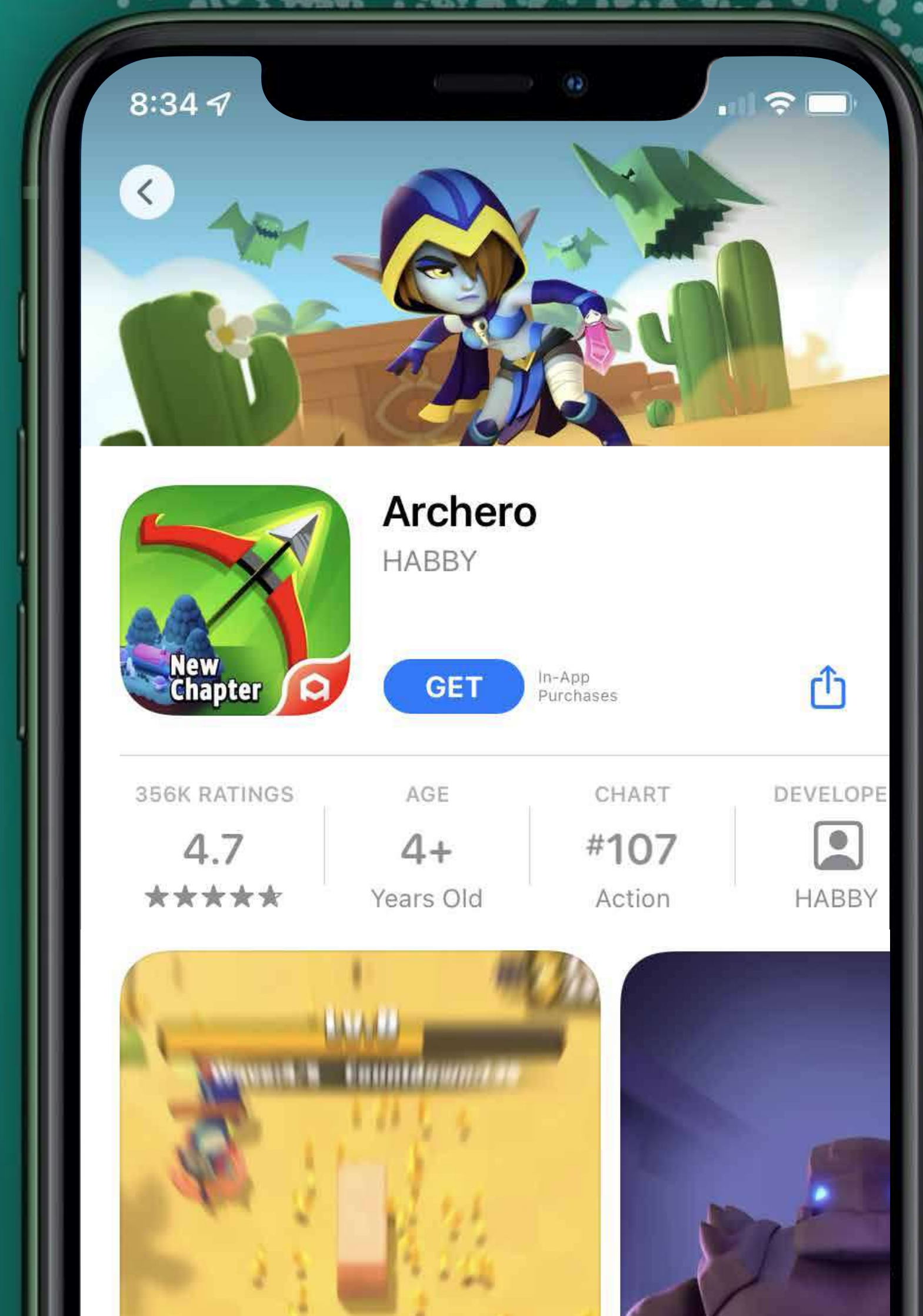
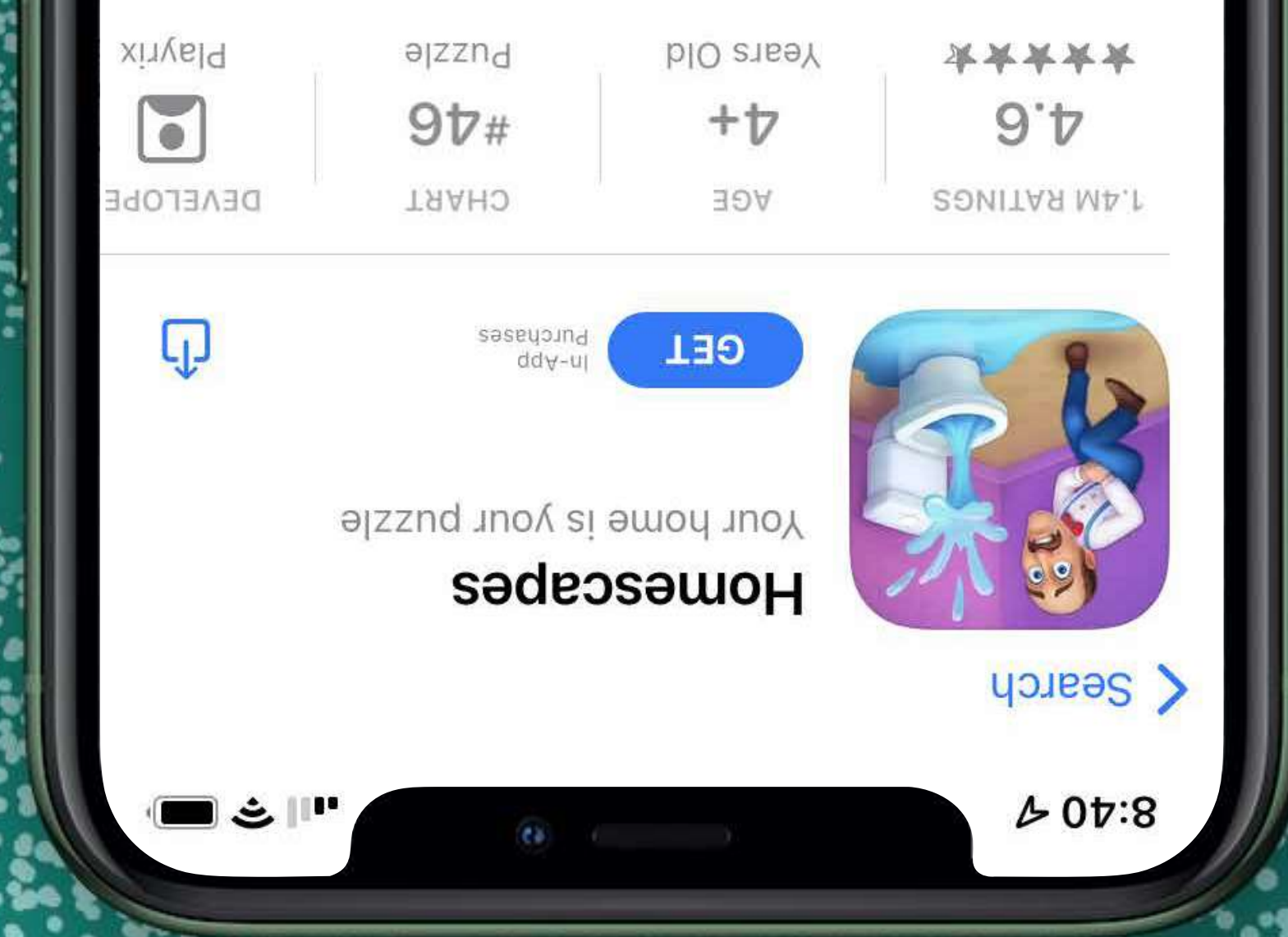




