GameRefinery
By Vungle

In-Game Events Snapshot

November 2021

GameRefinery uses a three-layered approach to categorize games

- Using a **Category -> Genre -> Subgenre** hierarchy we are able to differentiate games in a meaningful way and offer accurate insights for all individual game types currently found in the market

- Our taxonomy is **created together with industry experts** and is based on thorough testing and data-analysis of the market

- In this report we are focusing on **in-game events**

Casual

Puzzle
- Action Puzzle
- Board Games
- Bubble Shooter
- Match 3 Puzzle
- Merge Games
- Other Puzzle
- Word Games
- Trivia Games
- Coloring Games
- Hidden Objects
- Solitaire/Mahjong

Lifestyle
- Customisation
- Interactive Story
- Music/Band

AR / Location Based
- AR / Location Based

Arcade
- Platformer
- Shoot/Beat 'em Up
- Other Arcade
- Tower Defense

Hyper Casual
- HC - Puzzle
- HC - Tap
- HC - Steer
- HC - Swipe/Drag
- HC - .io
- HC - Other

Simulation
- Adventures
- Breeding
- Tycoon/Crafting
- Sandbox
- Time Management
- Idler

Mid-core

RPG
- Action RPG
- Tower Defence RPG
- Turn-based RPG
- Fighting
- MMORPG
- Puzzle RPG
- Idle RPG
- Survival
- Sovereign Games

Strategy
- 4X Strategy
- Asymmetric Survival
- Build & Battle
- MOBA
- Tactical Battler

Shooter
- Battle Royale
- Classic FPS/TPS
- Snipers
- Tactical Shooter

Card Games
- Card Battler

Sports & Driving

Sports
- Arcade Sports
- Realistic Sports

Driving
- Arcade Driving
- Realistic Driving

Casino

Casino
- Bingo
- Casual Casino
- Other Casino
- Poker/Cards
- Slots

GameRefinery's Genre Taxonomy

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Event Overview

Erno Kiiski
Chief Game Analyst - US

Mobile game events come in all shapes and sizes. Whether they're seasonal events celebrating Christmas and Halloween, non-recurring and recurring live events, or promotional collaborations with non-gaming brands, developers across the world are utilizing them in creative ways to boost their revenue and player count. The Chinese mobile game Sky: Children of the Light celebrated one of its biggest revenue spikes in history thanks to a September 2020 collaboration with the virtual YouTube star Kizuna AI. It proved that you don't need to reinvent the wheel when you can tap into a passionate fanbase; Kizuna played the game on her channel and an in-game Kizuna accessory kit was released for $20, the demand for which led to the game surpassing $1m in daily revenue (iOS market, CH). Genshin Impact found similar success in the West through its Lantern Rite event ringing in the 2021 Lunar New Year, with a new gameplay mode, character, storyline and gacha mechanics causing revenue to grow from $200k to over $1.25m in just over a day (iOS market, US).

Perhaps it's no surprise to learn that 90% of the top-grossing 100 mobile titles use seasonal events, whereas 40% of the top 100 in the US iOS market are collaborating with brands for partnership events. The great thing about events is that their various implementation methods mean they can be used in pretty much any genre of game.

As the mobile gaming market continues to grow, events such as those featured in this report will only become more popular, especially with so many brands trying to establish themselves in the gaming world. The challenge to developers is figuring out which events are worth exploring, and which mechanics are worth implementing as part of an engaging and rewarding online ecosystem.

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Key points

Erno Kiiski
Chief Game Analyst - US

- Seasonal events occur in 90% of the top 100-grossing mobile games.

- In the US market, some of the most popular seasonal events are based around public holidays such as Christmas, New Year, Halloween and Thanksgiving, but region-specific events are being utilized in other parts of the world, such as Quixi Festival (double 7) in China and Sakura (Cherry Blossom season) in Japan.

- Successful events lead to the re-engagement of the existing player base and acquisition of new players.

- Events are a great way to test run new features and trends. For example, Township's Christmas event in 2020 was an intriguing mix of two latest trends, mini-games and renovation events.

- Time-limited skins, characters, weapons sold through themed currency and special gacha are some of the most profitable revenue streams for events.

- Promotional collaboration events have seen a steady rise in the US iOS market and now appear in over 40% of the top 100 grossing US iOS titles. As a result, more non-gaming brands are entering the gaming space.

Seasonal Events Calendar... there are always more

New Year

Christmas

Lunar New Year

Thanksgiving

Halloween

Valentine's Day

St. Patrick's Day

Harvest Festival

Easter

Oktoberfest

May Day

4th of July   Midsummer
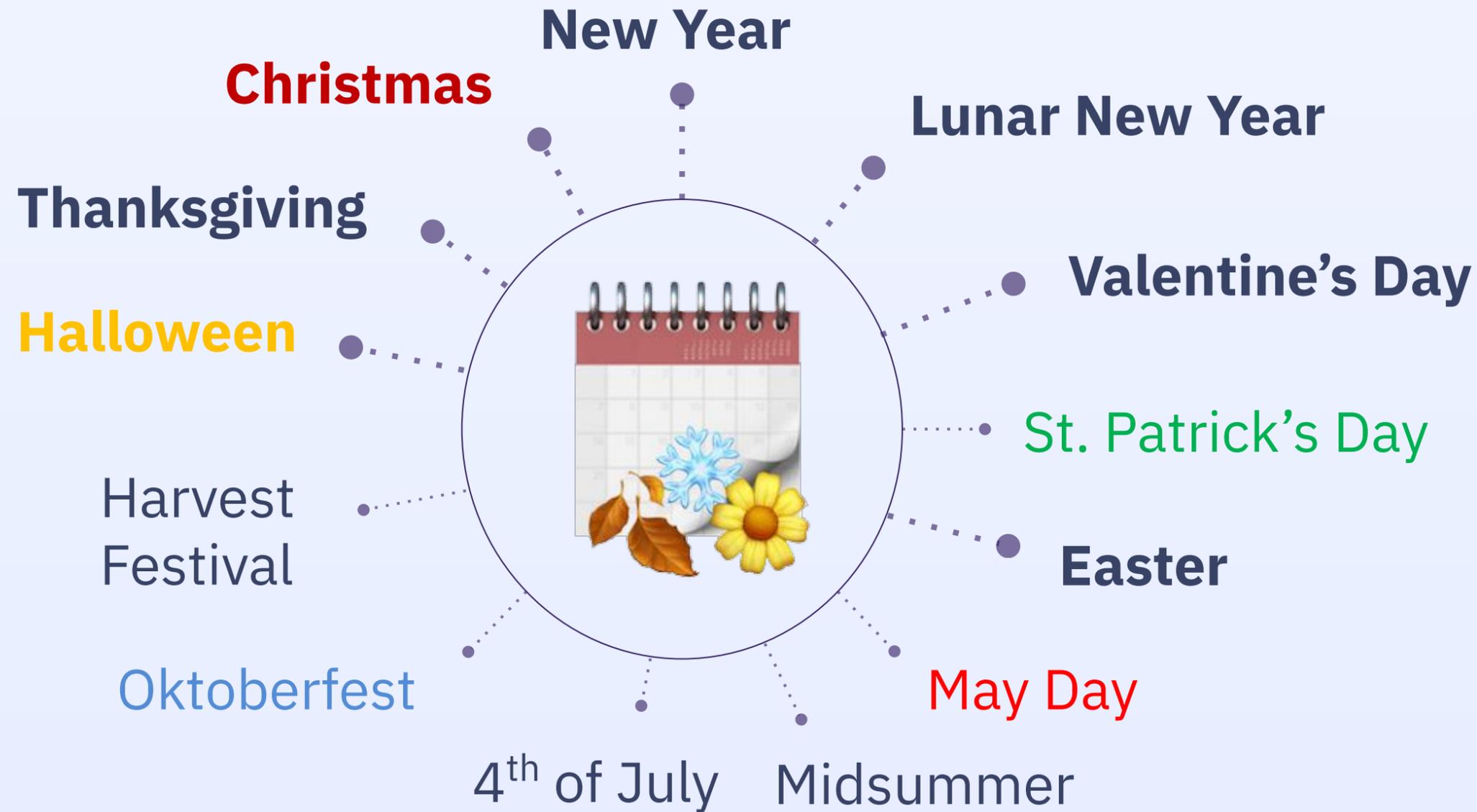
Erno Kiiski
Chief Game Analyst - US

