



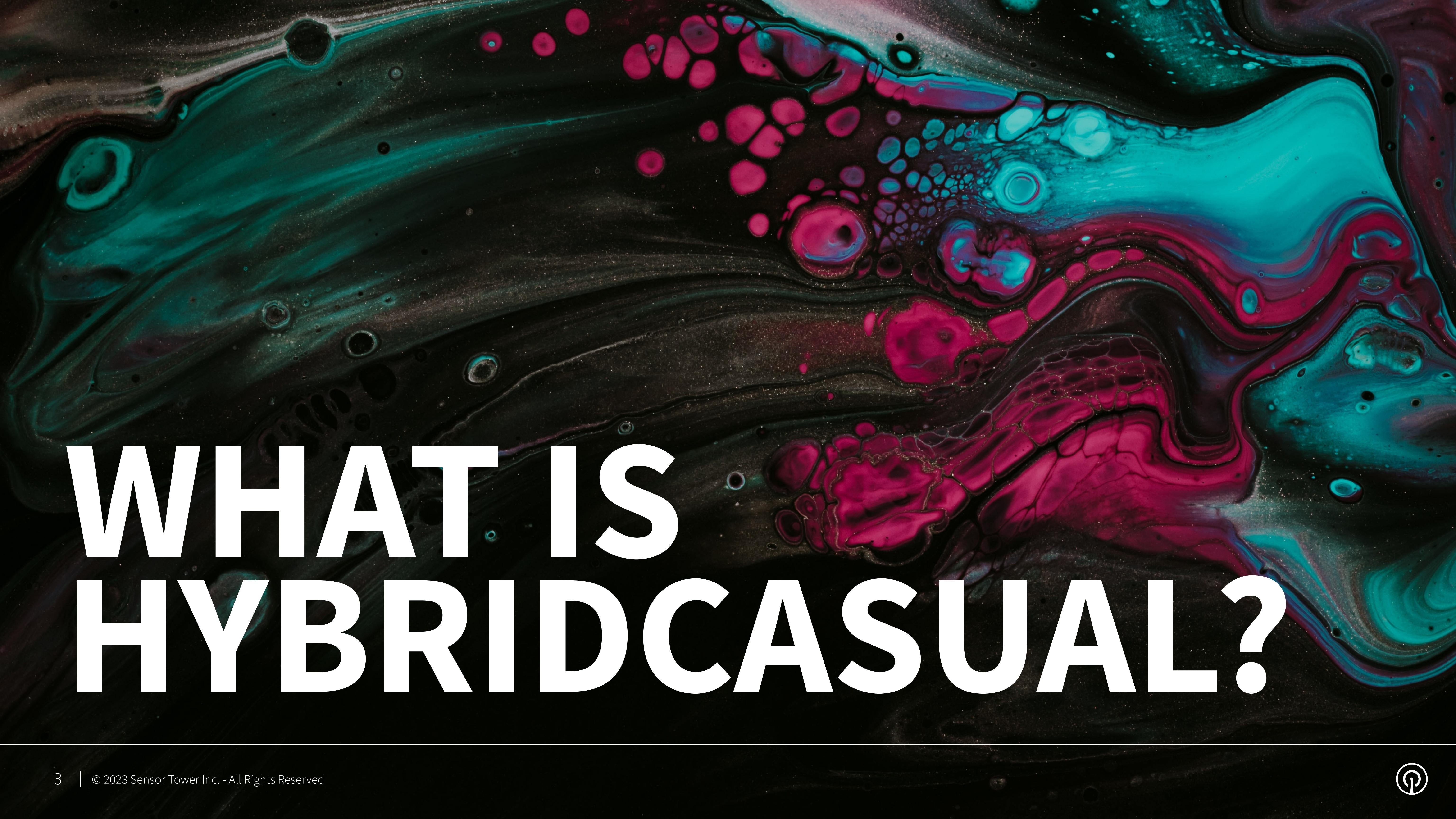
HYBRID CASUAL GAMES PLAYBOOK

By Sensor Tower and Homa



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WHAT IS HYBRID CASUAL?