# Mobile Game Store Asset Optimization Trends 2021

An Analysis of iOS 15 Changes and Innovative Case Studies





# Table of Contents

---

- 03 - Introduction
- 04 - iOS 15: App Store Updates
- 09 - Icon Strategy: Special Events
- 12 - Icon Strategy: Brand Identity
- 15 - Icon Strategy: Live Operations
- 17 - Marketing and App Store Alignment
- 22 - Conclusion

# Mobile Game **Store Asset Optimization Trends 2021**

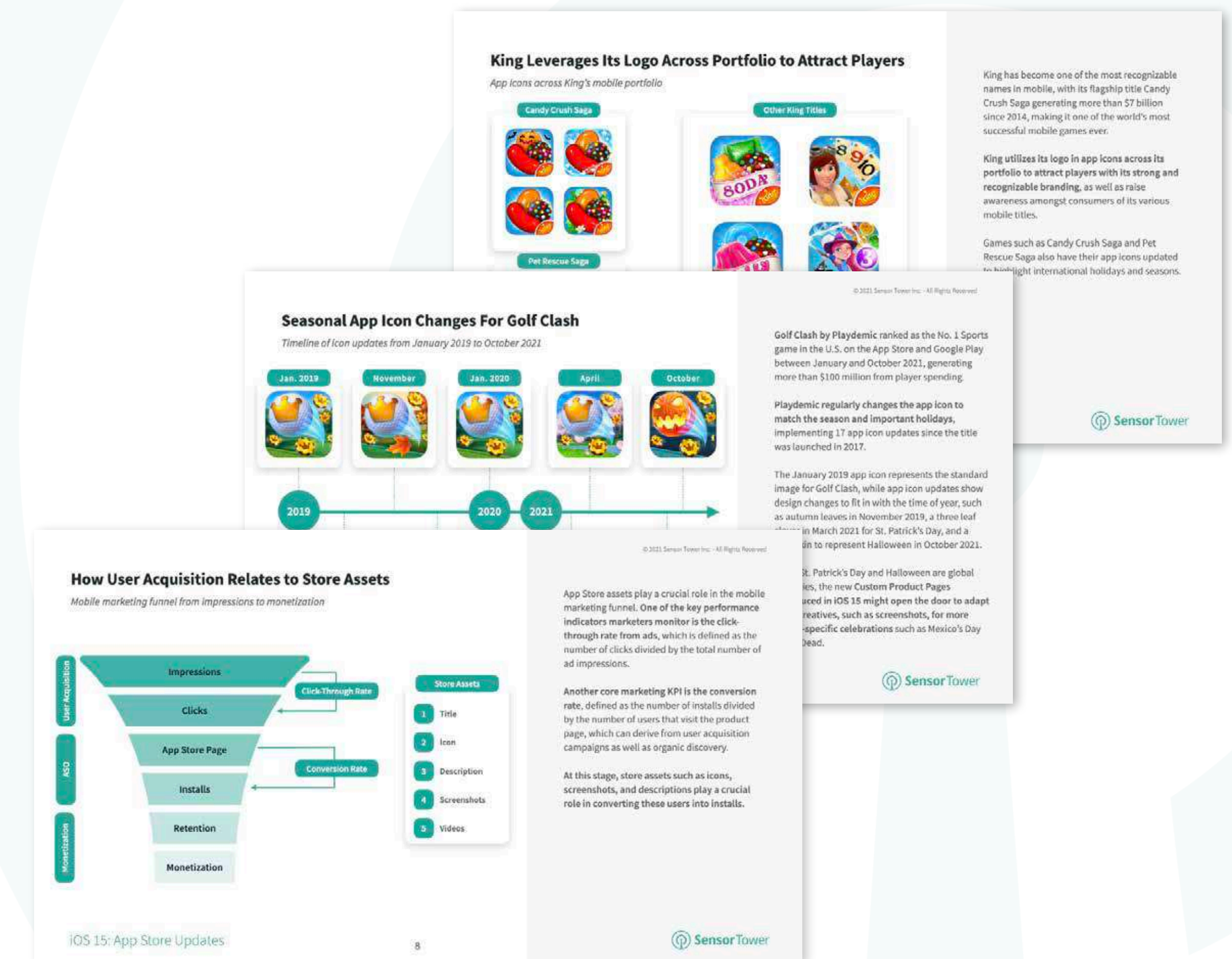
## Introduction

This report presents an overview of how the top mobile games publishers are maximizing their conversion rates with innovative store asset strategies.

This analysis leverages Sensor Tower's **App Intelligence**, **Game Taxonomy**, **Game Intelligence**, **Ad Intelligence**, and **Store Intelligence** data.

The report delves into upcoming iOS 15 changes for App Store asset optimization in addition to covering key trends in app icon design, including how marketing can align with these creatives to unlock an app's full potential.

You can also discover how Sensor Tower's **App Intelligence** and **Ad Intelligence** products can be harnessed to understand and monitor these trends and garner inspiration for your own creatives.







