

# Test, Validate, Innovate



How can you **refine a game post-launch** to more fully satisfy player preferences? A recent example from Italy offers a framework for innovation—one that can be leveraged in other markets to evolve games in ways that truly resonate.

Sometimes you think you know which player groups are likely to adopt a new game – and which features they will enjoy. You might have tested concepts and planned the launch based on research and a current understanding of the projected player groups.

And sometimes players surprise you when their engagement with a game reveals unexpected preferences and behaviors.

“It’s exciting when this happens, because **players themselves are pointing the way to evolution,**” observes Federica Valentini, Vice President Instant Lottery Product Management & Development, Brightstar Lottery Italy. “But you can only turn those insights into action if you have collected and analyzed players’ feedback. In addition to extensive pre-launch research, we have found that **gathering insights from consumers after a game is in market** can reveal important new information and provide **a blueprint for continued innovation, specific to your players.**”

For example, when Brightstar Italy unveiled the POP 5€ game in October 2024 — created with the company’s Infinity Instants™ technology — they weren’t just launching a new scratch game, they were reimagining the traditional scratch-card product for the Italian market. The new game quickly captured attention with its vibrant, color-based mechanics. But what happened next offers a case study in how player insights can guide product evolution.

## A Strong Start with Detailed Understanding

The team in Italy took a data-driven approach to developing the initial POP 5€ game. “We segment our customer base thoroughly,” Federica explains. “Segmentation allows us to tailor product development based on critical factors such as demographics, price sensitivity, preferred game mechanics, themes, and more. A well-structured,

qualitative and quantitative market research process also provides us with a detailed understanding of player preferences and product value.”

The team tested and evaluated consumer reactions to various games created with Infinity Instants technology, then used the extensive feedback to design the first game. “We didn’t just apply the Infinity technology. We focused on the player experience to understand how to apply it,” notes Federica. At that point, they found that players responded most enthusiastically to Infinity’s ability to make a game mechanic simpler or provide a completely new way to play.

The resulting POP 5€ game featured a simple white face, free of typical game symbols, which stands out visually against other games in the Italian Scratch and Win portfolio.

The profusion of color that players discovered beneath the scratch coating was an entertaining surprise and an enhancement to the game’s symbol-match mechanic, allowing players to intuitively understand the color-based multiplier and prizes (see comparison graphic).

The POP 5€ instant game generated higher sales than previous scratch games launched at the same price point. Through the first five weeks after launch, it outperformed the previous two 5€ launches in sales (+10%), in retailer sell-in penetration (+5%), and in

## Boosting Visibility

To maximize player awareness within strict advertising limits, Brightstar Italy focused on creating a strong in-store presence for the initial POP 5€ game.

The team engaged retail agents early with a clear communication plan and provided training materials via its network portal.

Eye-catching point-of-sale (POS) displays were designed to highlight the game’s unique features. The POS materials included an innovative sliding-frame poster that consumers could interact with to reveal the uncovered game design, and a video for use on digital signage monitors in stores.

The product team communicated with consumers about the new game through banners, messaging, and push notifications on the My Lotteries website and app. They also developed an instant version of POP tailored to the preferences of omnichannel and digital consumers.

## Innovating the Classic Scratch Card Through Color

Standard Uncovered



Traditional black and white symbols

“Infinity” Uncovered



Colored symbols for enhanced engagement  
Surprising dynamic bonus positions

sellout penetration (+3%). Within three months of launch, the game attracted nearly 700,000 players, growing to 900,000 in the following quarters.

Based on player-panel surveys and observation, Brightstar Italy found that the profile of POP players skewed slightly younger (average age 48.5) and more male (52.5%) than the general instant ticket base.

Notably, the game appealed strongly to segments that are typically harder to engage, including selective players (24.6%), who were much more oriented toward entertainment and greater engagement with the game. These early adopters were drawn to POP's standout graphics and the novelty of color-based mechanics.

## Post-Launch: Turning Feedback into Features

While the team now understood which aspects of the game players appreciated, a **qualitative post-launch study** revealed why some players, after an initial burst of enthusiasm, had begun to trail off.

"The game's ability to attract attention and drive sales was significant. Players recognized the graphic distinctiveness of the proposal, and they perceived it

as offering a good level of entertainment compared to other games," says Federica. "But what we learned from the 'abandoners' – who had purchased the game five or more times in the previous month before deciding not to buy it again – is that **they desired a more involved, extended-play style game to sustain their interest.**"

Rather than consider it a setback, the product team saw it as **an opportunity to further develop the game's potential and harness more of Infinity Instants' capabilities** to deliver entertaining products that are color and feature rich.

They launched a **structured evolution process**, which included defining new proposals for the 5€ game and an upgrade to 10€, developing different product concepts that would increase the level of entertainment.

This new phase of product development yielded proposals for games that were uniquely possible to create with Infinity Instants technology.

The team performed **qualitative and quantitative testing** on both the 5€ and 10€ proposals, and as a family, to determine likeability and preferences. The new concepts were tested with current 5€ players, abandoners, and 10€ ticket buyers, to ensure broad

# POP 5€: Post-Launch Evolution

Post-launch evidence clearly underlines that POP is a distinctive and appreciated ticket, but it has gaming experience potential that can be further developed.