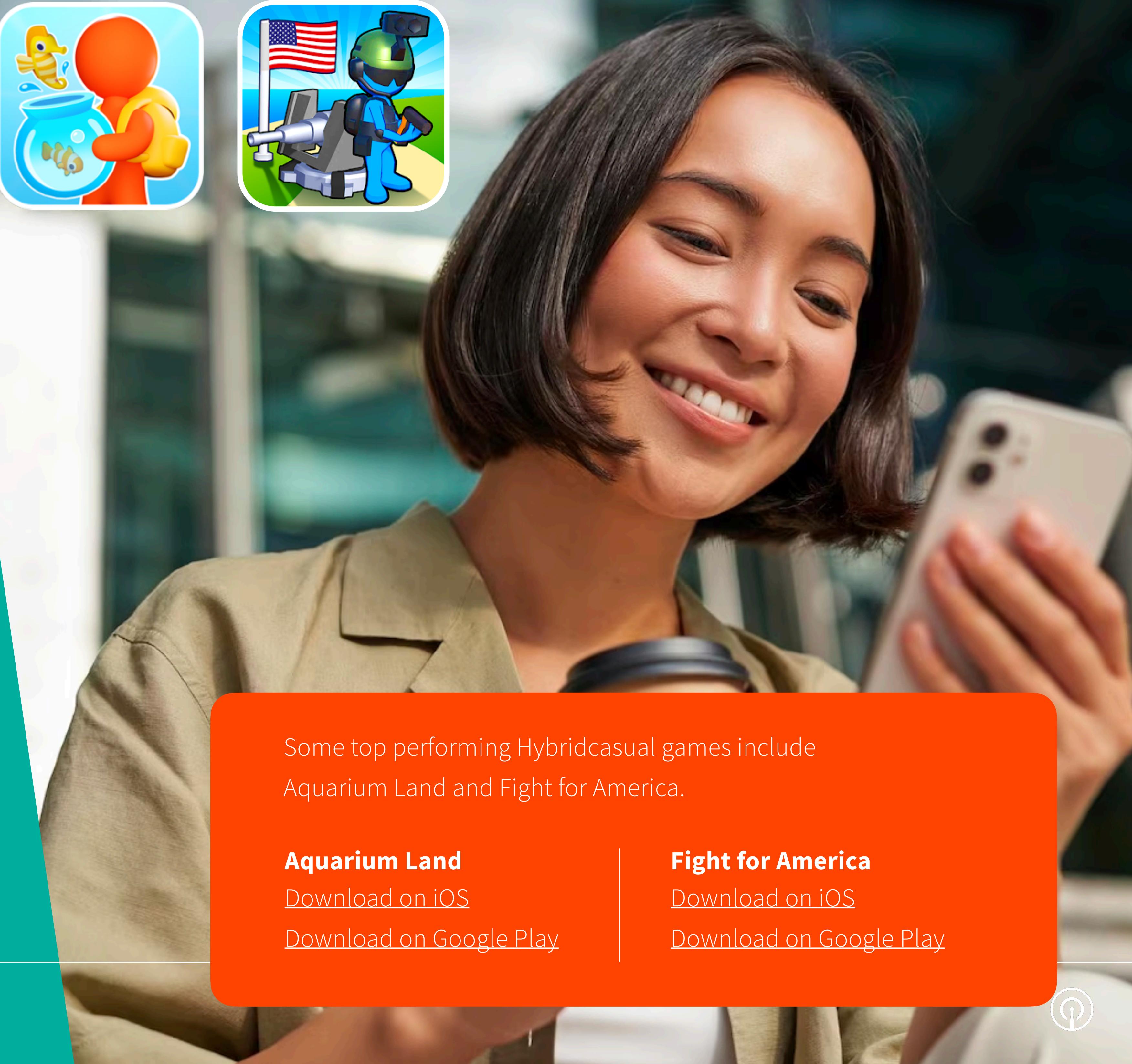


Introduction

Games Designed with Mobile in Mind

Over the last few years, a new style of mobile games has emerged, Hybridcasual. Hybridcasual games maintain the simplicity of Hypercasual games while including more sophisticated progression mechanics. This genre requires audiences to make time to play to improve long term user engagement.

Throughout this playbook, we will provide an overview of the Hybridcasual landscape, highlight how Hybridcasual games have influenced subgenres, showcase the success of Hybridcasual titles, and share best practices for developing Hybridcasual games.



Some top performing Hybridcasual games include Aquarium Land and Fight for America.

Aquarium Land

[Download on iOS](#)

[Download on Google Play](#)

Fight for America

[Download on iOS](#)

[Download on Google Play](#)



Why are developers shifting to Hybridcasual Games?

Engage Audience

Hybridcasual players are highly engaged and dedicated to making time to play your game. Typically this user base is comprised of teens that have moved on from Hypercasual games. These users are typically hooked by progression models introduced over Hypercasual mechanics.

Fewer Advertisements

Hybridcasual games earn 50% of their total monthly revenue through advertisements. However, compared to Hypercasual games, which make the majority of their revenue through ads (and therefore showcase a larger volume of ads to their users), Hybridcasual games display 4-5 ads, often optional, per session in exchange for extra rewards.

Reasonable Production Cost

Mid to Low production costs due to a focus on mechanics, experience, and progression. This makes the barrier for entry reasonable, with a lot of upside based on how engaged the players are.





HYBRID CASUAL OVERVIEW



Downloads and Trends

Hybridcasual games have continued to grow in popularity, with a total of 5B downloads in 2022. This is a 3% increase from 2021, when the genre started to boom.

Compared to Hypercasual games, which saw a 15% decrease in downloads from 2021 to 2022, Hybridcasual games continue to attract new, while retaining existing users. Hybrid Casual games keep players engaged with a more narrative style of gaming, while players are becoming less interested in the Hypercasual game.

As the Hybridcasual genre continues to grow in popularity, there's an increased opportunity for developers to create top performing games that blend sophisticated and simplistic elements that keep players coming back for more.

Below are the top downloaded Hybridcasual games for 2022:

Stumble Guys

Race Master 3D

Traffic Rider

Magic Tiles 3

Soccer Super Star

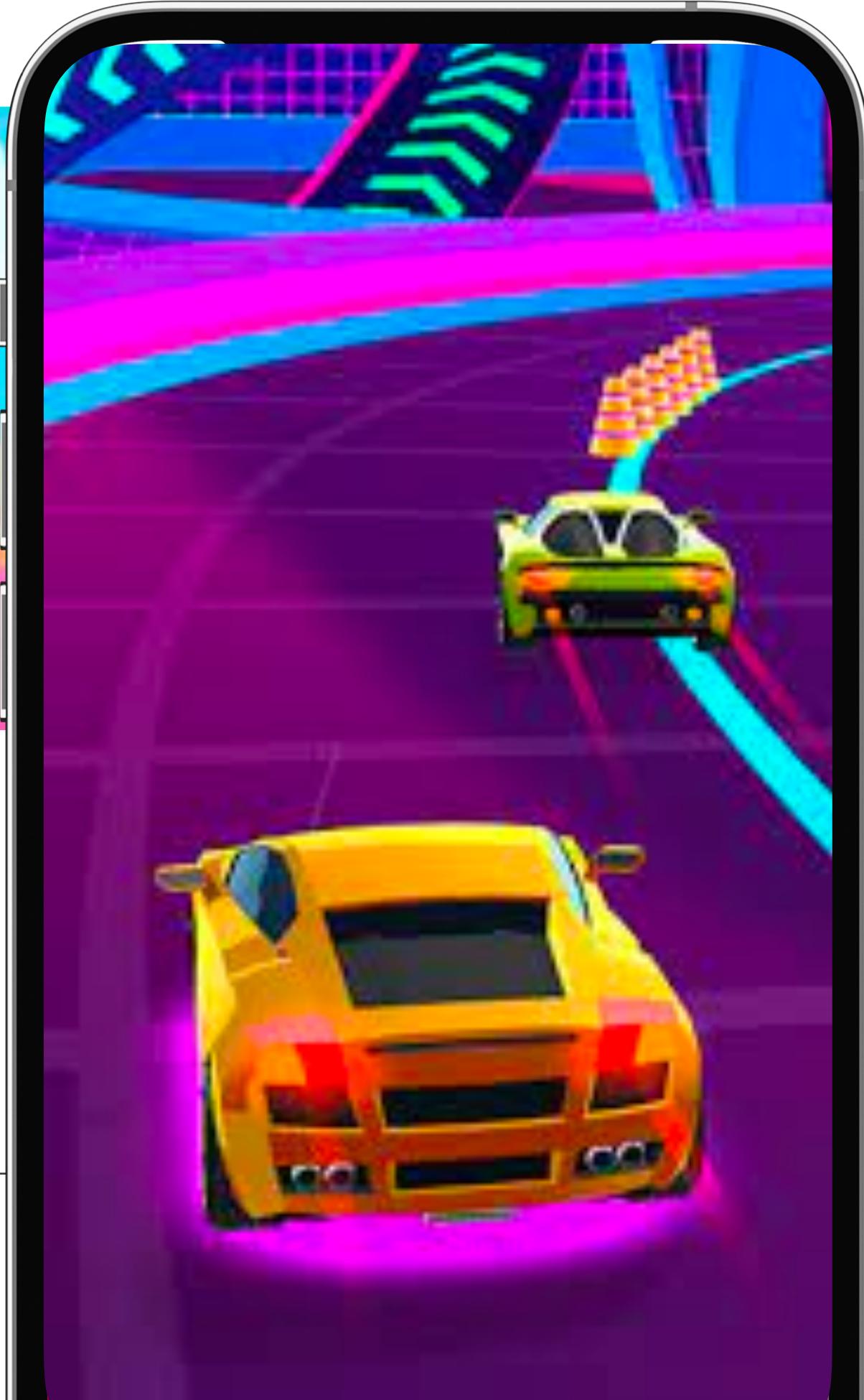
Hill Climb Racing

Temple Run

Tiles Hop

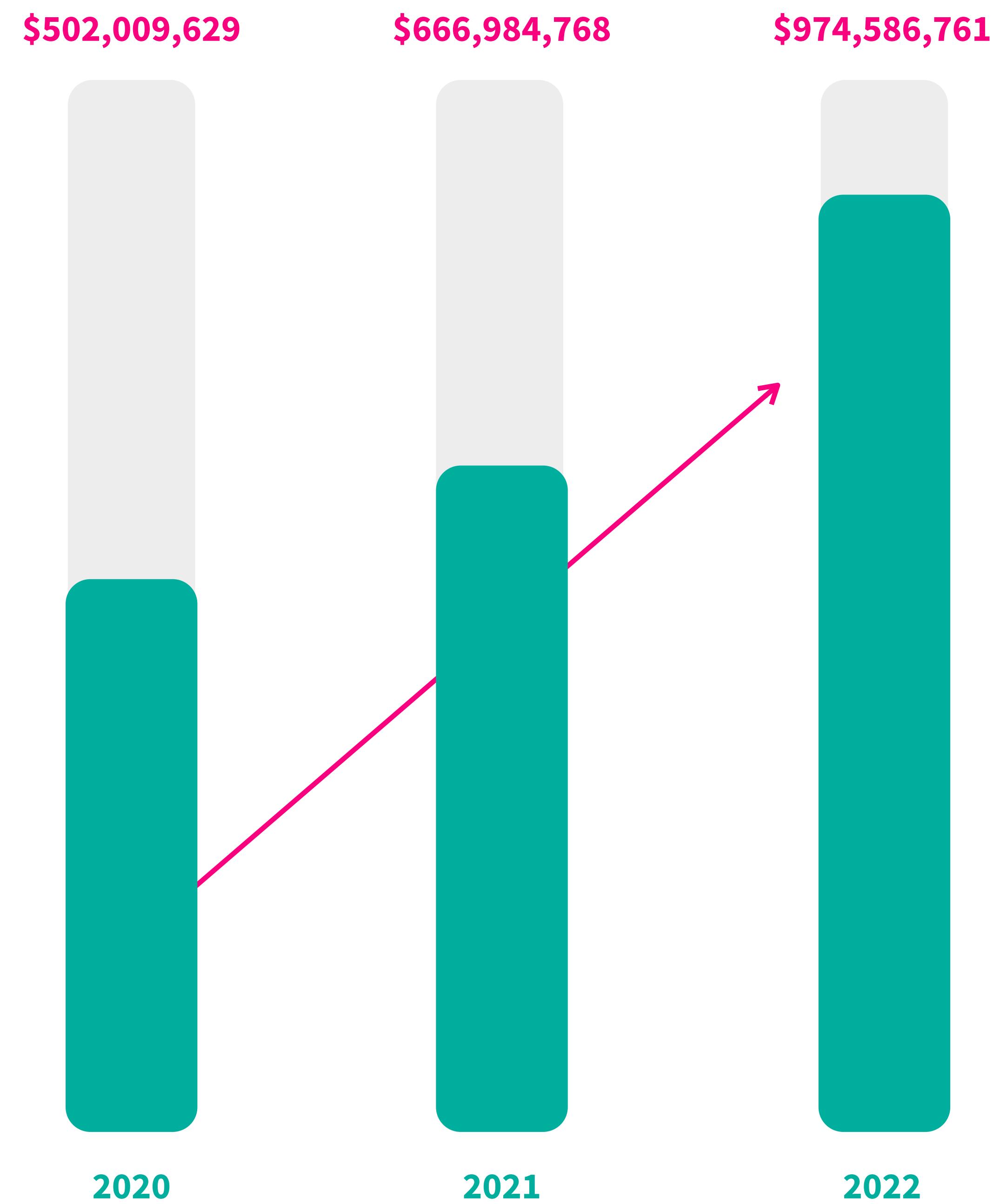
1945 Air Force

Subway Princess Runner



Hybridcasual Revenue Trends

Over the last two years, revenue for Hybridcasual games has almost doubled, as developers have mastered the balance between monetization and player experience. Ads in Hybridcasual games are often optional and are displayed in exchange for user awards. This advertising strategy allows the games to generate 50% of their revenue, without deterring users from playing.