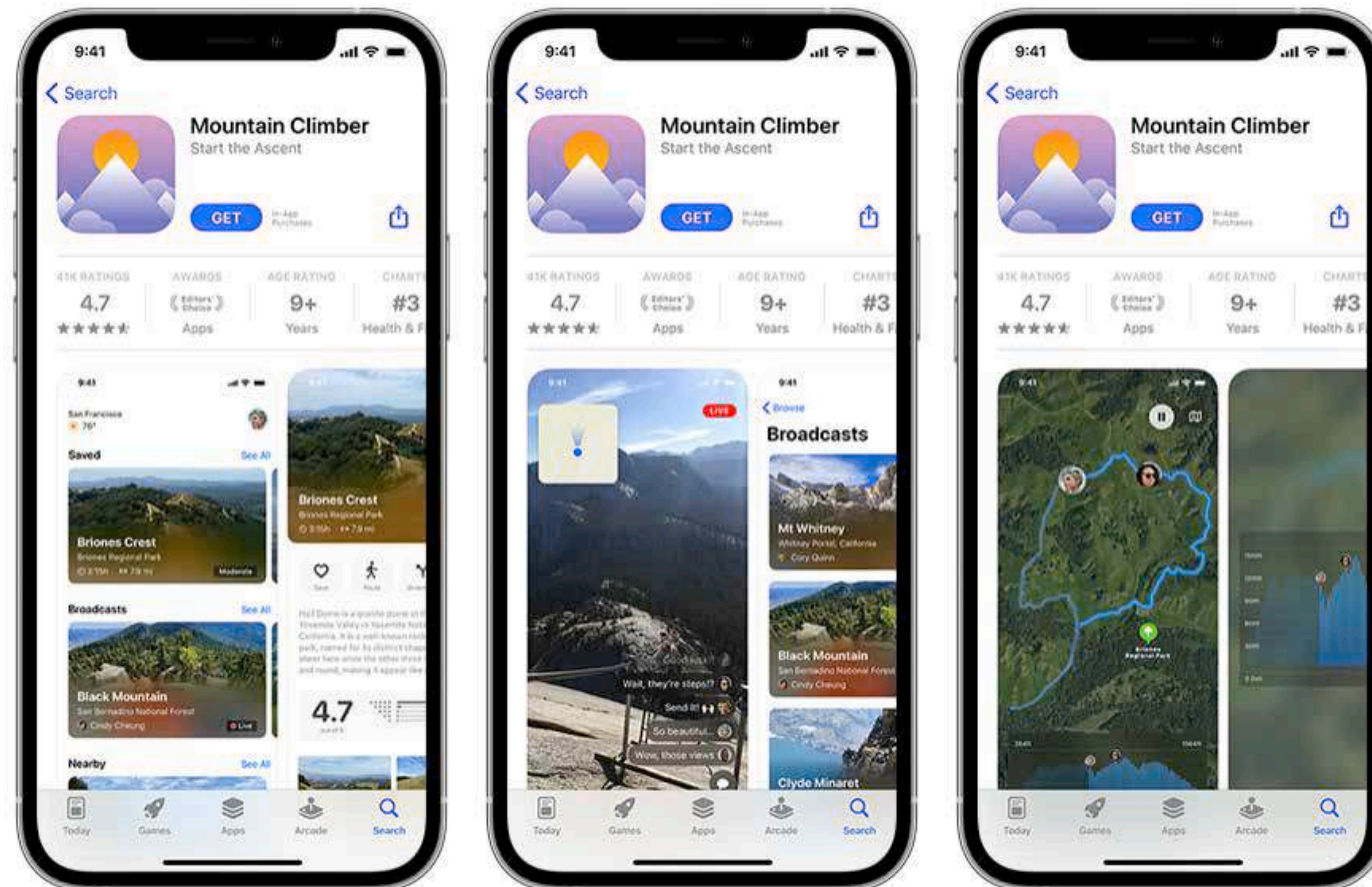
# iOS 15: App Store Updates

—  
An Overview of App Store Optimization Changes





# iOS 15 introduces Custom Product Pages



One of the main features announced for the iOS 15 App Store update is **Custom Product Pages**, which are due for release in Q4 2021. With these tools, publishers can create up to 35 unique App Store product pages to test, each with their own preview video, screenshots, and promotional text.

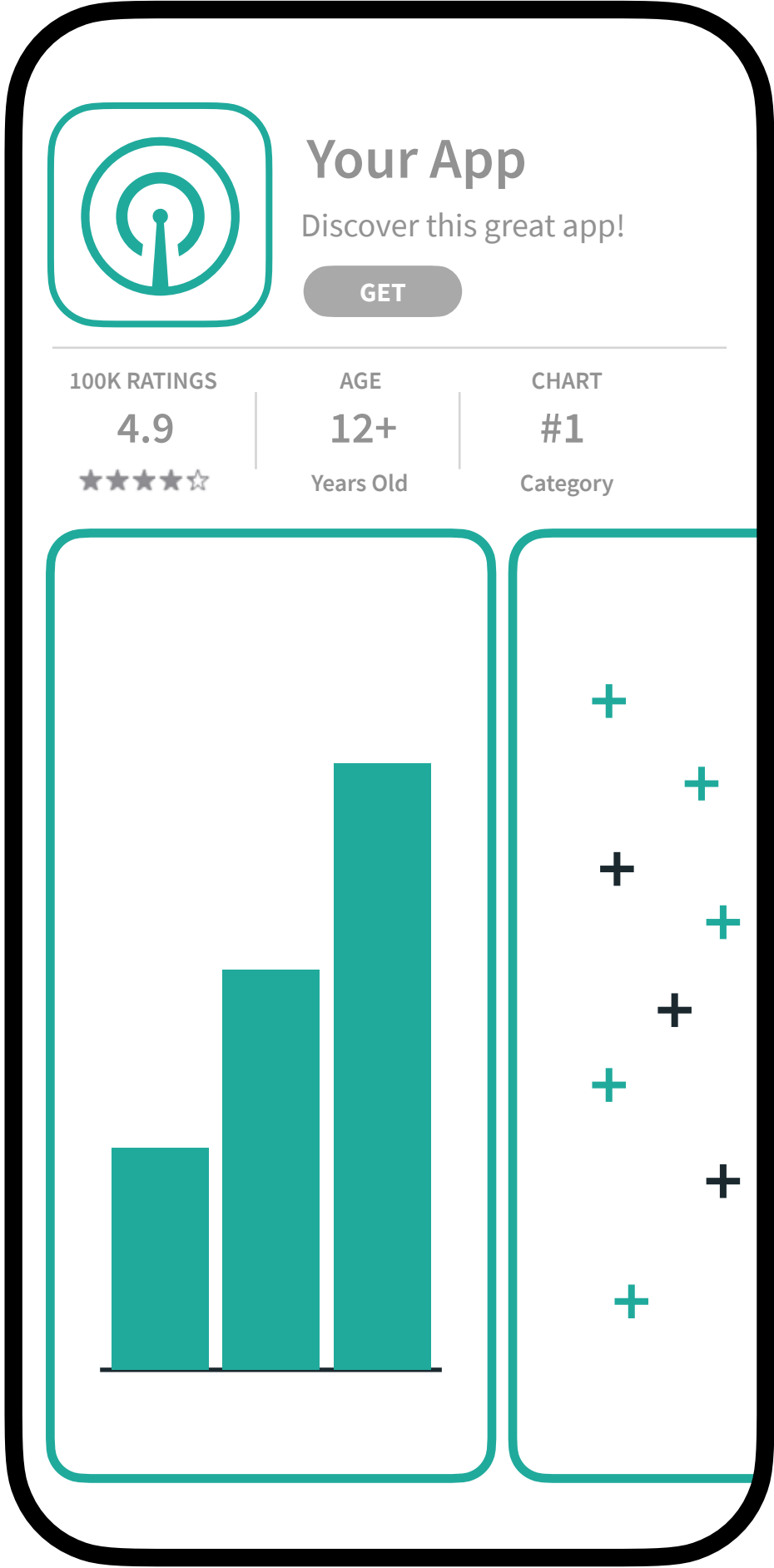
Each individual Custom Product Page can be targeted to different subsets of users through custom URLs, driving traffic to content that's most relevant to them. This can be adapted to unique marketing campaigns, ensuring consistency across assets and potentially resulting in better conversion rates across various audiences.

One example of how these new features can be harnessed is through influencer marketing campaigns, where a celebrity can be featured in an ad and then also on the specific Custom Product Page for users who clicked through.



# Product Page Optimization Empowers Experimentation

Test up to three store pages with different app icons, screenshots, and app previews.



Another new feature set from Apple is **Product Page Optimization**, which enables publishers to continually A/B test their main App Store assets to improve organic installs.

Publishers can concurrently test up to three different storefront pages to analyze which assets drive the best results. These assets can include screenshots, icons, and videos.

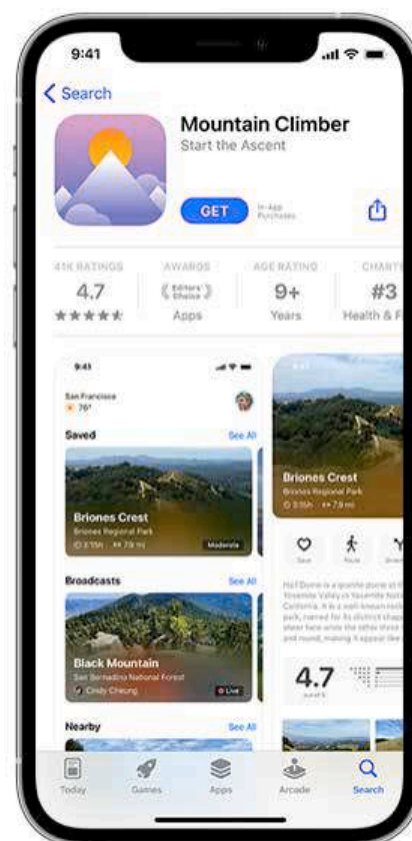
The product page variations can be tested for up to 90 days and some of the trackable metrics include impressions, conversion rate, and performance relative to the original product page. All of this data will be available in App Store Connect.