Typically the most significant seasonal events in the US mobile game market are New Year, Lunar New Year, Valentine's Day, Easter, Halloween, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. However, there are several other smaller seasonal events that provide an excellent opportunity to give some seasonal joy to your players.

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Event data

90% of top-grossing 100 games use seasonal events
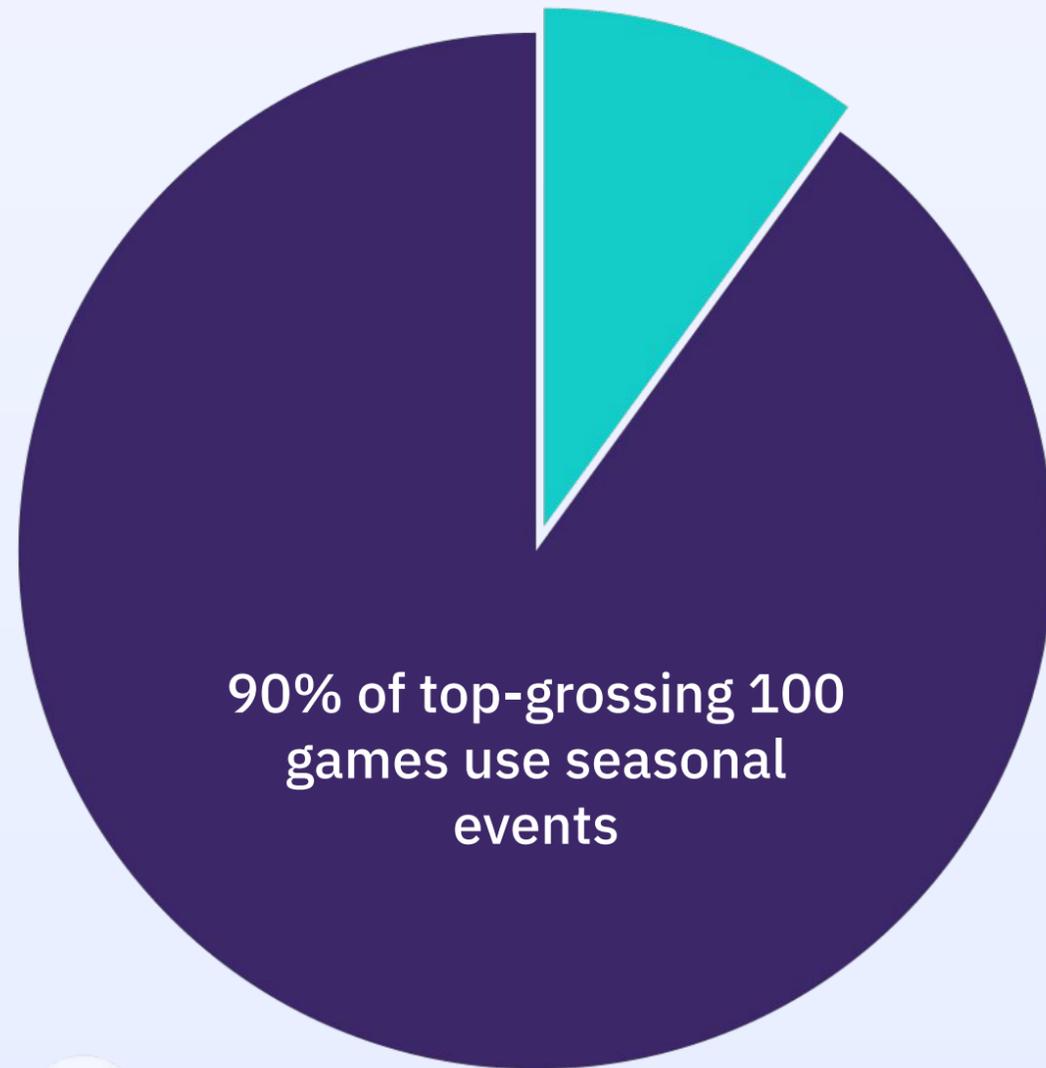
Many top games change their storefront to represent the seasons as well (icons more common / screenshots a bit rarer)

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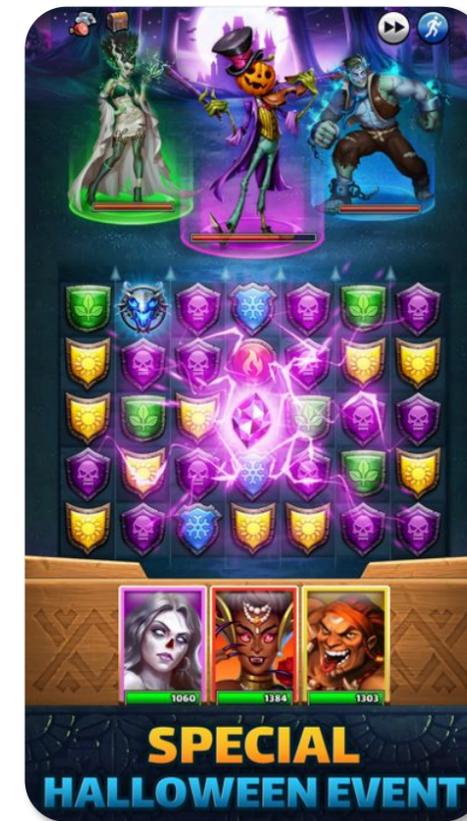
Common seasonal event types

1. Just UI changes to represent the ongoing seasonal festivities

2. Event related offers (e.g. Halloween skins in the shop) + previous

3. Playable content / event tasks/rewards + all the previous

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Seasonal event examples from the top US games

Genshin Impact - Lantern Rite event

Genshin Impact is no stranger to massive and impressive events. It once in a while also ties these events to current seasons, such as this year to Lunar New Year.