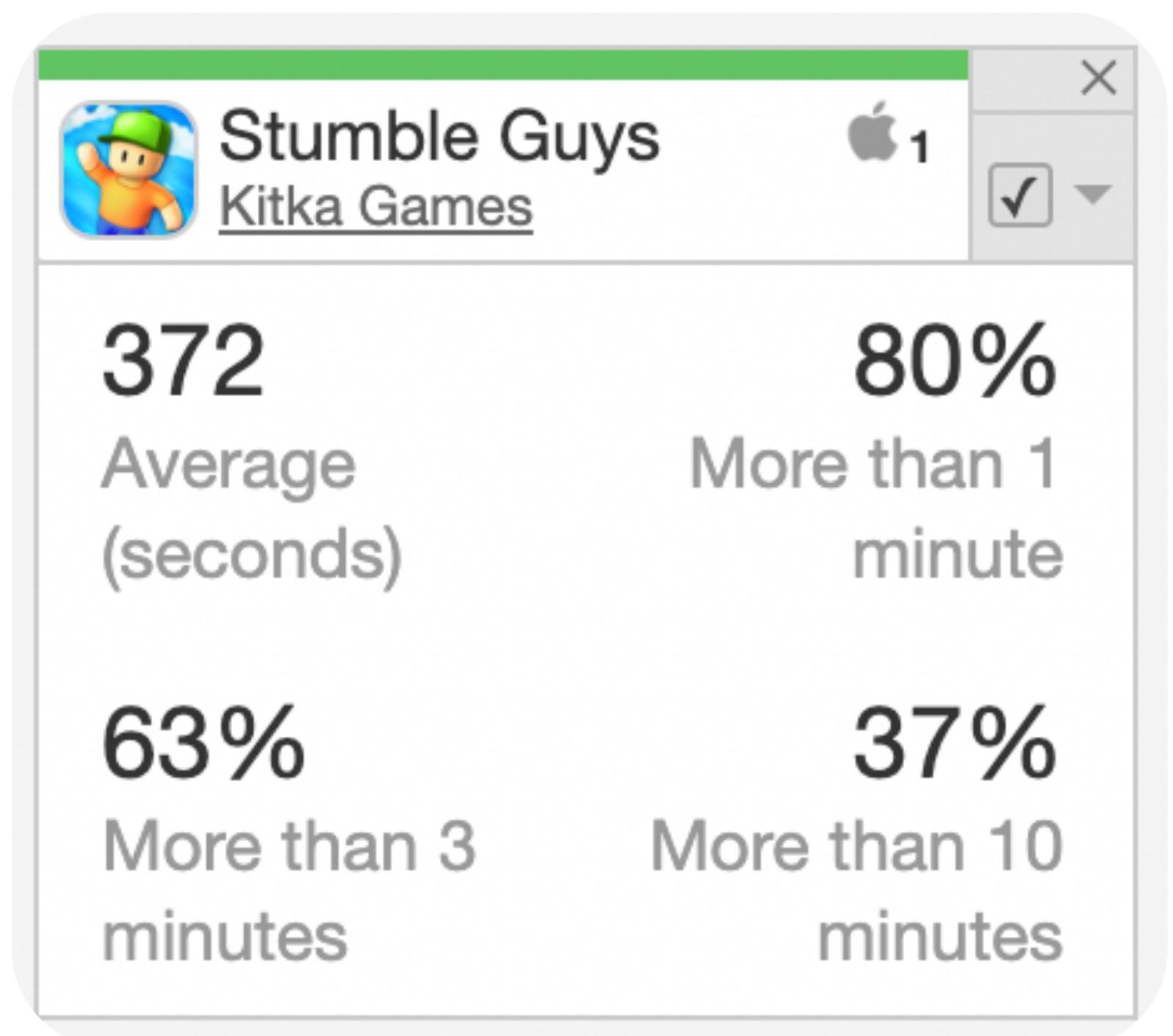
Session Length Comparison

Hybridcasual games are designed to keep players engaged for a longer period of time.

We compared the average session length for the top Hybridcasual and top Hypercasual game of 2022 in terms of total downloads.

We found that the top Hybridcasual game had an average session duration of 372 seconds, which is 160 seconds longer than the average session duration for the top Hypercasual game.

63% of users spent more than 3 minutes on the top Hybridcasual game, and 37% of users spent more than 10 minutes on the top Hybridcasual game, compared to 47% and 23% of users respectively for Hypercasual games.