# iOS 15 Changes Unleash Significant Store Optimization Features

Before iOS 15

Organic Traffic

Paid Traffic



Single Product Page

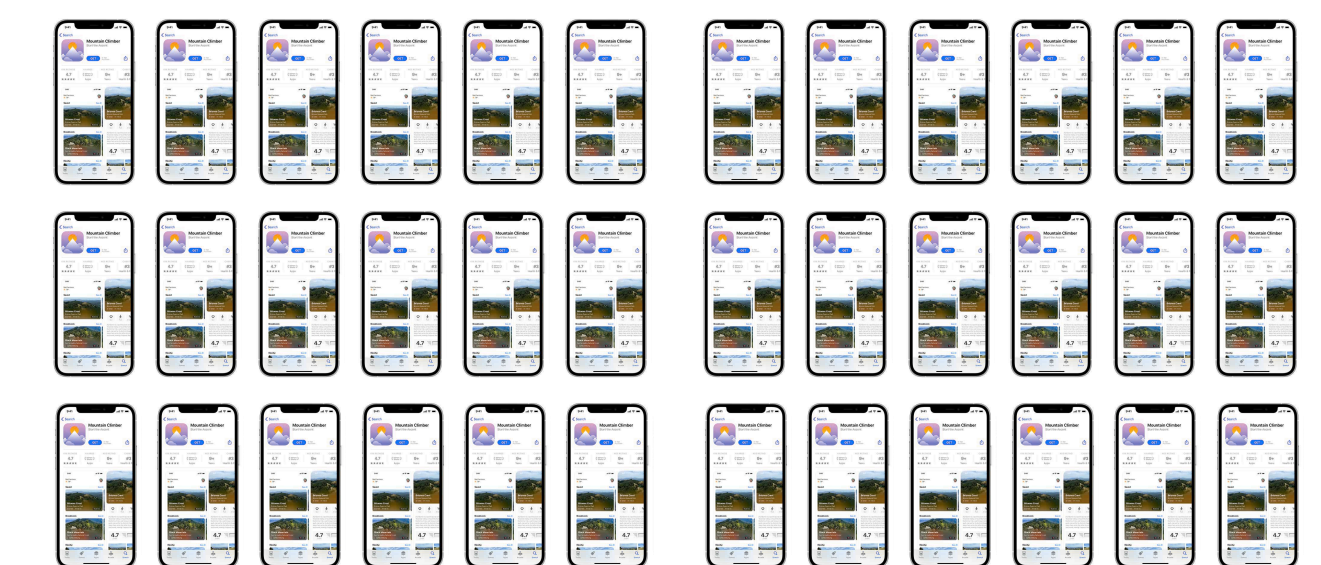
After iOS 15

Organic Traffic

Paid Traffic



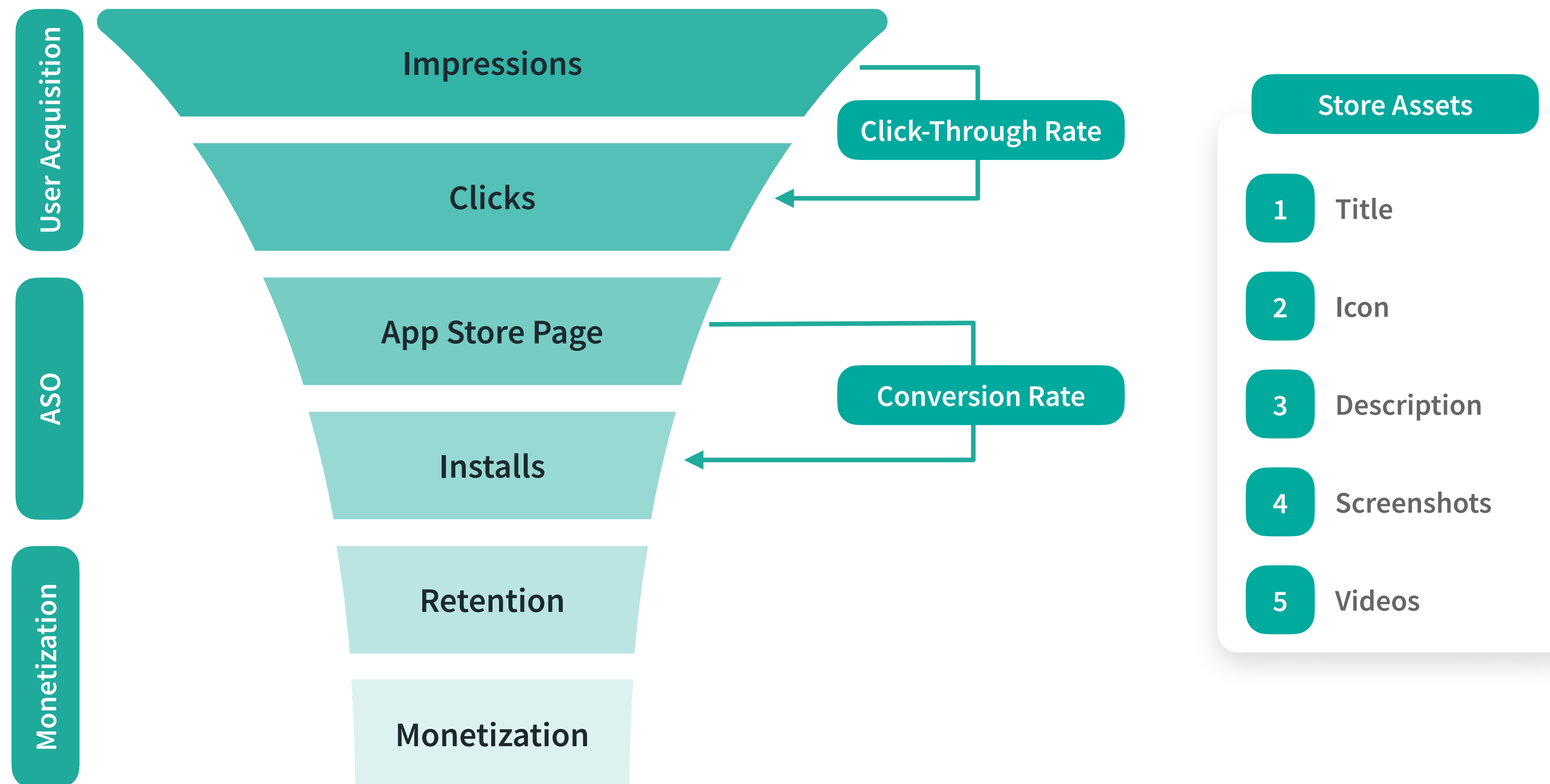
Default + 3 Variants  
for Experiments



Default  
+ 35 Custom Pages

# How User Acquisition Relates to Store Assets

*Mobile marketing funnel from impressions to monetization*



App Store assets play a crucial role in the mobile marketing funnel. **One of the key performance indicators marketers monitor is the click-through rate from ads**, which is defined as the number of clicks divided by the total number of ad impressions.

Another core marketing KPI is the **conversion rate**, defined as the number of installs divided by the number of users that visit the product page, which can derive from user acquisition campaigns as well as organic discovery.

At this stage, store assets such as icons, screenshots, and descriptions play a crucial role in converting these users into installs.