This big Lantern Rite event had unique "tower defense-like" gameplay, a bunch of quests, an event store with its own currency, and most importantly, the game introduced a new character through an event storyline → acquirable through related new banner gacha (the main reason for the revenue spike).
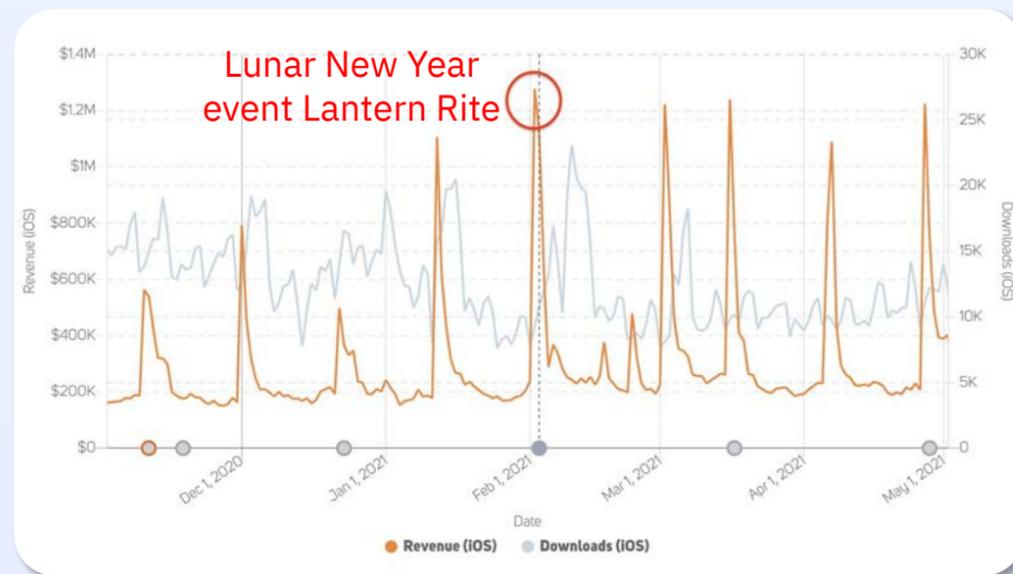
Source: GameRefinery SaaS platform

Seasonal event examples from the top US games

Township - A Surprise for Santa event

Township's Christmas event in 2020, A Surprise for Santa, was an intriguing mix of two latest trends, mini-games and renovation events.

The event included an endless-runner style mini-game where you earned tickets used in the game's renovation/decoration meta (similar to Home Design Makeover or Property Brothers). The progression in the event was restricted by event energy, which could be bought with premium currency.

Source: GameRefinery SaaS platform

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Seasonal events to consider - China

"5/5, 7/7, 11/11"

- **The Dragon Boat Festival, aka. "double five,"** is a traditional summer festival celebrated on the 5th day of the 5th month of the lunar calendar, which is usually in June.

- **"Chinese Valentine's Day" is known as the Qixi Festival in Chinese or "double seven"** since it is celebrated on the 7th day of the 7th month of the lunar calendar, which was in August in 2021. The traditional Chinese day of romance.

- **The National Day of China** is celebrated on October 1st, but it also includes seven days of holiday in total, called the Golden Week. During the long holiday, people have time to travel or visit their homes (and play games).

- **Singles' Day or "Double Eleven"** is an unofficial holiday in China, known for being the largest shopping day in the world by consumer spending. Originating as a day to celebrate single people, it has been heavily commercialized by online retail companies such as Alibaba, and it is also extremely common for mobile games in China to feature IAP events around the day.

Seasonal event examples from the top Chinese games

Princess Connect! Re:Dive - Summer Event

In the summer of 2021, turn-based RPG Princess Connect! Re:Dive (公主连结Re:Dive) had a summer event with swimsuit versions of the characters available from a limited-time gacha as well as a limited-time game mode. Despite the very simple implementation of the event, the game's revenues had a clear spike after the update.
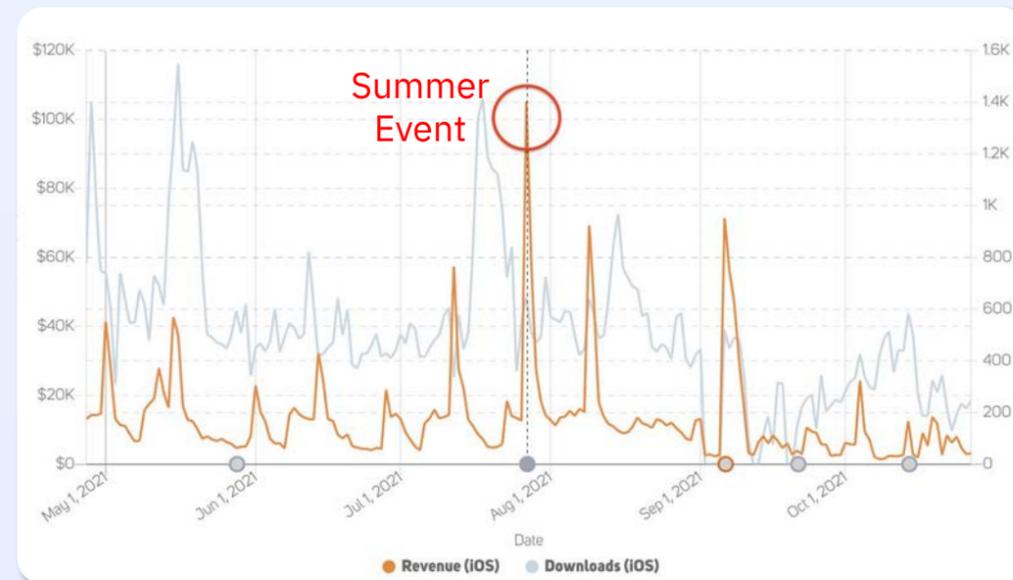

Source: GameRefinery SaaS platform

Seasonal event examples from the top Chinese games

Dream of the Three Kingdoms Mobile - Chinese New Year event

During the last Chinese New Year, the Chinese MOBA Dream of the Three Kingdoms Mobile (梦三国) tied the Lunar New Year celebrations to the introduction of its new pet system.

