5%
48%

Share of revenue from the Top 5% of payers is growing outside the U.S. and Tier 1

D7 Revenue Growth from Top 5% 2024 vs. 2023

+0%	-1%	+5%	+12% ← YOY change
47%	50%	50%	29%
U.S.	TIER 1	ROW	EMERGING

TOP 5% OF PAYERS

↑ D7 Revenue, Attributed and Unattributed to Moloco (2024 vs. 2023) | Top 100 Moloco Mobile Gaming Advertisers

The rising costs to acquire mobile gaming's biggest spenders

As competition heats up for high-value users, bid prices are climbing, especially on iOS in the U.S., where advertisers are paying a premium to secure these key users.

Over the past year, winning bid prices – across all advertising platforms – at the 95th and 99th percentile on iOS in the U.S. have jumped by 80–140%. This trend is not limited to the U.S. and similar bid inflation at the highest percentiles is emerging across the world.

Median winning bid prices have increased on Android and remained relatively stable on iOS…

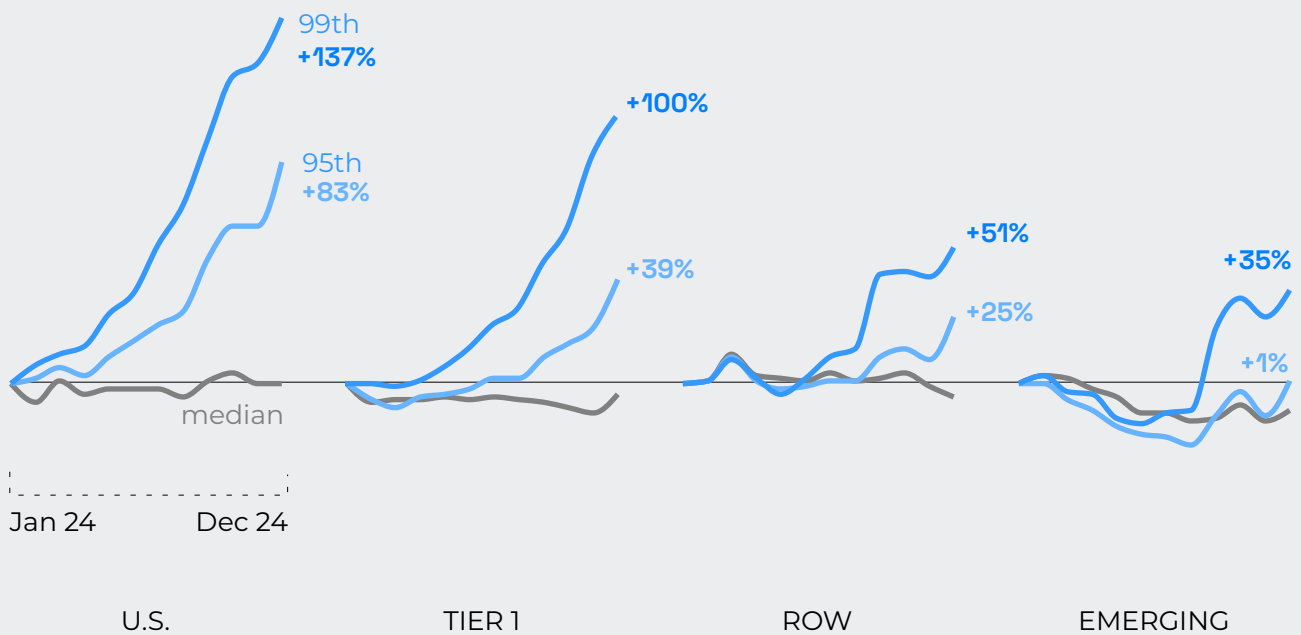Median Industry Winning Bid Price (Across all advertising platforms)
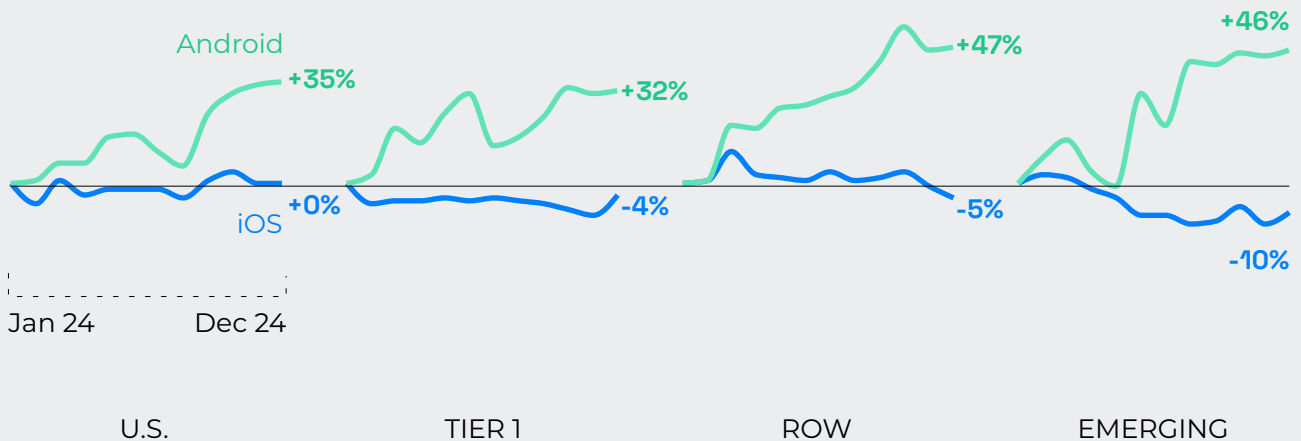
Android