# Icon Strategy: Special Events

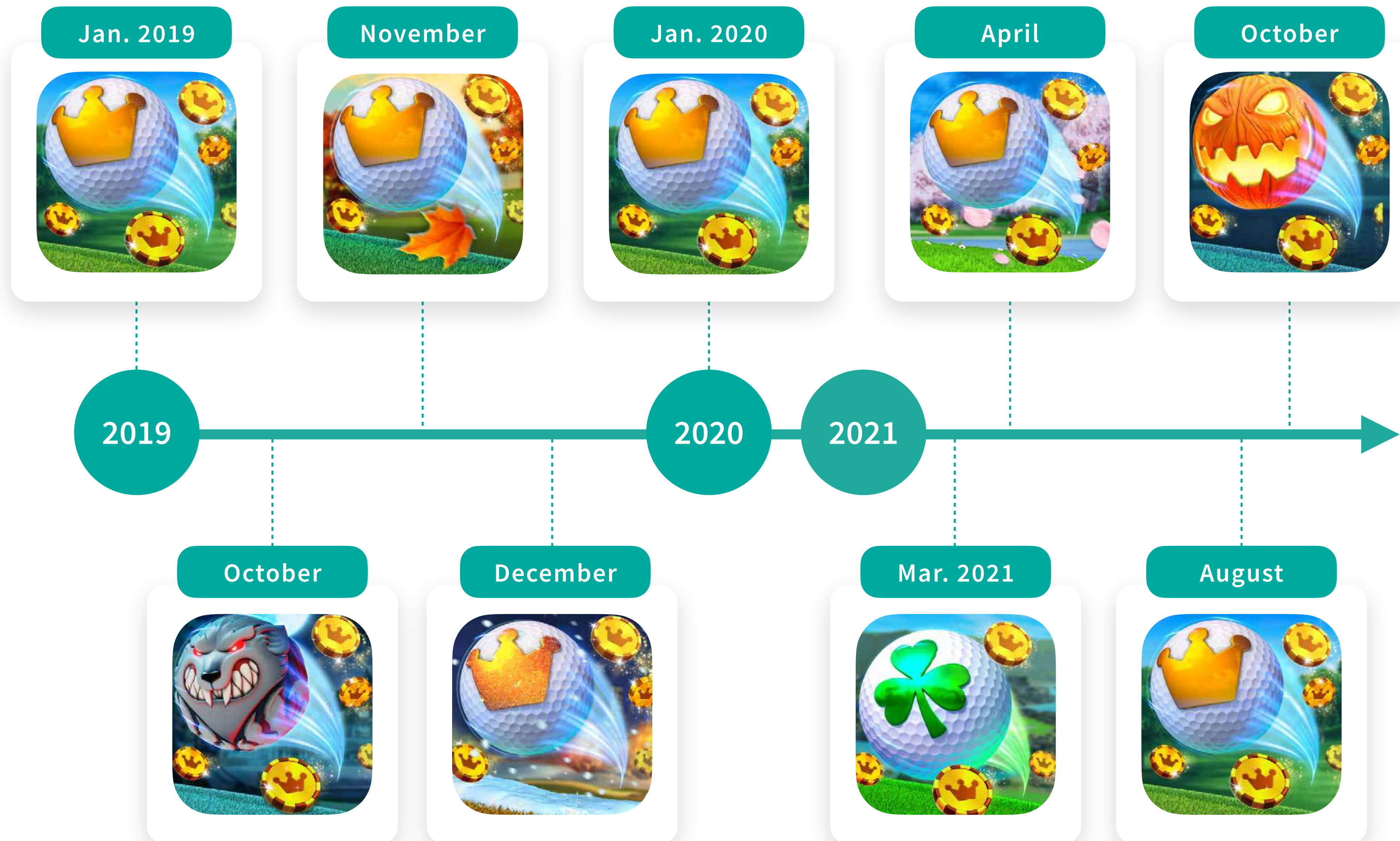
—  
Analysis of How Top Titles Adapt App Icons  
to Improve Conversion





# Seasonal App Icon Changes For Golf Clash

*Timeline of icon updates from January 2019 to October 2021*



Golf Clash by Playdemic ranked as the No. 1 Sports game in the U.S. on the App Store and Google Play between January and October 2021, generating more than \$100 million from player spending.

Playdemic regularly changes the app icon to match the season and important holidays, implementing 17 app icon updates since the title was launched in 2017.

The January 2019 app icon represents the standard image for Golf Clash, while app icon updates show design changes to fit in with the time of year, such as autumn leaves in November 2019, a three leaf clover in March 2021 for St. Patrick's Day, and a pumpkin to represent Halloween in October 2021.

While St. Patrick's Day and Halloween are global festivities, the new Custom Product Pages introduced in iOS 15 might open the door to adapt store creatives, such as screenshots, for more region-specific celebrations such as Mexico's Day of the Dead.



# Top Games Adapt App Icons for Anniversaries

*Timeline of icon updates from selected games*

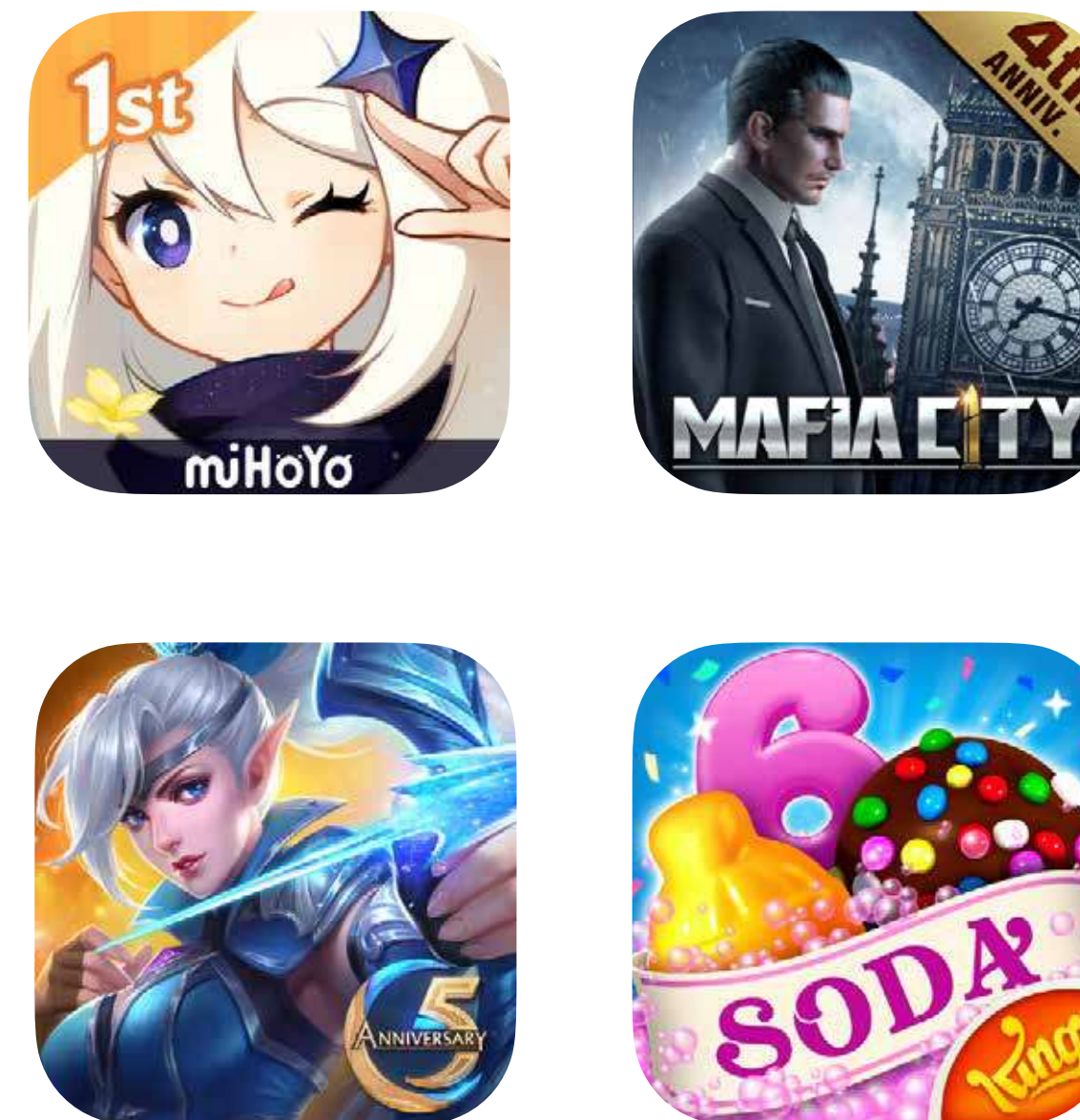
## Animal Crossing



## Yu-Gi-Oh! Duel Links



## Other Games



Forever franchises such as Animal Crossing: Pocket Camp and Yu-Gi-Oh: Duel Links celebrate their launch anniversaries every year with special events.