During the event, players were able to purchase event-only pets as well as skins. This revealed to be a very profitable plan for the game, as its revenues went up after the update.

Lunar New Year event
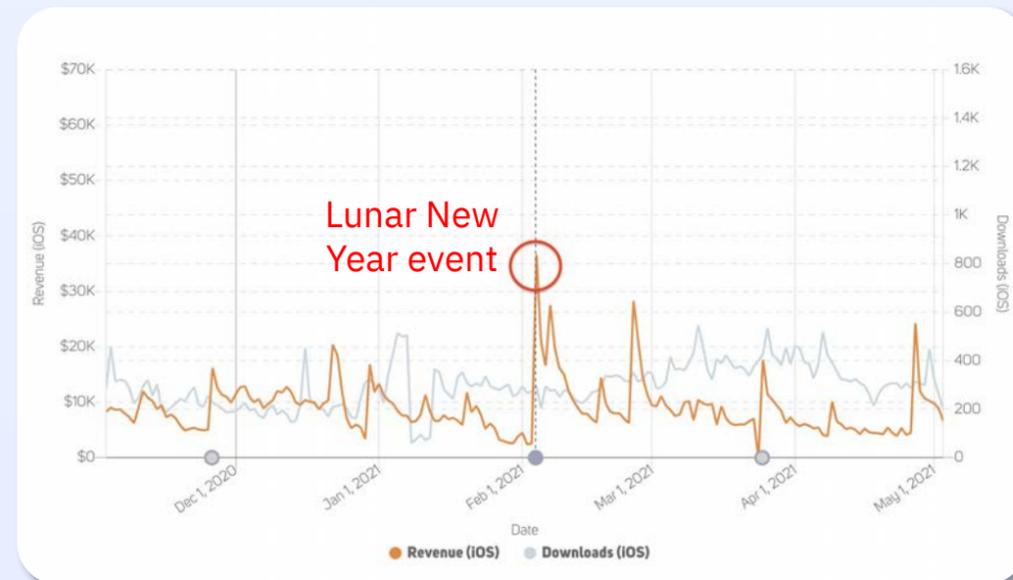
Source: GameRefinery SaaS platform

Seasonal events to consider - Japan

- **Golden Week** is a national holiday week from the end of April to the beginning of May. People travel long distances to see their families – and play tons of games while transporting or spending time in their hometowns, so it is the perfect time to monetize with limited-time events and IAP offers.

- When the **Sakura (cherry blossoms) season** starts in late March, or more commonly in early April, it shows everywhere. Mobile games are not an exception, as they're filled with beautiful in-game items and UI designs related to these blossoms.

- **June Bride concept**: It's said that couples who marry during June live happily ever after. Therefore, in June, Japanese games are also filled with special versions of characters wearing bridal dresses, tuxedos, or traditional Japanese wedding attire.

- **Japanese New Year or "Shogatsu"** is one of the longest national holiday stints, hence the perfect time for gaming. Many of the mobile game companies have huge IAP sales and special gacha offers during the period. In addition, it is very traditional to give players unique New Year's gifts (in-game items or other things) once they log in to a game.

Seasonal event examples from the top Japanese games

Gotoubun no Hanayome Itsutsugo-chan ha Pazuru wo Gotoubun Dekinai - Hanami event

A puzzle RPG based on the popular manga and anime series Quintessential Quintuplets, 五等分の花嫁五つ子ちゃんはパズルを五等分できない。, incorporated a social aspect into its Hanami event experience. Players created teams of max five players, and each team member could temporarily boost the team's event points from gameplay once a day. To coordinate the buffs, a team chat was also added to the game. In addition to the two event gachas, this update brought new additions to the game's IAP side, reflecting a spike in the game's revenue.
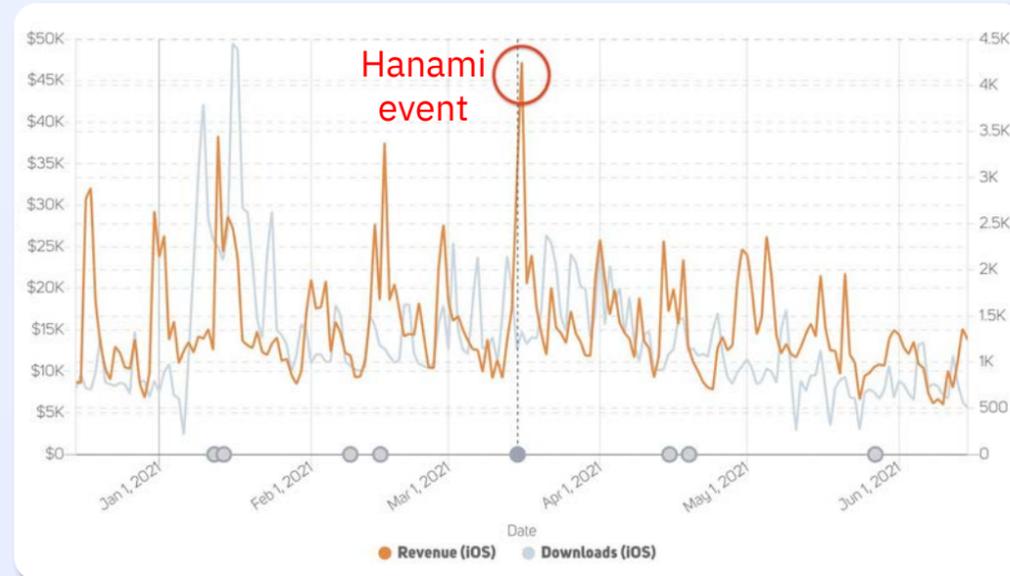

Source: GameRefinery SaaS platform

Seasonal event examples from the top Japanese games

Puzzle & Dragons! - June Bride event

June is one of the most popular months to get married in Japan, and "June Bride" is a term that you'll often see in Japanese manga, anime, TV dramas, and social media. So it's no surprise that June Bride-related content has made its way to mobile games.