Hybridcasual Top Game
(Downloads) of 2022



Hybridcasual Top Game
(Downloads) of 2022



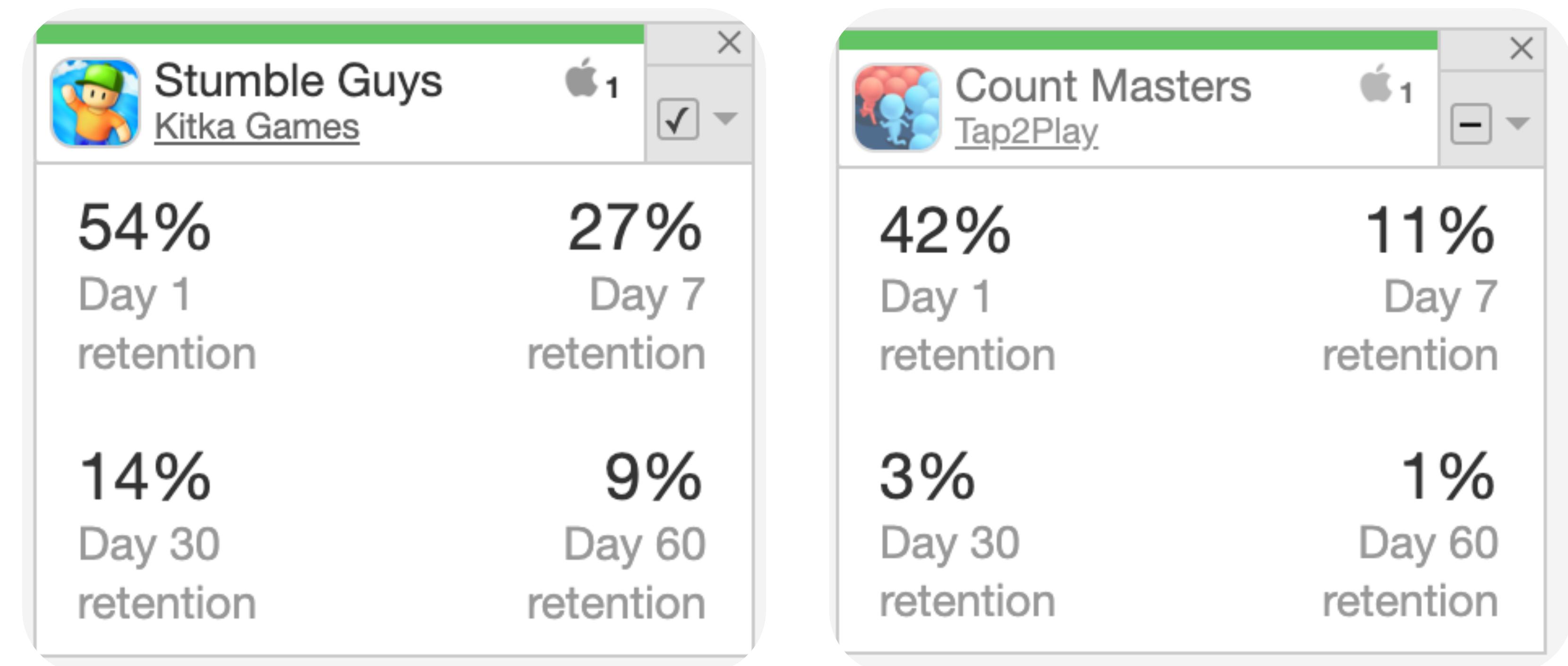
Retention Rate Comparison

As Hybridcasual games better engage players for longer session durations, these games are also better able to retain users.

We compared the retention rates for the top Hybridcasual and top Hybridcasual game of 2022 in terms of total downloads.

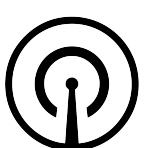
We found that the top Hybridcasual game had 54% Day 1 retention, compared to 42% for the top Hypercasual game.

On a broader time horizon, we found that the top Hybridcasual game had retained 9% of users after 60 days, compared to only 1% of users retained after 60 days for Hybridcasual games.



Hybridcasual Top Game
(Downloads) of 2022

Hybridcasual Top Game
(Downloads) of 2022





HYBRID CASUAL INFLUENCE ON SUBGENRES



Exploring the World of Hybridcasual Gaming: Blurring the Lines Between Subgenres (1/2)

Hybridcasual games have transformed the mobile gaming industry by fusing Hypercasual gameplay with engaging casual elements. Subgenre categorization is essential for developers to narrow their product vision and identify references while enabling players to become more aware of subgenre trends. Developers can leverage Hybridcasual games to experiment with combining genres and creating fresh experiences.

For example, *Fight For America* blends shoot 'em up and tower defense mechanisms to offer a more immersive gaming experience. By pushing the limits of conventional subgenres, game makers can develop unique and stand-out titles that offer players something novel and thrilling.



The Homa product strategy team has identified and designed several subgenres of Hybridcasual games.

Below is a brief description and successful title for each. (1/2)

Arcade Idle games combine adventure-like arcade attributes with power progression and metagame systems from the Idle genre. Successful examples of Arcade Idle games include FarmLand and Aquarium Land.

In **battle** games players battle with other players or NPCs and try to come out on top. One good example of the battle subgenre game is Merge Master.

Tower Defense games involve building towers to defend against waves of enemies. Players must strategically place their towers and upgrade them to withstand increasingly challenging waves. Example of a Hybridcasual game incorporating elements of this subgenre is City Defense!.

.io games are multiplayer games where players must survive in a shrinking play area. They must gather resources, weapons, and equipment to defeat other players and become the last ones. Examples of successful games include Pocket Champs.