These are highlighted to players through app icon changes, which will appear both on the app stores and on their mobile devices if the title is already installed. This may encourage players to access the games to see what's new and to potentially receive celebratory rewards.

Mafia City only recently began implementing app icon changes for its anniversary in 2020 to celebrate its fourth year of launch. This strategy was replicated again for its fifth anniversary in November 2021.

Other top grossing titles such as Genshin Impact, Mobile Legends, and Candy Crush Soda Saga have also begun using app icon changes to coincide with their anniversaries.



# Icon Strategy: Brand Identity

—  
Analysis of How Top Publishers Use Their  
Logos to Increase Brand Awareness





# King Leverages Its Logo Across Portfolio to Attract Players

*App Icons across King’s mobile portfolio*

## Candy Crush Saga



## Pet Rescue Saga



## Other King Titles



King has become one of the most recognizable names in mobile, with its flagship title Candy Crush Saga generating more than \$7 billion since 2014, making it one of the world’s most successful mobile games ever.

King utilizes its logo in app icons across its portfolio to attract players with its strong and recognizable branding, as well as raise awareness amongst consumers of its various mobile titles.

Games such as Candy Crush Saga and Pet Rescue Saga also have their app icons updated to highlight international holidays and seasons.



# Garena Utilizes Its Logo on First- and Third-Party Titles

*App Icons across Garena's mobile portfolio*



Like King, Garena utilizes its logo in the app icon for its flagship mobile title Free Fire, while also regularly changing the main image to mark international holidays, changing seasons, game slang (Booyah!), special in-game events, anniversaries, and updates.

Activision's Call of Duty: Mobile, a competitor to Free Fire, is published by Garena in Asian markets such as Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Singapore. **Despite being in competition and only acting as the regional publisher, Garena still integrates its logo onto Call of Duty: Mobile's app icon for these markets.**

Garena also publishes the world's biggest mobile title, Honor of Kings, in select Asian territories. **As with Call of Duty: Mobile, it integrates its logo on the app icon, while also using the company name as part of the game's title, e.g., Garena: Arena of Valor.**



# Icon Strategy: Live Operations

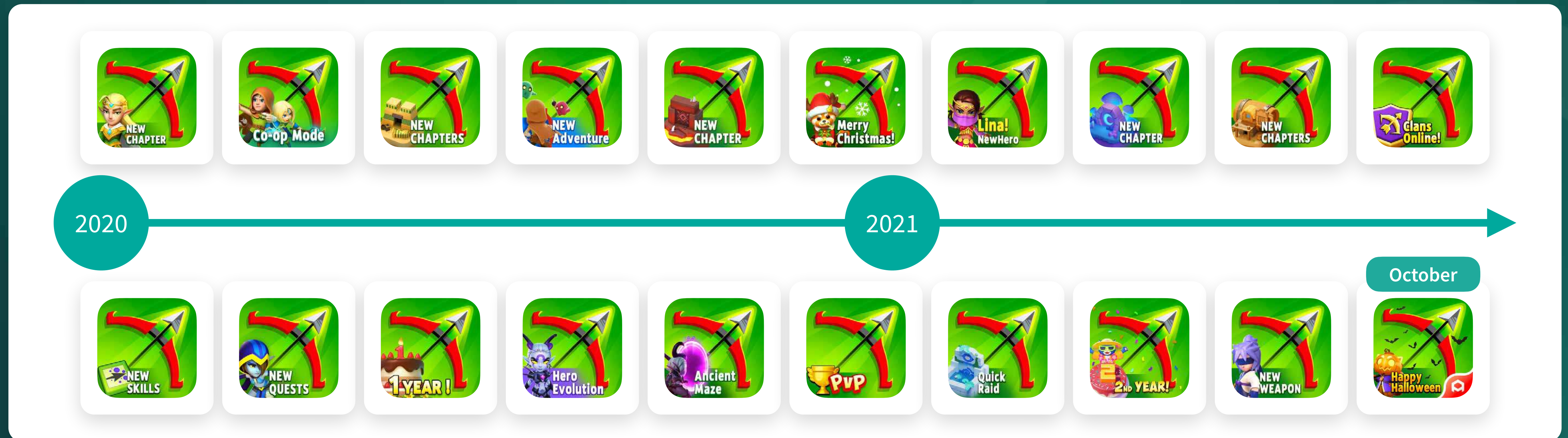
—  
Analysis of Archero's Innovative App Icon  
Strategy for Updates and Events





# Archer0's Innovative Strategy Sees Regular App Icon Updates

*App Icons in Archer0 and Habby's mobile portfolio*



Habby regularly deploys new app icons for Archer0 to showcase new updates, events, and game features, typically changing the image at a monthly cadence.

Archer0 publisher Habby began featuring its logo on the title's app icon in its October 2021 update. The company has committed to the same strategy across its portfolio of published titles, which includes Spin Rhythm and Pun Ball.

Habby



Archer0



Pun Ball



Spin Rhythm



# Marketing and App Store Alignment

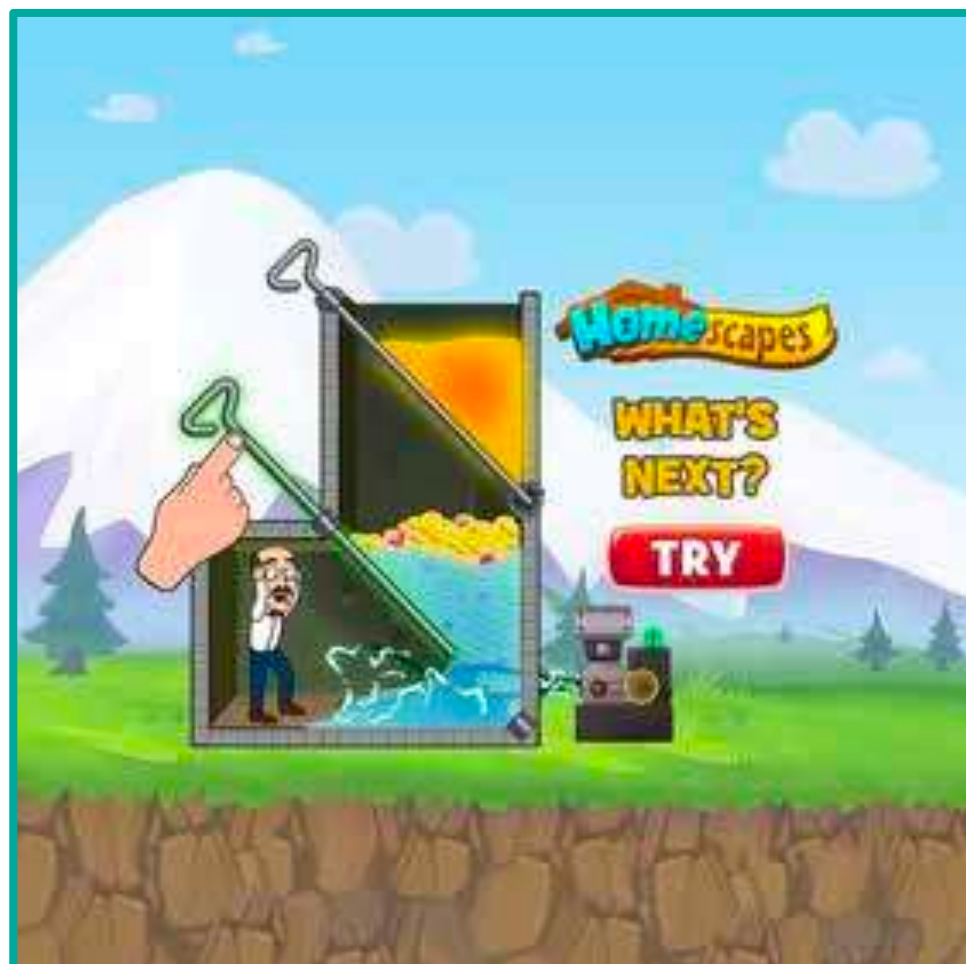
—  
Analysis of How Top Publishers Adapt Store Assets to Match Marketing Efforts