Puzzle & Dragons!'s (パズル＆ドラゴンズ) June Bride event included a special wedding-themed gacha and characters in their bride and groom attires. The special currency for the event, bouquets, could be collected from event dungeons and exchanged in the event shop.
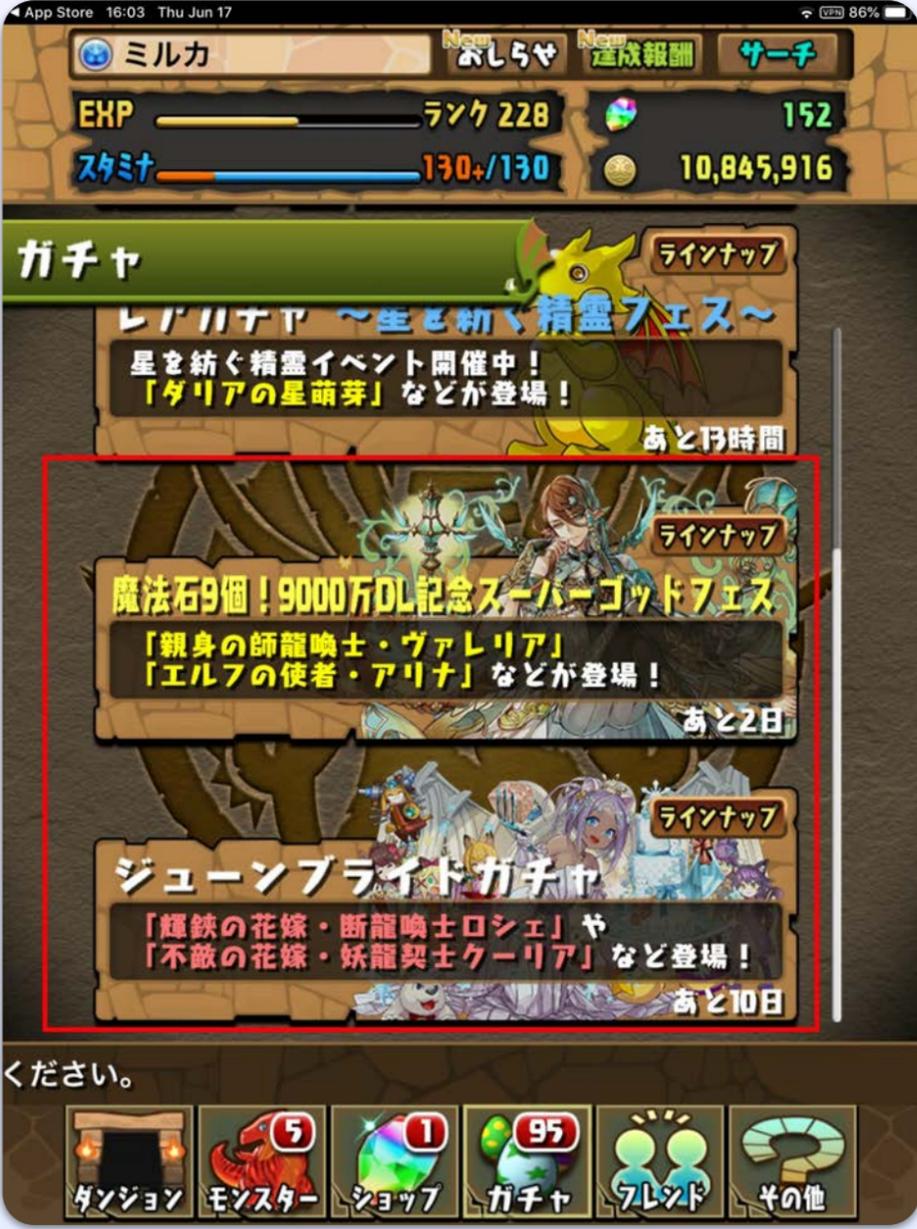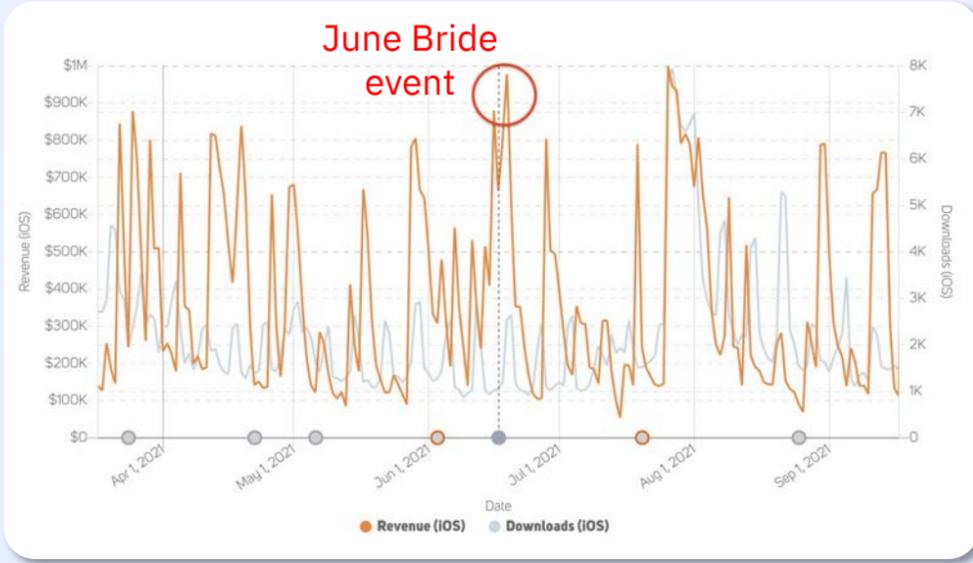
June Bride event

Promotional Collaboration Events have seen a steady rise in the US iOS market since 2017

Popularity

☑ Scale Y-axis

● Top Grossing 100   ● Outside Top 100

The feature "Promotional Collaboration Events" has seen a steady rise in the US iOS market ever since GameRefinery started tracking it (source: GameRefinery SaaS).

Erno Kiiski
Chief Game Analyst - US

Promotional collaboration events in mobile games are still a hot topic after a steady rise in popularity in the US market since 2017. According to GameRefinery data, by October 2021, 42% of games in the US top-grossing 100 had implemented the feature in one form or the other, reaching an all-time high. Meanwhile, only 10% of US games outside the top 100 had the feature, making it a highly differentiating asset for your game.

But did you know that collaboration events are an even bigger thing in China and Japan than in the US? In China, collaboration events have been rising sharply in popularity as well, reaching 51% within the Chinese top-grossing 100, while outside of the top 100, only 15% had it. However, in Japan, within the top 100 games, a whopping 62% had implemented collaboration events, and even outside of the top 100, it was 28%. Japan can be said to be ahead of the curve on this front since collaboration events reached peak popularity in Japan already in 2017, with a staggering 75% of top 100 games using the feature at the time.

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Collaboration events are a great way to utilize synergy effects across IPs, thus boosting all stakeholders' brand awareness.

Erno Kiiski
Chief Game Analyst - US

In the host game, where the event takes place, there are potential positives in terms of:

1. **Re-engaging the existing player base**. A collaboration event can be a surprising and unique (as these are often one-off) occasion – reinvigorating your players and facilitating a strong pull-effect.