### Product Asset

- The players recognize the graphic distinctiveness of the proposal within the portfolio
- A good level of entertainment is perceived compared to other tickets
- It can attract new and occasional players

### Improvement

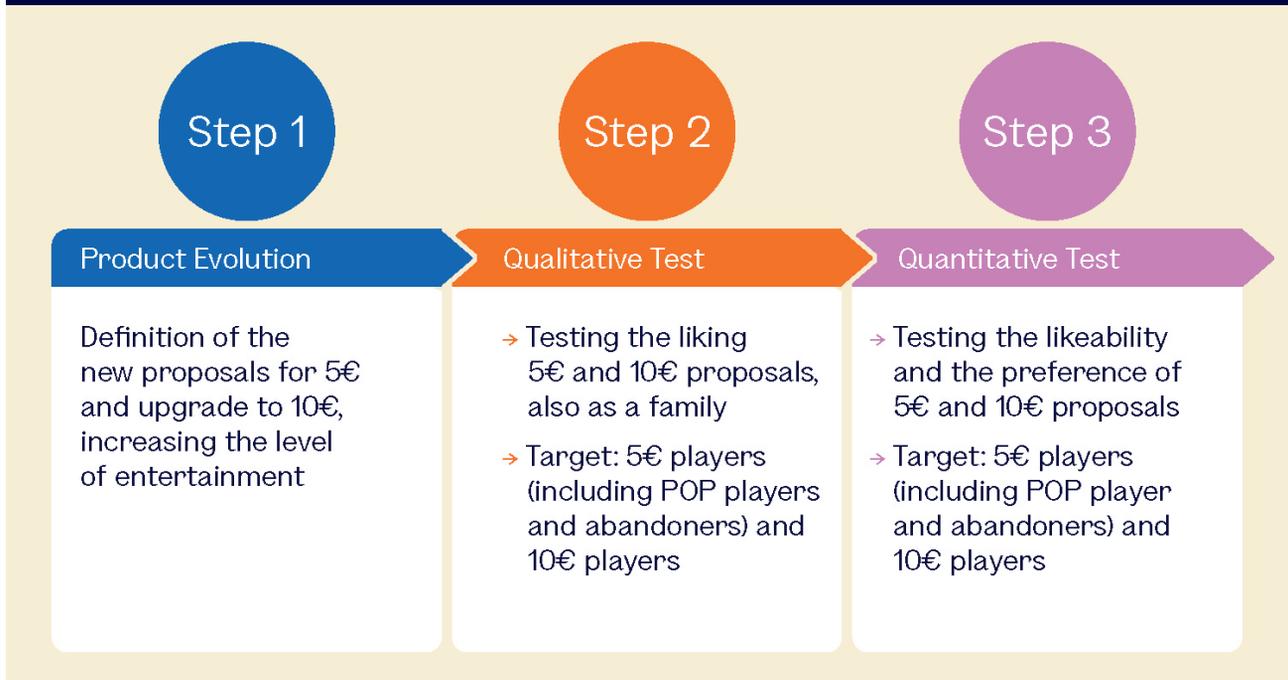
The player wants to increase the color feature on the mechanics, requesting higher level of entertainment and engagement

### Next Step

Starting from the assets appreciated by players, develop a new proposal that can increase the level of entertainment, also using extend play mechanics

Following a launch, lotteries can pivot to more closely match the game attributes that prove to be most desired by players in that market. Infinity Instants technology, by virtue of its design, offers more options for doing so.

# The Qualification Process for New POP



Player insights, gained through post-launch research, are critical for understanding who is playing a game and how to further evolve a product to meet their preferences.

appeal and relevance prior to a planned launch in 2026.

Asked for insights on how others could structure a useful post-launch study, Brightstar’s Annalisa Spano’, Senior Director, Global Market Insights, emphasized that it is a key research step to assess performance and consumer perception: “The research should measure satisfaction, loyalty, and repurchase intent, while identifying areas for improvement,” she notes. “Effective post-tests involve both active players and those who abandoned the game — to understand the reasons for their dissatisfaction—as well as retailers with significant sales, who can share their own feedback as well as consumer reactions.”

Adds Annalisa: “We recommend combining qualitative methods – such as interviews or focus groups involving at least 30–40 participants – with quantitative analysis involving a sample of no fewer than 300 people. This combination helps to ensure a deep understanding of a product’s strengths, weaknesses, and the impact of key factors on players’ future purchase behavior.”

## Greater Potential: The Power of Flexible Game Design

The case underscores that innovation doesn’t end at launch. In fact, that’s where it begins again. “Post-

launch evidence clearly underlined that POP is a distinctive and appreciated game, and one with even greater potential to fulfill,” says Federica.

When it comes to evolving a game, Infinity Instants technology, designed for flexibility, makes it a powerful partner in innovation. The technology gives lotteries an extensive toolset and endless options to create and adapt games to player preferences through its ability to enhance virtually all elements of an instant ticket with color; enable all-new play mechanics; and customize graphics for games that can be offered across channels.

“We’ve seen that sometimes it may not be as simple as doing a ‘version 2’ of a new game without fully understanding the player segments who are drawn to it and what type of entertainment they’re seeking,” reflects Federica.

As lotteries look to excite new audiences and retain existing ones in the face of growing competition from other entertainments, the case offers a powerful reminder: The best ideas can come from players themselves.

