Analysis of US Sweepstakes vs. Real-Money Gaming

Insights for Global iGaming Marketers

Why it Matters:

For iGaming marketers and operators, understanding the dynamics of U.S. Sweepstakes gaming is no longer optional, it's strategic. With Real-Money Gaming still restricted in most U.S. states, Sweepstakes offer a unique, fast-growing alternative to acquire and engage players legally. But their value isn't just regulatory compliance. This post unpacks exclusive data comparing Sweepstakes and Real-Money Gaming behaviors, from acquisition and retention to deposit patterns, helping operators optimize their portfolios, unlock new markets, and grow customer lifetime value in a changing regulatory landscape.

Key Points:

1. Sweepstakes platforms are growing player acquisition at a faster and steadier rate than Real-Money Gaming, offering a scalable, low-friction entry channel.
2. While Sweepstakes see more one-time depositors and lower conversion rates, retained players show strong engagement and long-term value potential.
3. To maintain player interest, operators must continuously refresh content, gamification mechanics, and retention offers.
4. Sweepstakes allow legal market entry today while building a future-ready database of players for Real-Money Gaming as regulations evolve.

The Big Picture:

As regulatory environments evolve, global iGaming marketers are finding legal alternatives to reach U.S. audiences, especially in states where Real-Money Gaming remains restricted. Optimove Insights' analysis reveals the potential of Sweepstakes gaming as a complementary or even foundational growth channel in the U.S. market.

Based on data from over 67,000 players across Real-Money Gaming and Sweepstakes platforms, the findings deliver a data-driven roadmap for operators evaluating the long-term value of adding Sweepstakes to their portfolio.

Key Takeaways from the Research

1. Predictable Growth and Low Acquisition Friction

Sweepstakes operators are experiencing faster and steadier growth in player acquisition than their Real-Money Gaming counterparts (16% month-over-month versus 5%). With fewer legal constraints and no payment required to play, Sweepstakes offer a consistent and scalable acquisition funnel.

2. Conversion Remains a Hurdle

Sweepstakes conversion from registration to first deposit is significantly lower (12%) compared to Real-Money Gaming (51%), underscoring the importance of Day 1 onboarding experiences.
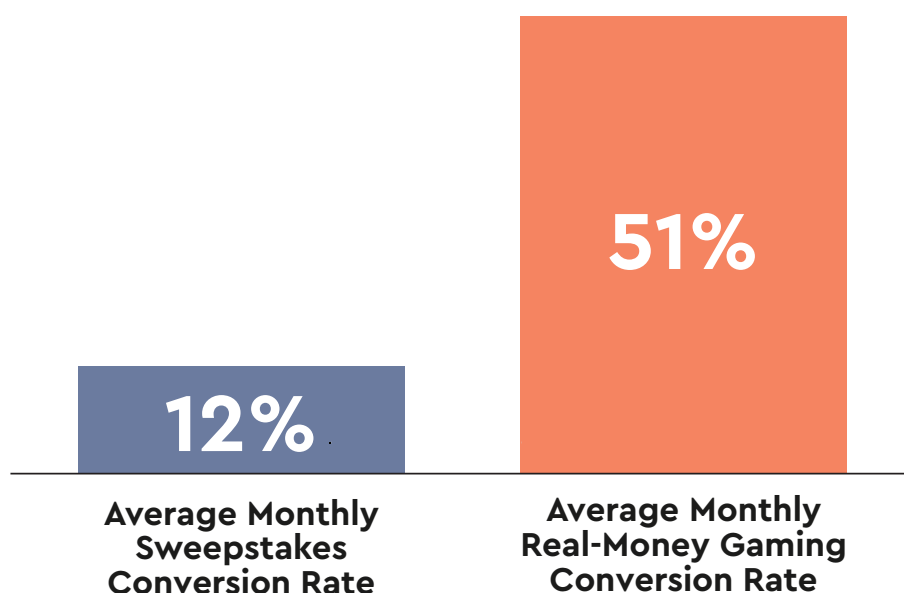
51%

12%

**Average Monthly
Sweepstakes
Conversion Rate**

**Average Monthly
Real-Money Gaming
Conversion Rate**

Based on representative sample of 30,242 Real-Money Gaming players and 36,877 Sweepstakes players from July 1 to December 31, 2024.

