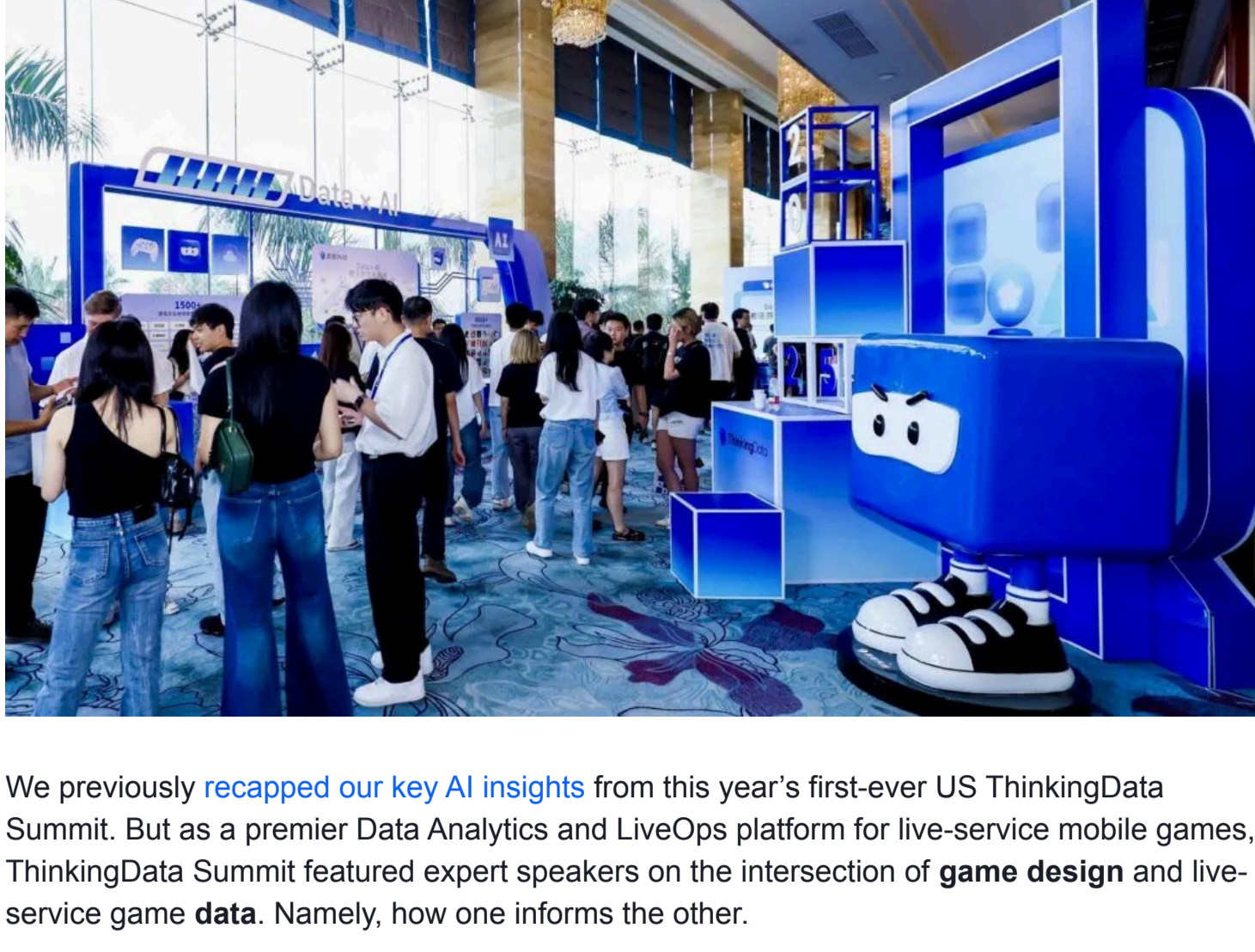


Data-Driven Game Development: 5 Key Insights From ThinkingData Summit 2026

March 18, 2026 By Matthew Kim



We previously [recapped our key AI insights](#) from this year's first-ever US ThinkingData Summit. But as a premier Data Analytics and LiveOps platform for live-service mobile games, ThinkingData Summit featured expert speakers on the intersection of **game design** and live-service **game data**. Namely, how one informs the other.

In our final ThinkingData Summit recap, we will summarize talks from our speakers at **Blizzard, Reality Games, Habby, Mavis, and Google**, who dive deep not only into our core passion, data, but how that data can guide the **live-service mobile games we power**.

We begin with possibly a contradictory topic, which is what happens when too much data impacts our decision-making?

How to Balance Qualitative and Quantitative Data in Live-Service Game Development

Chase Shi, Senior Director of Product at Blizzard Entertainment, believes that we are in an age of data abundance. But that abundance can lead to indecisions that ultimately harm the long-term health of a live-service game. The solution? Marry short-term quantitative data with long-term qualitative data to form a new framework that unifies decision making across teams, and ensures the long-term success of a game both in terms of business KPIs and player satisfaction.

"If we just keep listening to short, near-term data, we are actually just scaling and amplifying what is already working. We forget about why we're doing this and what kind of game we're trying to be."

Quantitative data serves as an early warning system, though any player dissatisfaction may not immediately appear on the KPIs. Not listening to these early signals is a mistake, Shi says. But equally, only focusing on the short-term quantitative will not lead to a successful live-service game, either.

The solution is to think long-term qualitatively. What game are you trying to make? What audience are you trying to reach? What is your core loop? With these key decisions made, quantitative data will then help bolster your long-term vision for success.