Idle/tycoon games are simulation games with similar mechanics and gameplay elements, requiring strategic decisions around resource management, marketing, and product development. They are designed for extended play and involve building resources, progressing through the game, and unlocking new content. Tycoon games involve managing resources like money, personnel, and equipment to build a successful business empire. Some idle games, such as Idle Lumber Empire, can be hybrid games that incorporate tycoon elements. Other examples of games include Idle World & Frozen City.

Interactive Story games allow players to shape the story by making choices that impact the outcome. Players engage in dialogues and make decisions that affect the game's story and ending. One example of the subgenre is MeChat - Love secrets.



The Homa product strategy team has identified and designed several subgenres of Hybridcasual games.

Below is a brief description and successful title for each. (2/2)

Puzzle games require players to solve challenging puzzles to progress through the game. Players must use logic and critical thinking to solve increasingly complex puzzles. One successful game example is Bubble Buster 2048.

Racing games are fast-paced games that require quick reflexes and decision-making. Players race against the clock or other players to reach the finish line. Example of a Hybridcasual game incorporating racing elements is Race Master 3D.

Shoot'em up games involve players controlling a character or vehicle that fires weapons to defeat enemies. Players must dodge enemy fire and collect power-ups to progress through the game. Hybridcasual games incorporating elements of the subgenre include Zombie Defense and Fight For America.

Simulation games allow players to simulate real-life situations and scenarios. Players must manage resources, build structures, and make decisions to progress through the game. Examples include Decor Life.

Sniper / FPS games involve players shooting at enemies from first-person or third-person perspectives. Players must use weapons and tactics to eliminate enemies and complete missions. One good example is Johnny Trigger Sniper.





Blending Genres and Reinventing Subgenres

(1/4)

As Hybridcasual games evolve, game makers find innovative ways to reinvent subgenres and create new gameplay experiences.

One example of the emerging Hybridcasual subgenre is Arcade Idle. While initially considered a separate genre, it eventually became the first pillar of the Hybridcasual category due to its successful blending of features from the arcade and idle games.

For instance, Aquarium Land mixes arcade-style levels with idle activities like upgrading a base. In addition, Homa's team introduced an automated worker feature as part of the fish collecting mechanics, resulting in increased retention, 25% of revenue from in-app purchases, and an overall increase in total lifetime value (LTV) by 17%.



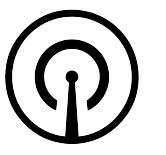


Blending Genres and Reinventing Subgenres

(2/4)

The success of Aquarium Land and other similar games has spurred developers to experiment with combining different genres, such as Tower Defense and Shoot 'em up, resulting in new experiences for players.

Tower Defense games have been a popular subgenre, but there is always room for innovation and improvement. Additional gameplays need to be introduced to enhance the player experience and monetize the core gameplay mode. For instance, Homa incorporated the drawing mechanism and level standardization in City Defense!. In the title, players draw defensive structures to protect against waves of enemies. This blend of drawing and tower defense gameplay elements gives users a new level of creativity and control and tests their strategic abilities.





Blending Genres and Reinventing Subgenres (3/4)

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Blending Genres and Reinventing Subgenres

(4/4)

Hybridcasual games have also taken the classic shoot 'em up formula and added new elements to make them even more engaging. For example, *Zombie Defense* incorporates RPG elements, allowing players to upgrade weapons and defenses and collect and manage resources to defeat waves of zombies. The Homa team tested in-app purchases, resulting in a 35% increase in IAP revenue and clustered audience to adapt to the level of difficulty and proposed economy, which brought more whales, helping scale the game from a user experience perspective.

In conclusion, Hybridcasual games represent a significant shift in the mobile gaming industry, offering developers exciting opportunities to create games that appeal to a broader audience and experiment with blending genres to create new experiences. By continuing to innovate, test, and collaborate, the Hybridcasual game genre will continue to evolve and thrive in the years to come.



MICROVIEW: SUCCESS OF HYBRID CASUAL TITLES



How to Turn Your Hypercasual Game into a Revenue-Generating Machine

It's time to take the theory to practice. In this case study, we'll dive into the success story behind Yorf & Homa's Zombie Defense and explore the strategies and techniques used to transform a Hypercasual game into a revenue-generating machine.



Context and Challenges

At the outset, both teams had a clear vision for Zombie Defense - a game inspired by "Call of Duty: World at War - Zombies." However, they recognized that a traditional shooter game would have limited marketability and need help with cost-per-install (CPI). As a result, the team focused on in-app purchases (IAP) and a hybrid strategy to overcome these challenges, resulting in a 2\$ lifetime value (LTV) on D7.

This playbook will examine and best practices for creating a Hybridcasual game, including marketability, in-app purchases, and metrics analysis. Following these steps can elevate your game to the next level, increase engagement, and generate more revenue. So let's dive in and learn how to turn your Hypercasual game into a Hybridcasual hit!



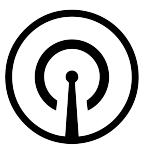
Action (1/4)

Step 1: **Enhance Marketability and Engagement Potential**

The first step towards creating a successful hybridcasual game is to improve its marketability and engagement potential. This requires a long-term approach involving creating content that keeps players engaged over time. For example, Yorf & Homa, in the case of Zombie Defense, spent five weeks polishing the prototype and ensuring the game had enough depth to keep players engaged. They also improved video clarity and level design to make the game more appealing and improve the cost-per-install (CPI). In addition, it is essential to consider adding a tutorial and a story mode that players can play and complete, which can help them stay engaged and invested in the game.

Step 2: **Optimize Lifetime Value through Economy A/B Testing**

To maximize the revenue potential of a hybridcasual game, optimizing its economy is crucial. Yorf & Homa tested more than 10 game economies before finding the winning one that resulted in a 10% increase in lifetime value (LTV) from ads. Consider running A/B tests on other in-app purchase and ad reward options to identify the most effective revenue streams. Offering in-game rewards, such as coins or power-ups, for watching ads can also boost LTV.