2. **Acquiring new players**. In the best-case scenario, a number of fresh players with a high affinity to the collaborating brand will enter your game when they hear about your awesome event. To maximize this opportunity, it might be a good idea to consider the following:

   a. Is the collaboration brand's user demographic aligned with my game's target audience, e.g., core gameplay and visuals?

   b. To what extent does the collaboration enable me to tap into new audiences?


Example Collaboration Event Framework

Sinks

Cosmetics
- Skins
- Accessories
- Portraits & frames
- Titles
- Emotes
- Buildings

Collectable (exclusive) collab event content:

Equip. items, e.g., weapons

Characters

Special collab. event shop

Limited-time bundle offers

Special collab. event gachas

Special collab. event currency

Sources

Special collab. event rewards

Special collab. event playing modes

Special collab. event tasks
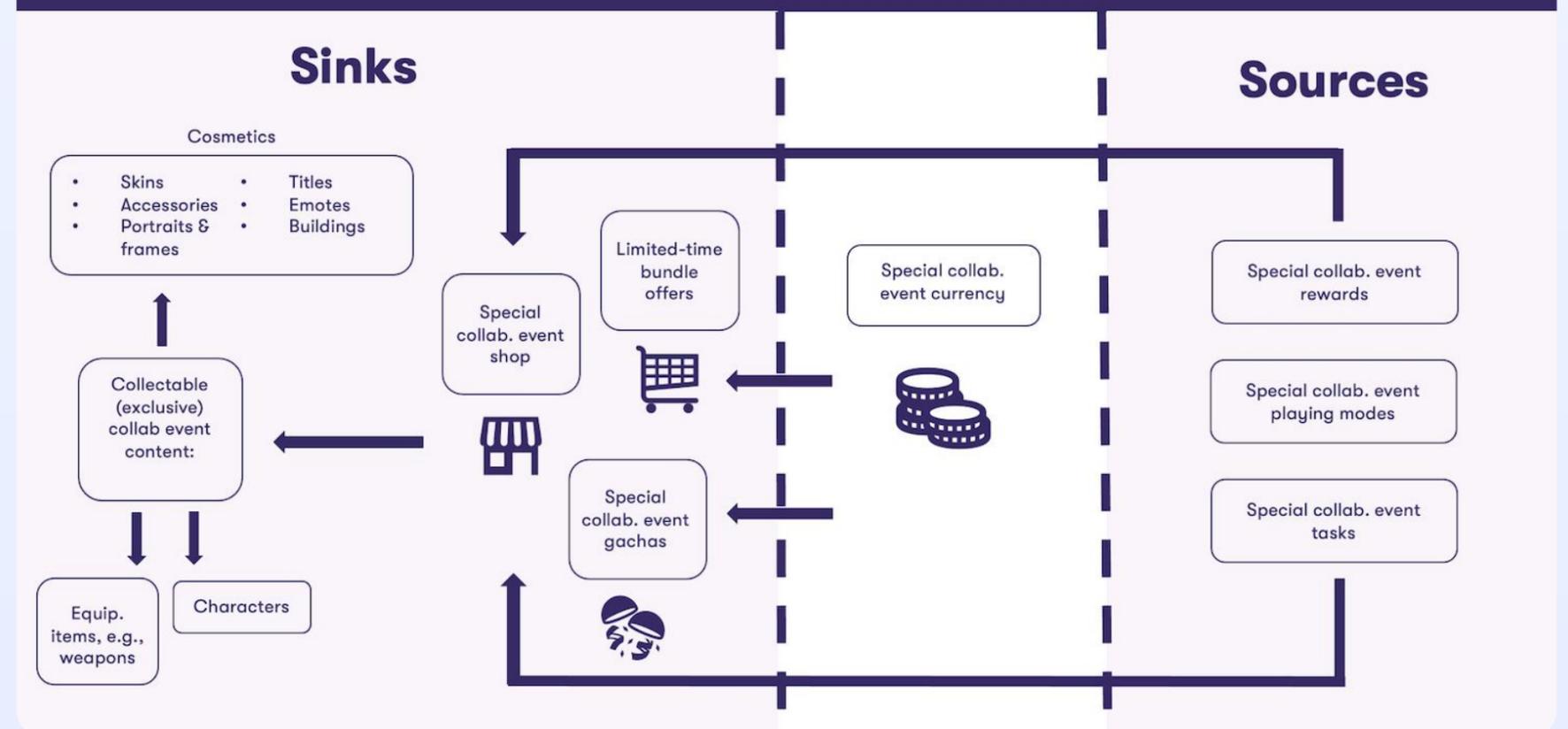
Implementation examples from top games:
Promotional collaboration events

PUBG Mobile x Resident Evil 2

PUBG Mobile's collaboration with Resident Evil 2 in February 2019 gave the Battle Royale formula a horror-themed spin.