Key Takeaways:

- By combining qualitative data and quantitative data, you can combine short-term priorities within a framework of long-term sustainability.
- A unified framework will bring different teams together towards the same goal of long-term success.

How Habby Uses Data Analytics to Build and Scale Hit Mobile Games

Habby is one of the world's most successful mobile game companies with hits like Survivor.io, Archerio, Copybara Go! and more under its belt. But how does a studio develop a consistent pipeline for hit games? Habby Head of Business Development, David Pan, sat down with PocketGamer.biz's Craig Chapple to discuss how Habby leverages live-service game data to build a portfolio of top-performing mobile games.

Though heavily associated with the **Hybrid Casual market**, Habby considers itself a mid-core game developer, but with a key difference. Whereas other midcore developers often work in mechanically intense genres like 4X Strategy, Habby focuses on building games that will keep players engaged beyond D30 and D100.

For Habby, a key metric the company tracks is engagement, which might not be directly related to monetization. However, Habby believes that focusing on not just how long a user is playing in a day, but going more granular into how long a player spends in a certain system or level. This level of granularity, powered by ThinkingData's ThinkingEngine, keeps Habby laser-focused on the all-important player engagement goals the company sets for many of its biggest games.

Key Takeaways:

- Key metrics for Habby focus on player engagement.
- The "stickiness" of Habby's most popular games is what drives the company's continued success in the mid-core market.

How Habby Transformed Copybara Go's Soft Launch Success into a \$100M+ Global Hit: Our Case Study

How Reality Games Built a New Mobile Business Model With Real-World Data

Z. John Woznowski, CEO of Reality Games, began his talk with a story on how he acquired a small game that would end up becoming Landlord Tycoon, Reality Games' megahit, geolocation game that combines real-world locations with a flourishing in-game economy. This model would become the basis of the studio's hit IP collaboration: Monopoly World.

But building a game based on real-life locations and activity requires tracking datapoints that are uncommon, to say the least. Monopoly World engages users with the real-world, and as players wracked up over 2 billion steps, Woznowski and his data team gained valuable insights from the live-service game data they were tracking.

Not only were active players engaging with the in-game economy, around 30% of the entire in-game economy flowed through the auctions mechanic which is built on speculating real-world property values.

Additionally, denser cities produced stronger cohorts. In urban areas, day one retention could reach up to 65 percent, and those cohorts can reach profitability in about two weeks. This is compared to sparser regions with lower density.

Key Takeaways:

- Real-world data offers new, dynamic insights into the geolocation genre, and shouldn't be overlooked.
- A compelling in-game economy is built on real-world engagement.

Beyond the KPI Filter: How Mavis Games Balances Creativity and Data in Game Design

When it comes to designing games, Saygin Topatan, founder and CEO of Mavis Games, says there's no replacing human creativity. Topatan pushes back against what he calls the **KPI Filter** where teams judge new game ideas on their potential for market success rather than creativity. Instead, he advises the need to separate the ideation process from development, allowing teams to generate ideas without needing to consider marketability.

By divorcing the creative ideation process from the business process, it can serve to create more inventive games that will naturally drive better business, and ultimately lead to a stronger company.

Key Takeaways:

- Teams should explore creative ideation freely.
- There are steps companies can take to focus on creativity without sacrificing the health of the business.

The State of Mobile Gaming in 2026: Untapped Markets and Growth Opportunities

In our final talk, Google's Mariusz Gasiewski presented a comprehensive overview of the state of the mobile games industry. Gasiewski's talk covered one of mobile gaming's biggest topics, which is how mobile gaming growth can be achieved in an increasingly competitive attention battlefield. Shortform video in particular has seen noticeable growth in the past year, while streaming services also continue to take up users' time.

But amid this data, there are signs of growth for mobile games. Emerging markets like India and Brazil are replacing traditionally big markets like the United States, and casual gaming genres are also on the rise in terms of popularity. Gasiewski also stresses the importance of focusing on long-term growth through emphasis on user engagement over monetization in order to build a healthy and sustainable userbase.

Key Takeaways:

- Mobile gaming is still a popular and growing business, but steps must be taken in this more competitive war of attention.
- Focusing on user engagement and building IP can help mobile gaming grow, especially in emerging markets like Brazil and India.

How ThinkingData Helps Mobile Game Studios Turn Data Into Growth

This concludes our recap of ThinkingData Summit. Across every panel, one theme rang clear: data is the backbone of every successful live-service mobile game, from the earliest stages of creative ideation all the way through to scaling UA and maximizing player retention.

At ThinkingData, we built ThinkingEngine to help studios harness that data at every step of the journey. We will publish the full Summit on our Resource page soon. And if you're ready to see ThinkingEngine in action, book a demo with us today.

Supercharge Your Game Growth

See how ThinkingData helps leading studios increase retention, optimize monetization, and grow faster with real-time analytics.

[Book a Demo](#)

Data-driven results for over 8,000 games

ThinkingData has served more than 1,500 game companies, including well-known game companies such as FunPlus, SEGA, IGG, Habby, River Games, Century Games, LoadComplete, 37 Games and so on. More than 8,000 games have been integrated into ThinkingEngine.

[More About Us](#)

Your powerful one-stop data analytics engine trusted by over 1,500 games studios around the world

[Get Started](#)

<p>Platform</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unified Platform Game Analytics LiveOps Data Infrastructure 	<p>Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Product Guide Technical Documentation 	<p>Solutions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> MMORPGs Casual Games Social Games Strategy Games Card Games 	<p>About</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> About Us Join Us Locations Contact Us
---	--	---	--

ISO 9001 ISO 27001 ISO 27701