# Pull the Pin Ads Prove Highly Effective for User Acquisition

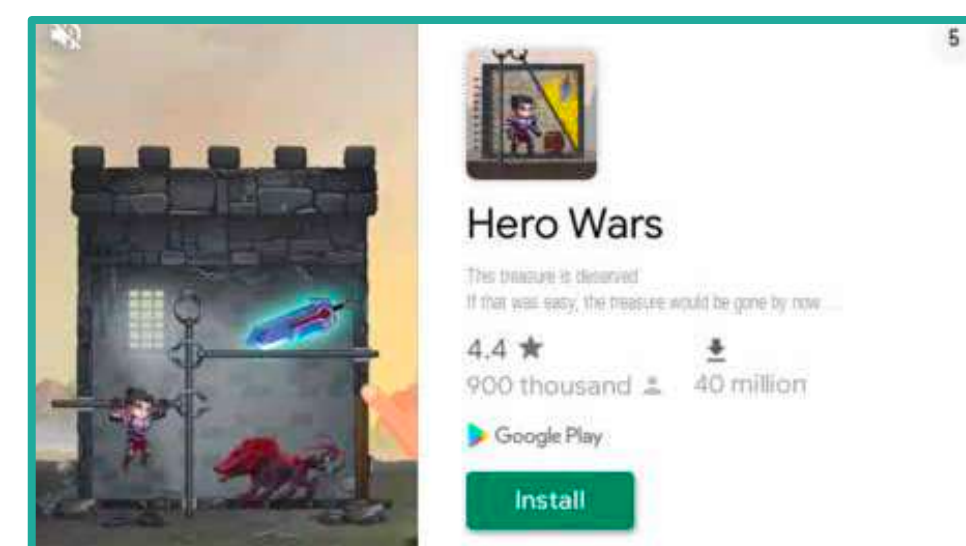
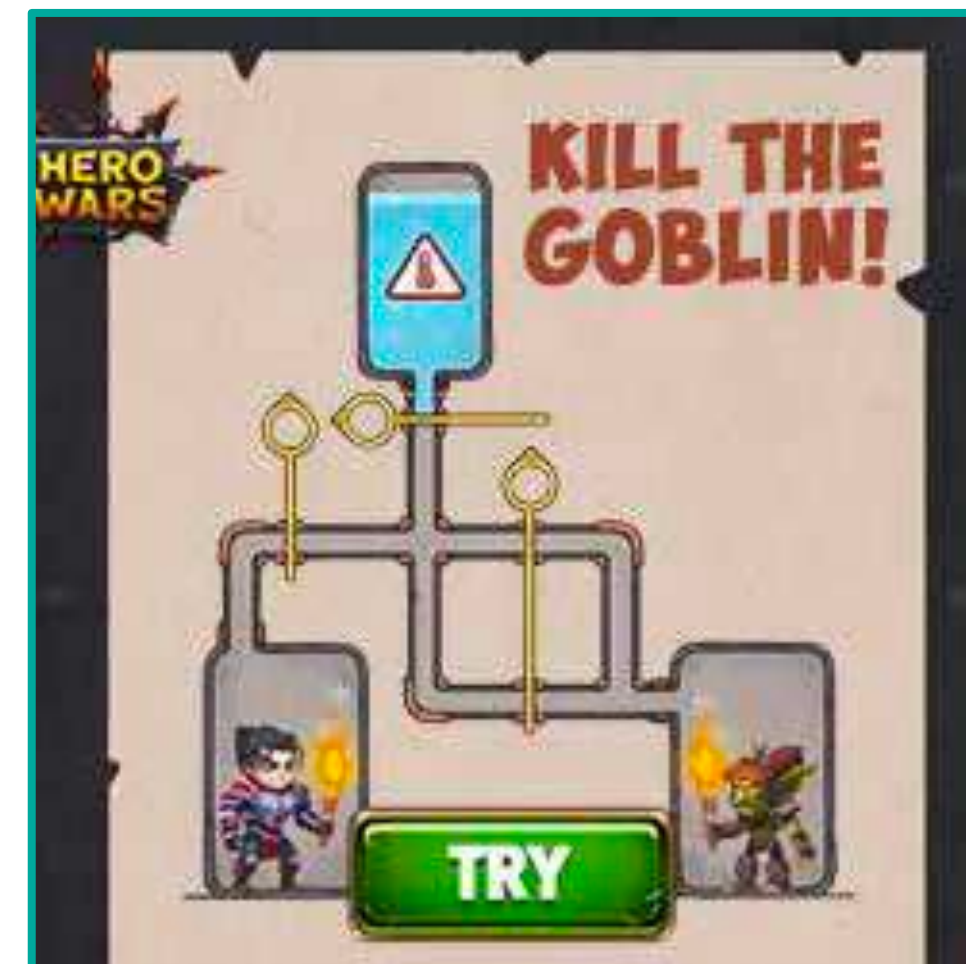
## 1 Homescapes



## 2 Fishdom



## 3 Hero Wars



During the second half of 2020, publishers such as Playrix and Nexters began finding success with Pull the Pin ads, which were unrelated to the core gameplay of the titles being advertised.

These campaigns were highly effective for attracting players and reducing user acquisition costs by improving CTR and therefore increasing return on ad spend.

Classic Match 3 titles are some of the most lucrative titles in the Puzzle genre, with a revenue per download in the U.S. above \$15. Because of this, the competition to acquire users can elevate CPIs for titles in this genre. Pull the Pin ads have proven effective as the puzzle gameplay creates an audience overlap with the genre, therefore reducing UA costs.

The main challenge of this strategy is to retain those users once they realize the core gameplay experience is different from the marketing. This is a greater challenge for non-puzzle games, such as Idle RPG Hero Wars.



# Marketing Campaigns Influence Store Assets

While game design typically informs marketing, the opposite was true in the case of Pull the Pin ads. Their success led to publishers including Playrix updating store assets, such as screenshots, to match these UA campaigns and notify players that such features are now available in these games.

This strategy improves the performance of the marketing campaigns by reducing friction between the App Store landing and effective install, thereby increasing conversion rates.

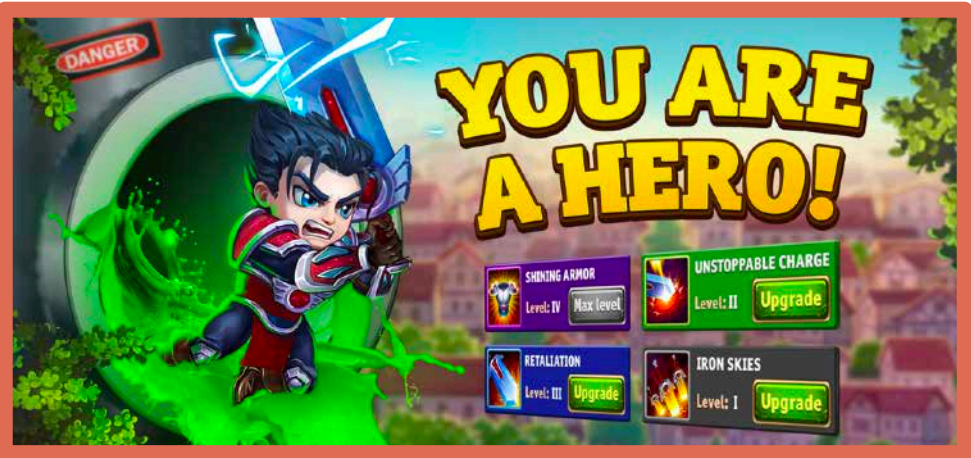
## 1 Homescapes



## 2 Fishdom



## 3 Hero Wars



Old Screenshot

New Screenshot



# App Icon Updates Align with Marketing Strategy

## 1 Homescapes



## 2 Fishdom



## 3 Hero Wars



Pull the Pin marketing campaigns not only impacted store assets such as screenshots, but publishers that utilized these ads also updated their app icons to match.