+35% +32% +47% +46%

iOS

+0% -4% -5%

-10%

Jan 24   Dec 24

U.S.   TIER 1   ROW   EMERGING

↑ 300 million winning bids from all advertising platforms competing in an open auction – including and not including Moloco

…yet there has been a significant increase on iOS for the most competitive auctions

99th and 95th Percentile Winning Bid Price (Across all advertising platforms)

99th **+137%**

95th **+83%**

+100%

+39%

+51%

+25%

+35%

+1%

median

Jan 24   Dec 24

U.S.   TIER 1   ROW   EMERGING

↑ 300 million winning bids from all advertising platforms competing in an open auction – including and not including Moloco

Winning high-value users takes more than simply raising bid prices. Long-term profitability depends on a sophisticated acquisition strategy that balances audience segmentation, payer retention, and market diversification.

Focusing solely on outbidding competitors for top spenders isn't sustainable. Advertisers need to acquire a broader mix of users at the right price to drive ROI-positive growth across multiple segments—not just the top tier.
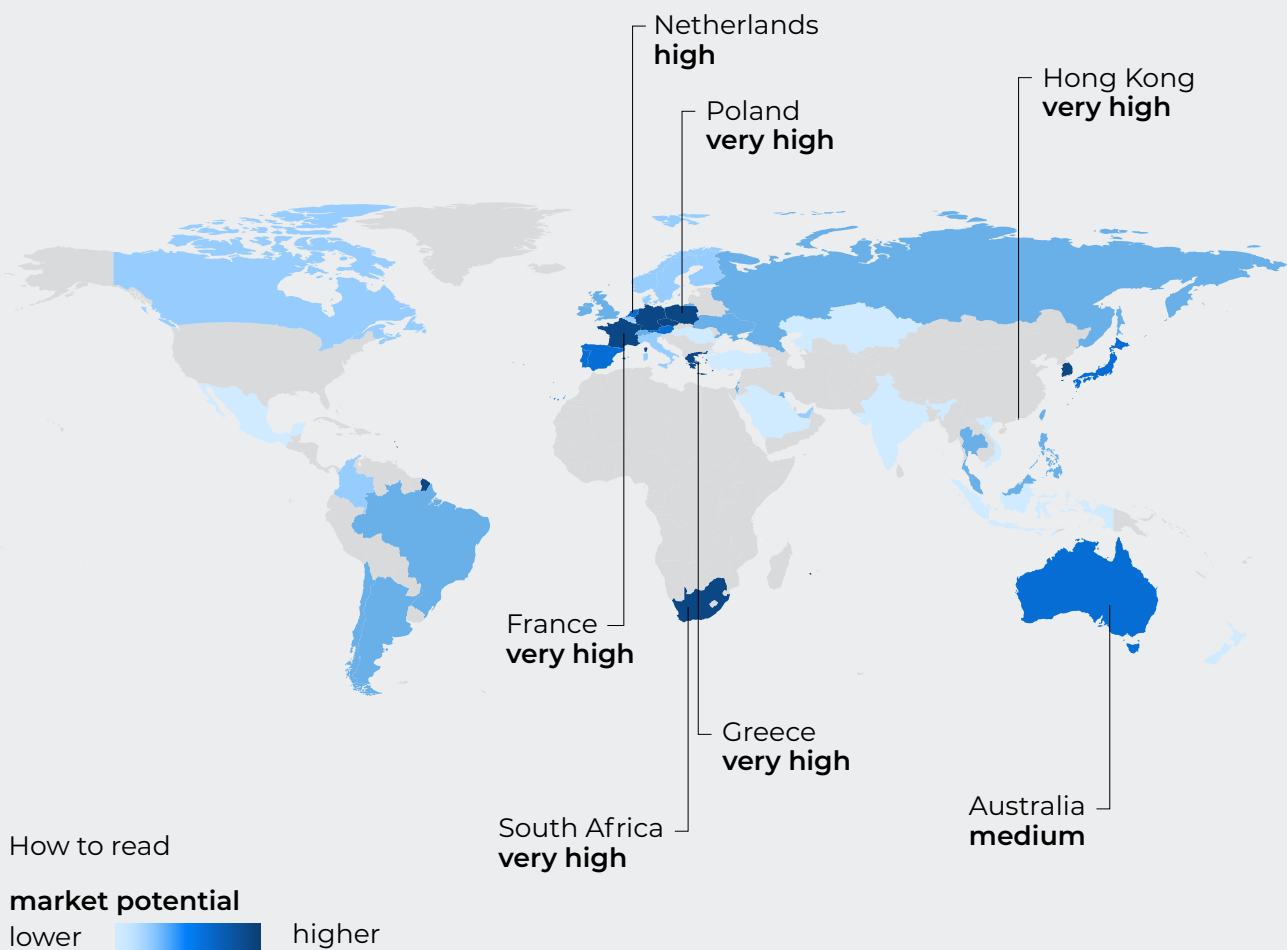
Expanding into new markets can offer growth opportunities

As acquisition costs rise in the U.S. and Tier 1 markets, expanding into less competitive regions offers marketers a cost-effective way to reach high-value users and drive sustainable growth. For a deeper analysis of user value and acquisition trends across countries and regions, see Moloco's Beyond Borders report.

Beyond the U.S., many global markets offer cost-efficient growth opportunities for high-value users

Relative Opportunity: ARPPU vs. CPP (Cost Per Payer)

Netherlands **high**

Poland **very high**

Hong Kong **very high**

France **very high**

Greece **very high**

South Africa **very high**

Australia **medium**

How to read

market potential

lower ▬▬▬ higher

↑ Moloco Beyond Borders 2024

Paid Acquisition Strategies That Set the Top 5 Apart

Paid Acquisition Strategies that Set the Top 5 Apart

While this report centers on the Top 100 advertisers, zooming in on the Top 5 reveals key trends. These leaders see significantly stronger D7 retention (10–20% higher), greater transaction volume (+22%), and more repeat purchasers (+10%). Their UA strategies also stand out—they distribute budgets across more countries, focus on ROAS-driven bidding, prioritize interactive ad formats, and embrace a full-funnel strategy that includes both acquisition and re-engagement.