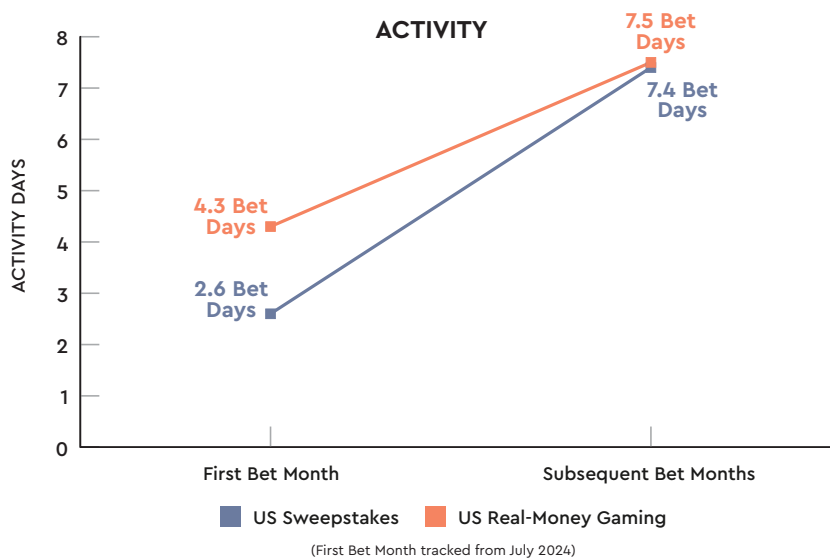Source: Optimove Insights

3. The "One-and-Done" Player Dilemma

Sweepstakes platforms see a higher proportion of one-time depositors. While some players drop off after an initial experience, those who remain show similar betting frequency and retention patterns to Real-Money Gaming players suggesting a valuable upside to driving loyalty.

4. Bet Size and Frequency Gap

Average monthly deposits and daily bet amounts are significantly lower in Sweepstakes. However, players who stick around often triple their number of betting days after their first month, offering strong LTV potential over time.

## Average number of bet days per player: First vs Subsequent Months

Based on representative sample of 30,242 Sweepstakes (Alternative Method of Entry) players and 36,877 Real-Money Gaming players from July 1 to December 31, 2024.

Source: Optimove Insights

5. Average Monthly Deposit Amount Higher for Real-Money Gaming Players

The average monthly deposit amount for Real-Money Gaming players is significantly higher than for Sweepstakes players: $878 compared to $263. That's more than 3.3 times greater. This difference highlights that for Sweepstakes operators growing player value over time is essential to approaching the revenue potential of Real-Money Gaming.

Sweepstakes average monthly deposit amount lower for Real-Money Gaming
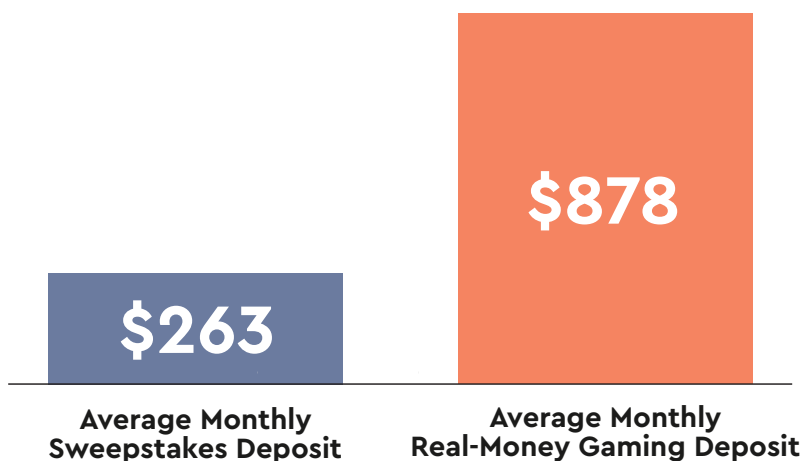
Real-Money Gaming average monthly deposit amount is 3.3 times higher than Sweepstakes.

Based on representative sample of 30,242 Real-Money Gaming players and 36,877 Sweepstakes players from July 1 to December 31, 2024.
Source: Optimove Insights

6. Constant Innovation Required

Because Sweepstakes rely heavily on novelty and low stakes, player fatigue can set in quickly. Operators must invest in content refreshes, gamification mechanics (e.g., leaderboards, badges), and compelling retention offers to keep players engaged.

7. A Bridge to Real-Money Gaming

Sweepstakes offer a dual advantage: they generate compliant revenue today, while building a database of players who may convert to Real-Money Gaming if and when regulation allows.

The Bottom Line

Sweepstakes are a viable marketing and engagement strategy. For operators seeking consistent acquisition, mobile-first engagement, and a lower barrier to entry, Sweepstakes represent a valuable complement to Real-Money Gaming. But success requires more than a launch. It requires constant optimization, personalized engagement, and ongoing innovation.

As regulations evolve, and customer demands increase, operators must remain nimble. The ability to attract, retain, and grow value from a Sweepstakes player base can become one key growth lever for operators.

For more information on this and other trends in gaming and sportsbook, contacts up to gain more insights contact us to request a demo.

About Optimove

Optimove, the leader in Positionless Marketing, frees marketing teams from the limitations of fixed roles, giving every marketer the power to execute any marketing task instantly and independently. Positionless Marketing has been proven to improve campaign efficiency by 88%, allowing marketing teams to create more personalized engagement with existing customers.

Optimove is recognized as the Visionary Leader in Gartner's Magic Quadrant for Multichannel Marketing Hubs. Being a visionary leader is a hallmark of Optimove. It was the first CRM Marketing Platform to natively embed AI with the ability to predict customer migrations between lifecycle stages in 2012.

Today, its comprehensive AI-powered suite is at the leading edge of empowering marketers to optimize workflows from Insight to Creation and through Orchestration. Optimove provides industry-specific and use-case solutions for leading consumer brands globally. For more information, go to Optimove.com.

About Optimove Insights

Optimove Insights is the analytical and research arm of Optimove, dedicated to providing valuable industry insights and data-driven research to empower B2C businesses.

For more information on this report and to get a demo on how to unlock Positionless Marketing and lead the customer experience, contact us to request a demo.