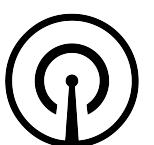
Action (2/4)

Step 3: **Deepen the Metagame for Increased Engagement**

To keep players engaged and interested in your Hybridcasual game, it's important to deepen the metagame. Yorf & Homa achieved this by introducing new weapons, characters, and loot to Zombie Defense, an infinite game mode, and a bonus level in the Colosseum. These additions added gameplay diversity and attracted a wider audience. In addition, to further increase player retention and engagement, consider adding social features such as the ability to play with friends or compete in tournaments.

Step 4: **Integrate In-App Purchases (IAPs) Strategically**

Strategically integrating in-app purchases (IAPs) is essential for increasing revenue and retaining committed users. Yorf & Homa tested various IAP strategies in sync with the game loop, such as introducing a second currency, offering shops, discounts, and polished asset packs. This led to a significant 35% increase in IAP revenue. In addition, consider offering a subscription service that provides access to exclusive content or power-ups that can further increase revenue. Implementing these strategies effectively can enhance the overall gameplay experience and increase user engagement.



Action (3/4)

Step 5: **Monitor Key Metrics for Continued Success**

To maintain the success of your Hybridcasual game, it's crucial to analyze and monitor key metrics. Playtime session length, retention rate D30/D60/D90, and whale potential are just some metrics that can help you understand user behavior and increase the game's LTV. Homa used their in-house analytics tools to track user engagement and spending patterns and used this information to make data-driven decisions about content updates and monetization strategies. Thanks to IAPs, Homa unlocked a full scale & brought strong LTV (CPP campaigns).

By consistently analyzing metrics, you can ensure that your game remains engaging and profitable over the long term.

Step 6: **Regularly Optimize Content Post-Launch**

To ensure that your Hybridcasual game continues to succeed post-launch, it's crucial to regularly optimize its economy and difficulty level. Even after launch, the main task is to offer the best user experience and improve the global LTV by adjusting the game's content. Utilize data to identify different player groups and tailor the game to their needs. For example, the Homa's data team identified three layers of players: casual players who prefer more manageable levels, whales who want more challenging levels, and basic players who are in the middle. These audiences could be addressed differently by pushing an ad-based economy to basic players or offering more in-app purchase opportunities to whales.



Action (4/4)

Step 6 (cont.):

Implement A/B testing to experiment with features and pricing models and improve the game's performance. It is an ongoing process for the team to cluster users and optimize the content to offer the best player experience. By continuously optimizing the game, you can improve the user experience and increase the game's lifetime value (LTV).



Results

Zombie Defense is an example of how a Hypercasual game can thrive as a Hybridcasual game, despite facing marketability challenges from its conception. Despite the game's high cost per install (CPI), the development team opted to concentrate on other metrics and raised the IAP to 35% of the revenue, achieved an RRD1 of over 40%, garnered a D30 score of 2%, and boosted the average playtime to 1500 seconds (25 minutes). Additionally, the team continues to refine the game post-launch to provide the best experience for each audience cluster.

To transform a Hypercasual game into a Hybridcasual one, you must alter the gameplay and design to make it more intricate and captivating. This may entail incorporating more elaborate mechanics, a richer storyline, and more challenging levels. Additionally, remember that the overall lifetime value (LTV) is critical for Hybridcasual games. Therefore, you should examine metrics such as playtime duration, potential high-paying customers, and retention

rates on days 30 and beyond. Moreover, segment your audience and adjust the game's economy or levels to cater to each group. This is how you can expand your game and uncover new in-app purchase (IAP) opportunities.

In conclusion, by following the best practices outlined in this playbook, game developers can improve their chances of creating a successful Hybridcasual game that increases engagement and generates more revenue. The case study of Yorf & Homa's Zombie Defense is a prime example of the importance of taking a long-term approach to keeping players engaged and testing various strategies. And with Homa's support, game developers can rest assured that they have the technology and expertise they need to publish the next chart-topping title.



BEST PRACTICES FOR HYBRID CASUAL DEVELOPMENT



The Ultimate Guide to Developing a Successful Hybridcasual Game

To break into the Hybridcasual game genre, developers must navigate the challenges of building a game that blends simple mechanics, engaging gameplay, and monetization strategies. This requires a deep understanding of the genre's key performance indicators, marketing strategies, and design considerations. In this section of the Playbook, we will share cheat codes for creating a successful Hybridcasual game and explore the genre's unique characteristics and opportunities for game makers.



1. The Three Main Ways to Create a Hybridcasual Game

When creating a Hybridcasual game, developers have three main options: hybridizing a Hypercasual game, hybridizing a casual game, or starting with a native hybrid approach. Each approach has unique advantages and challenges; choosing the one that best suits your game concept and target audience is essential. If you ever hesitate on the way to start, Homa's experts guide you through the process.

2. Simplifying Game Mechanics for a Wider Audience

One of the key features of Hybridcasual games is their ease of play, designed to be picked up and played quickly. Therefore, it's crucial to prioritize accessibility and a friendly user experience when designing the game. To achieve this, developers should simplify the game's mechanics, controls, and overall design, using clear, concise instructions and icons, minimizing the number of buttons, and introducing new elements gradually.

3. Increasing Engagement with Meta-Depth

Many hybrid games integrate deeper gameplay elements beyond simple mechanics to ensure players remain hooked and engaged. Adding meta-layers, such as challenging puzzles, a narrative story, strategic decision-making, or collectible items that encourage players to keep playing, even after completion, can achieve this. However, it's crucial to maintain simplicity in the player's decision-making process and automate actions whenever possible. Furthermore, multiplayer modes can offer an extra layer of enjoyment and competition to the gaming experience, making social interaction a vital aspect of hybrid games.