This strategy can help improve the conversion rate from the App Store to the install, as it shows players something similar to what initially caught their attention while exposed to the ad.

Pull the Pin ads are an example of how experimenting with marketing campaigns can potentially lead to huge success and even to game design changes within some of the most successful games in the world.



# App Icon Strategies Depend on Store and Audience

*App Icon update timeline for Township and Hero Wars on the App Store and Google Play*



App icons for the same game aren't always identical across the App Store and Google Play. For example, the App Store icon for Township has remained the same since April 2020, while the Google Play store page has seen four icon changes during that period.

Companies such as Playrix and Nexters experiment more on Google Play, perhaps as a result of existing A/B testing features and differing audiences. With iOS 15, there could be more such experimentation on the App Store thanks to Product Page Optimization.



# Conclusion



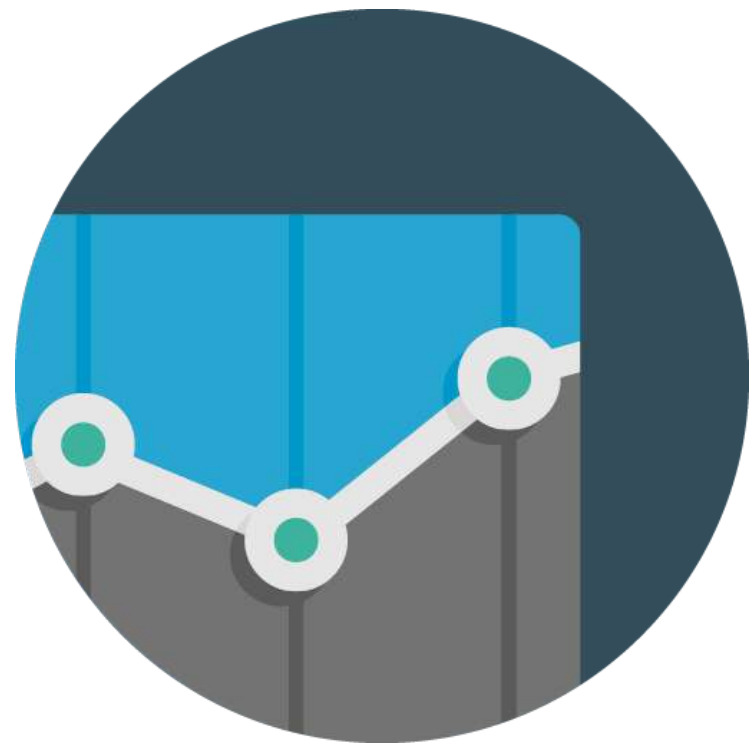
## Conclusion

- iOS 15's introduction of Custom Product Pages and Product Page Optimization aims to arm developers with the necessary tools to improve their App Store pages. **These new features are expected to give way to novel marketing strategies that can be tailored for specific target audiences and campaigns.**
- Top grossing games such as Golf Clash frequently update their app icons to match the seasons and international festivities such as Halloween and St. Patrick's Day.
- Forever franchises such as Animal Crossing: Pocket Camp and Yu-Gi-Oh: Duel Links celebrate their launch anniversaries every year with special events that are highlighted to players through app icon updates. This may encourage players to access the games to see what is new and to potentially receive celebratory rewards.
- Some publishers utilize their logos in app icons across their portfolios to attract players with strong and recognizable branding, as well as raise awareness among consumers of their various mobile titles.
- Habby regularly deploys new app icons for its hit title Archero to showcase new updates, events, and gameplay features, typically changing these images at a monthly cadence.
- Companies such as Playrix and Nexters experiment more with app icon changes on Google Play, perhaps as a result of A/B testing features that have been available on the marketplace since 2015. **With iOS 15, there could be more experimentation on the App Store thanks to Product Page Optimization.**





# Sensor Tower Solutions



## Store Intelligence

Make strategic decisions with the industry's most accurate estimates.



## App Intelligence

Drive organic growth with the leading App Store Optimization platform.



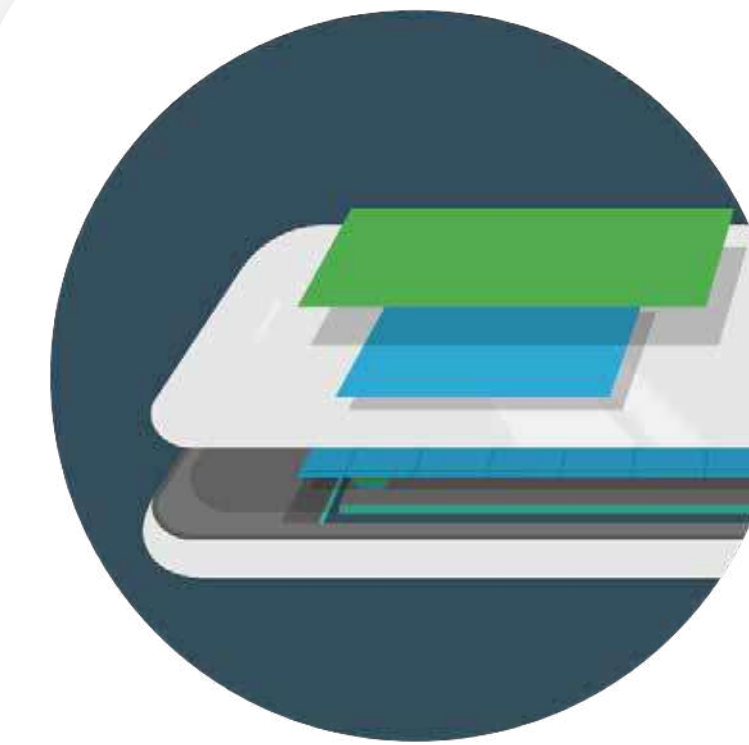
## Ad Intelligence

Develop winning User acquisition campaigns with crucial mobile advertising insights.



## Usage Intelligence

Benchmark app usage, engagement, and demographics.



## App Teardown

Evaluate which SDKs apps are using and measure SDK adoption across market segments.



## Consumer Intelligence

Access unfiltered mobile user engagement for financial analysis.



# Sensor Tower

## Terms of Use

This report and all original content contained within are wholly owned by Sensor Tower, Inc. © 2021.

Modification, republication, distribution, or other unauthorized usage violate this copyright, unless express permission has been granted.

App icons, images, and other branding assets are property of their respective publishers and are used expressly for the purpose of editorial commentary.

## LOOKING FOR MORE INSIGHTS?

Download our latest **Store Intelligence Data Digest** report on the mobile market at **[sensortower.com/reports](https://sensortower.com/reports)**



# About Us

Sensor Tower is the leading solution for mobile marketers, app developers, and industry analysts who demand competitive insights on the mobile economy. Sensor Tower's product suite includes: Top Charts, App Intelligence, Store Intelligence, Ad Intelligence, Usage Intelligence, and Consumer Intelligence.

## Office Locations:

 San Francisco, London, Shanghai, Seoul

## Contact Info:

 [sensortower.com](https://sensortower.com)

 [sales@sensortower.com](mailto:sales@sensortower.com)

 @sensortower