The event offered various cosmetic items known from the IP through different gachas. Some cosmetics were able to be also earned by playing a "Survive Till Dawn"-limited-time game mode where players were able to play Battle Royale match on a map infested by various zombies from Resident Evil.
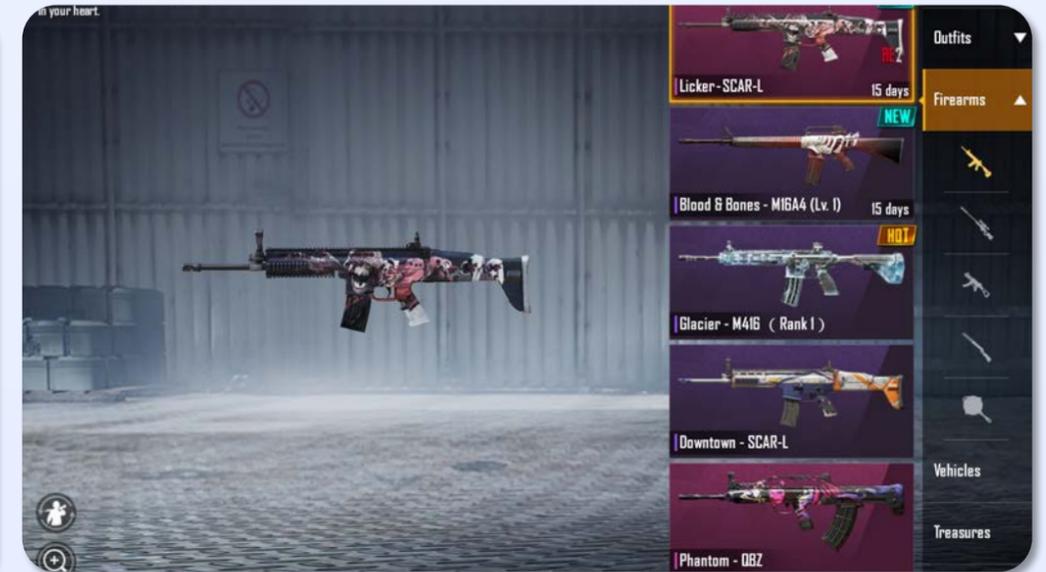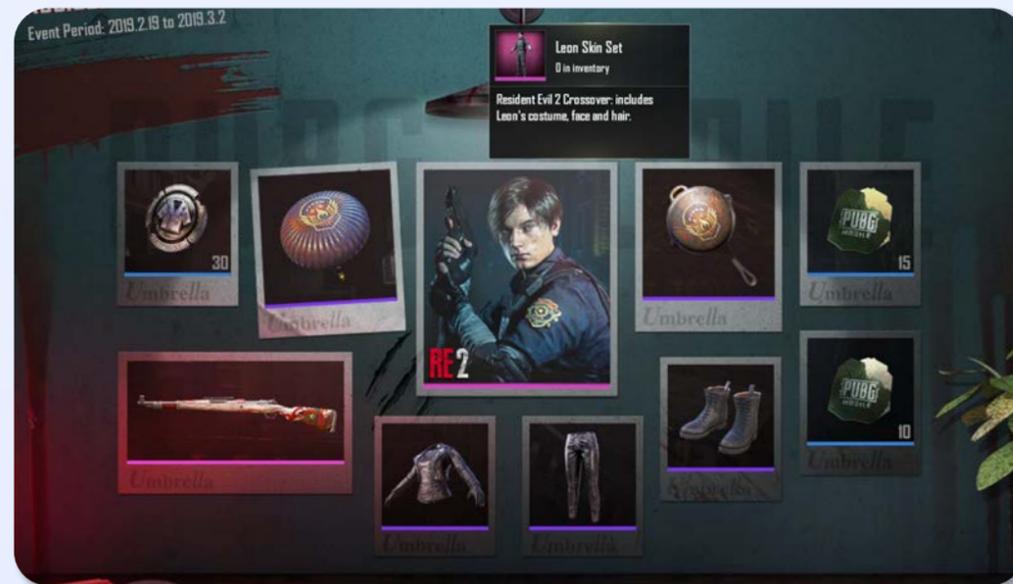
Source: GameRefinery SaaS platform

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Implementation examples from top games:
Promotional collaboration events

LINE: Disney Tsum Tsum x Disney Twisted Wonderland

One great way to tap into new audiences is to collaborate with a game that is likely to have a similar audience to your game.

Disney-themed Match3 game LINE: Disney Tsum Tsum (LINE：ディズニー ツムツム) collaborated with another Disney-themed game, Disney Twisted Wonderland, by introducing three characters from the game during a month-long Disney Twisted Wonderland themed event. The event included an increased gacha chance for the new characters, a log-in calendar, and different event missions, which gave a nice boost to the game's revenue.

Disney Twisted Wonderland collaboration
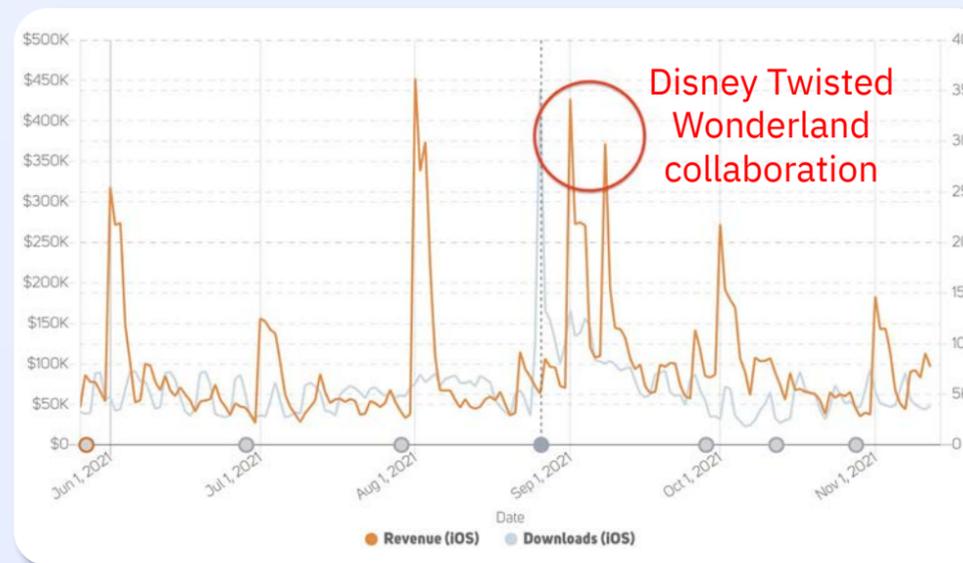
Successful collaborations with non-gaming brands: Case Kentucky Fried Chicken

Erno Kiiski
Chief Game Analyst - US

KFC wouldn't probably be the first one to come to your mind when you think about which brand would be a suitable fit for a collaboration event in a mobile game. However, after the seventh collaboration event, it looks like KFC is the IP that every single Chinese game wants to have in their event portfolio.

Many of the non-gaming collaborations that you see in mobile games revolve around in-game items that are the digital representation of real-life things, like fashion items. So having a bucket of Kentucky Fried Chicken in the game might feel strange and the brand connection loose. However, both parties get significant positive synergies by wide brand outreach through the game and the physical stores, which potentially converts into a bunch of new customers and players.

More successful collaboration examples with non-gaming brands

Mobile Legends: Bang Bang x Transformers

Mobile Legends x Transformers collaboration event in September 2021 resulted in one of the biggest revenue spikes of the game's history.