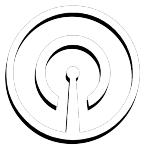


4. Maximizing Revenue through In-App Purchases

To maximize revenue from a Hybridcasual game, focusing on in-app purchases (IAPs) is crucial, which should contribute at least 30% of the game's lifetime value (LTV). This requires careful consideration of the game's economy and design, including the types and amounts of currencies to integrate. Prioritizing IAPs can help developers maximize their game's potential revenue. Innovative technologies have been developed by companies like Homa to assist with integrating IAPs into Hybridcasual games. These technologies provide resources, best practices, and asset packs to help developers master the design of IAPs.

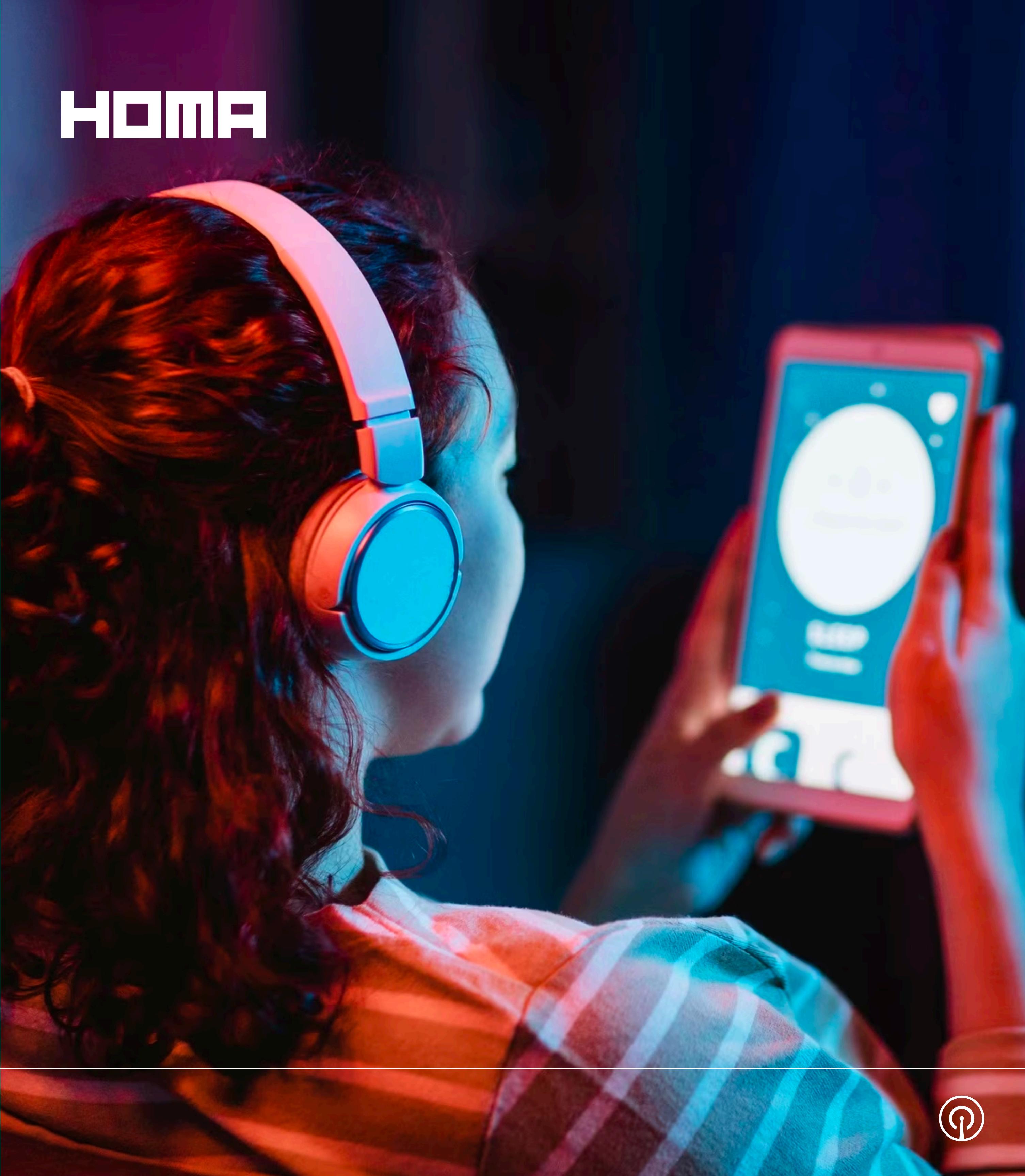
5. Maintaining User Engagement in Long-run

To keep Hybridcasual games engaging long-term, developers should have a broader vision for the game and optimize post-launch. This can include integrating new features into the core design, adding new elements and content at specific points, testing different meta and adaptive economies, and gathering player feedback to adjust the content and increase LTV. In addition, implementing IP characters and interoperable game assets can create a more exciting player experience.



Key Takeaways for **Developing a Successful Hybridcasual Game**

- Developing a successful Hybrid Casual game requires a balance between simplicity, engagement, monetization, and post-launch strategy.
- Choosing the right approach, simplifying game mechanics, adding meta-depth, maximizing revenue through in-app purchases, and maintaining user engagement, in the long run, are all essential elements to consider.
- Homa has pioneered Hybridcasual publishing. The team can provide the necessary tools, know-how, and expertise to help developers overcome obstacles and succeed in this exciting and lucrative genre.
- With careful planning, execution, and ongoing optimization, Hybridcasual games can offer an engaging and profitable experience for both developers and players alike.





SensorTower