The Top 5 diversify user acquisition budgets in more markets, investing significantly more outside of the U.S.

While revenue is becoming more concentrated in the U.S., leading advertisers are maintaining a global mindset. This is reflected in greater spending in Tier 1 markets like the U.K., France, Canada and Australia, but most notably in other European/Middle East markets like Italy, Spain, Netherlands, Norway, Belgium, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE.

Spend outside the U.S.

Benchmark

Top 5 advertisers

+20%
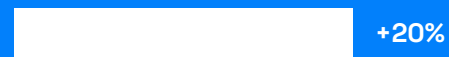
Spend in ROW (outside of U.S., Tier 1 & Emerging markets)

Benchmark

Top 5 advertisers

+34%

↑ Moloco's Top 5 advertisers vs Moloco's Top 100 Moloco Advertisers (by UA spend)

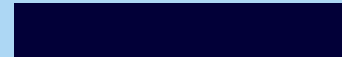## The top 5 focus on deeper funnel ROAS campaigns

In order to acquire users who are more likely to become payers, leading apps spend +19% more of their overall budget on ROAS campaigns to acquire users that matter.

↑ Moloco's Top 5 advertisers vs Moloco's Top 100 Moloco Advertisers (by UA spend)

Spend in ROAS

Benchmark

Top 5 advertisers

+19%

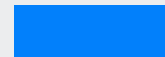## The top 5 spend more on re-engagement campaigns that focus on 'app opens'

Rising acquisition costs are pushing top apps to prioritize re-engaging lapsed users to increase their overall lifetime value.

↑ Moloco's Top 5 advertisers vs Moloco's Top 100 Moloco Advertisers (by UA spend)

Re-engagement Spend (App Opens, Android)

Benchmark

Top 5 advertisers

more than 3x

The Top 5 lean into immersive ad formats like playables to showcase the app experience

Especially effective for casual and hybrid casual games, these formats highlight gameplay to better attract users.

↑ Moloco's Top 5 advertisers vs Moloco's Top 100 Moloco Advertisers (by UA spend)

Spend on Playables

Benchmark

Top 5 advertisers

more than 5x

Looking
Forward

Looking Forward

The return to growth in mobile gaming is promising but brings new challenges. Success will depend on adapting acquisition strategies, evolving monetization models, and focusing on a global, diversified approach.

Industry Predictions

✳ Monetization models will continue to evolve, with hybrid casual games—blending casual gameplay and IAP experiences—playing a central role in driving industry growth.

✳ Developers will double down on live-ops, personalized offers, and community features to drive deeper engagement and sustained revenue.

✳ Hybrid monetization models (IAP + IAA) will see broader adoption, allowing developers to maximize revenue from both paying and non-paying users.

✳ The U.S. will remain a major driver of revenue, but high-value users in global markets will play an increasingly important role in growth.

Actionable strategies for app marketers

✳ Invest in both user acquisition and re-engagement strategies to maximize value across the entire customer lifecycle.

✳ As competition for high-value users grows, UA strategies should focus on maximizing value across a broader range of user cohorts.

✳ While the U.S. and Tier 1 markets will remain important, there is an opportunity to expand into lower-cost regions to drive incremental, ROI-positive growth.

✳ There's significant value to be unlocked across all user cohorts—including high-value users, mid-value users, and converting installers into payers. For non-paying users, selective ad monetization offers an additional opportunity to drive incremental revenue.

✳ Invest in interactive, immersive ad formats—like playables—that let users experience the game firsthand.

By embracing these strategies, mobile marketers can navigate industry shifts, drive sustainable growth, and stay ahead in an evolving market.

CONTACT US

moloco.com/contact