The event consisted of various event tasks that could be completed for exclusive cosmetic rewards, but the main revenue driver for the event was the event gacha with special cumulative purchase mechanics. The event gacha was the only way to get the main rewards of the event - super detailed limited-time Transformers character skins.
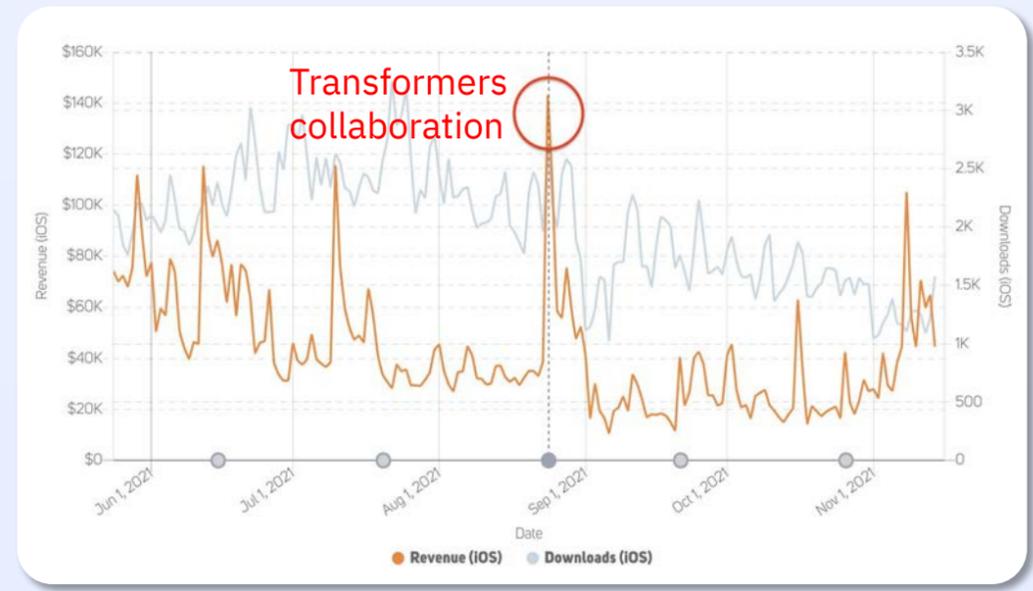
Source: GameRefinery SaaS platform

More successful collaboration examples with **non-gaming brands**

Sky: Children of the Light x Kizuna Ai

The Chinese release of Sky: Children of the Light (光·遇) did a collaboration event with the Chinese version of virtual YouTuber Kizuna Ai in September 2020, sending sales through the roof, peaking at a million dollars per day.

The event was quite simple, though. It only featured Kizuna Ai playing the game in her videos in her usual humoristic style and an in-game Kizuna Ai accessory set being sold for 128 RMB (roughly 20 USD). That goes to show what a devoted fan base can make happen.

Kizuna Ai collaboration

Source: GameRefinery SaaS platform
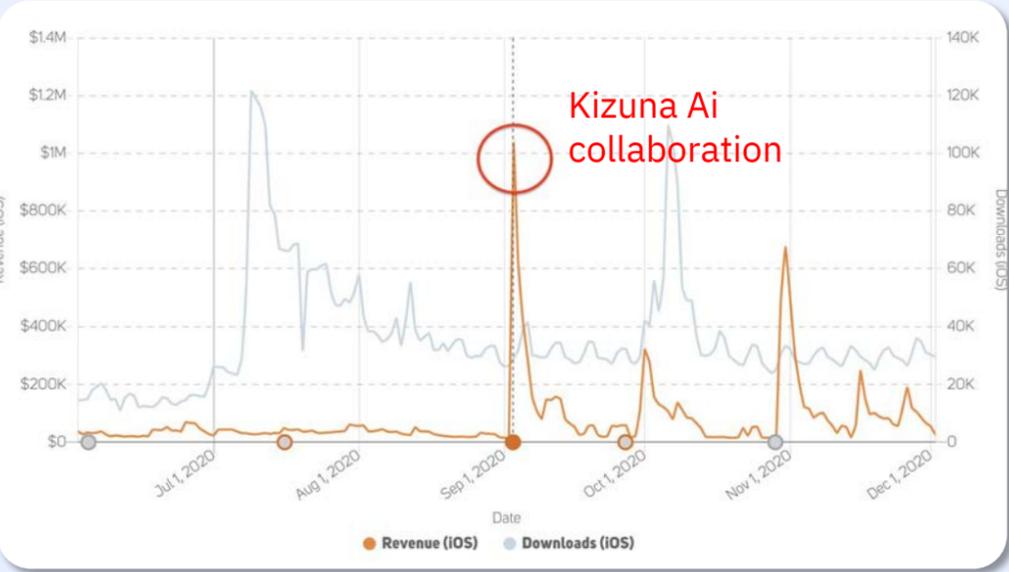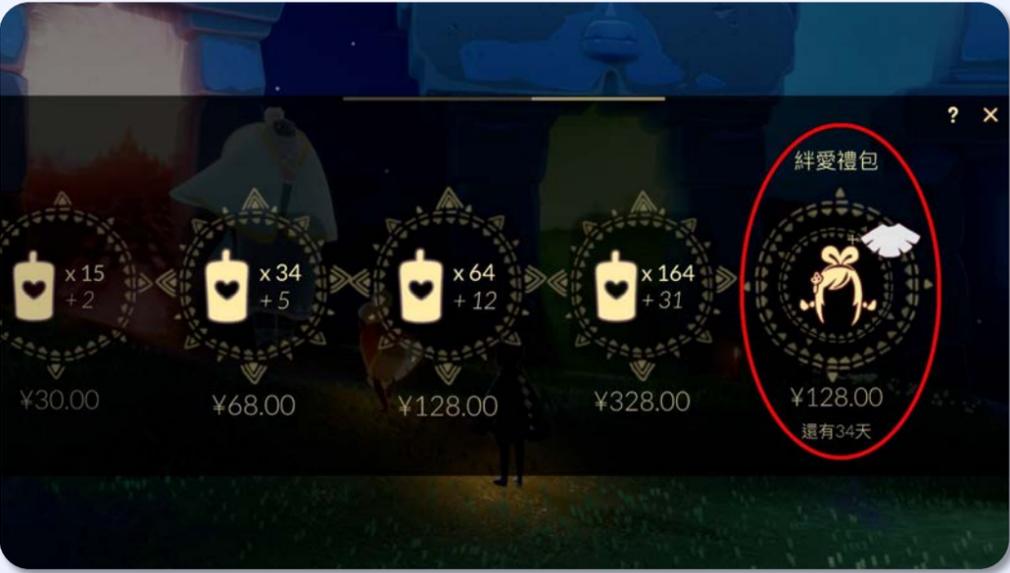
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Erno Kiiski

Chief Game Analyst - US

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We Know Mobile Games

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1. Choose Market

US

2. Select optional categories

GENRES

Casual, Mid-core

SUBGENRES

Build & Battle

3. Select optional Filter

Session Length | Game Progression
Gacha | Iap & Monetization
Live Events | Appointment Mechanics

Clash of Clans
Supercell

Build & Battle

FEATURE INDICATORS

Powerscore   82

Skill   Thinking

MONTHLY PERFOMANCE

Average Grossing Rank   10
Average Download   195K
REV / DL $30.1

12 Player Motivations

Escapism — Excitement & Thrill, Thinking & Solving
Social — Working With Others, Competing Against Others
Mastery — Improving Skills, Completing Milestones, Strategic Planning
Management — Resource Optimization
Expression — Role-playing & Emotions, Customization & Decoration
Exploration — Discovering New Worlds, Collecting Treasure

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