

ASO

App Annie

App Store Optimization

THE DEFINITIVE PLAYBOOK



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INTRODUCTION

What Is App Store Optimization?

The app market is one of the most competitive spaces in the world. And it's crowded — with approximately 2 million iOS App Store apps and 2.5 million Google Play Store apps¹. Between the sheer number of apps and the skyrocketing costs of advertising, successfully acquiring and retaining users is more challenging than ever.

As an app marketer, your job is to cut through that clutter and get in front of the right audiences. Increasing exposure for your app helps increase downloads, boost store rankings and ultimately drive revenue for your business.

A highly valuable strategy to increase long-term exposure is app store optimization. App store optimization, or ASO, can be defined as **the ongoing process of testing and measuring updates to app store marketing assets, with the goal of increasing visibility and driving more downloads.**

For many app publishers, the first thing that comes to mind when they think about ASO is building out a keyword strategy. While certainly an important component, optimizing your app for organic discoverability goes well beyond keywords.

























ASO is much more robust and strategic than many may think, comprising research, testing and a lot of creativity. In this playbook, we'll equip you with best practices for improving app discoverability and downloads among quality users. In addition to App Annie's expertise, we'll share insights from the industry's best and brightest, and offer actionable advice and tips you can apply to your own ASO efforts.

¹As of July 20, 2016 according to *App Annie Store Stats*

About App Annie

App Annie delivers the most trusted app data and insights for your business to succeed in the global app economy. Over 500,000 registered members rely on App Annie to better understand the app market, their businesses and the opportunities around them. The company is headquartered in San Francisco with 450 employees across 15 global offices. App Annie has received \$157 million in financing from investors such as e.Ventures, Greenspring Associates, Greycroft Partners, IDG Capital Partners, Institutional Venture Partners and Sequoia Capital.

Intelligence customers are responsible for over 50% of all revenue on Google Play and iOS

Games	    
Social	   
Investors	  
Platforms/ Mobile	   
Entertainment/ Media	   
Other	   

Learn more about App Annie Intelligence. [Request a demo.](#)



IMPROVING DISCOVERABILITY

There are many ways a user can stumble across your app; search is one. While most resources emphasize a keyword strategy for ASO, it's better to think of it as one tool in your arsenal.

In this chapter we'll look at the ways you can boost your app's visibility in the app stores including:

- Choosing keywords
- Categorizing your app
- Keeping tabs on competitors
- Improving ratings and reviews

Let's get started!

Choosing Keywords

With millions of apps available between the top app stores, choosing keywords that will move the needle for your business is no easy feat.

Your keyword strategy should neither exist in a vacuum or be static — it must be fluid and continuous, taking into account competitor and cultural changes plus the impact on your app's ranking, downloads and revenue.

So how can you select the right keywords to start with? Let's dive into the most effective methodologies.

- **Categorize Yourself for Discoverability:** In addition to keywords, you'll want to consider the categories where you want to compete. Your category strategy should take into account where you'll be most competitive as well as where you can organically attract the most relevant users.
- **Pay Attention to Competitors:** Finding the best keywords means closely tracking and monitoring competitors. By analyzing how a competitor ranks for a specific keyword, or determining which other apps rank for your app's keyword, you can strategically select keywords to help your app rank higher.
- **Leverage User Reviews:** One of the best ways to describe your app uses language from user reviews — their words may resonate better with prospective users than the ones you had in mind. Additionally, reviews can provide new cultural and geographic insights into certain user segments.
- **Stay on Top of Your Ranking:** Once you've selected a group of keywords, it's important to review how these keywords will impact your ranking. In addition to monitoring keyword impact on key performance indicators (KPIs), you should also pay attention to other factors that will affect ranking, such as:
 - Download levels
 - Download velocity

There are other elements that may factor into app store ranking (e.g., uninstall rates, keyword density, etc.). While it's important to take into consideration the many micro-signals that could impact your ranking and work to optimize them, it's difficult to say with certainty that they will positively or negatively impact your rankings in the App Store or Google Play Store.

Keyword Explorer (ASO)

Explore which apps are displayed by the app stores for different search terms.

social

Trending: netflix, tinder, zynga, snapchat, live.ly, snow, glu

Device

Country

Date

iPhone

United States

Jul 14, 2016

Top Apps for social

Search Volume: 115,433 (Jun 2016) | Difficulty: 88.7 (Jun 2016) | Search Volume / Difficulty: 0.00

#	App	2082 Results	Est. Downloads Jun 2016	Est. Revenue Jun 2016	Has keyword in title	Last Update	Category rank	Category	Star Rating	Ratings
1	Tumblr Yahoo		386,487	7,121	No	Jul 12, 2016	11	Social Networking	★★★★ 4.0	308,777
2	DOWN Dating: Meet, Chat, Date with Hot Singles Down, Inc.		35,000	1,41,888	No	Jul 06, 2016	74	Lifestyle	★★★★ 4.5	7,988
3	Pinterest Pinterest, Inc.		815,731	7,121	No	Jul 12, 2016	4	Social Networking	★★★★ 4.5	1,006,153
4	Twitter Twitter, Inc.	▲1	926,798	1,384	No	Jul 05, 2016	1	News	★★★★ 3.5	338,731
5	Polyvore - Fashion, Trends, Style & Shopping Polyvore	▲2	76,216	7,121	No	Jun 23, 2016	40	Shopping	★★★★ 4.5	28,549
6	Vine Vine Labs, Inc.		383,853	7,121	No	Jun 23, 2016	19	Photo and Video	★★★★ 4.0	80,460
7	We Heart It We Heart It	▼3	353,348	7,121	No	Jun 29, 2016	24	Photo and Video	★★★★ 5.0	89,174
8	Facebook Facebook, Inc.	▲5	1,213,067	7,121	No	Jul 07, 2016	2	Social Networking	★★★★ 3.5	2,933,338
9	Triller - Music Video Maker Triller LLC	▲2	285,483	7,121	No	Jun 20, 2016	14	Photo and Video	★★★★ 5.0	19,903

Using Keyword Explorer for Marketing Intelligence, you can assess how competitive certain keywords are for you and your competitive set. In this instance, “social” is being used by several apps across a variety of categories — perhaps not the best search term to focus on to maximize discoverability.

Categorizing Your App

There are two ways to be ranked in the app stores: by category and overall. Every app publisher is responsible for choosing how to categorize their own app; it's important to choose a category that is relevant to your app, but also one where you stand to best the competition.

On the iOS App Store, you can choose a primary and a secondary category. The primary is most important as it's where your app will be displayed in search results and the top charts. However, your app will be listed under both categories in the Explore tab.

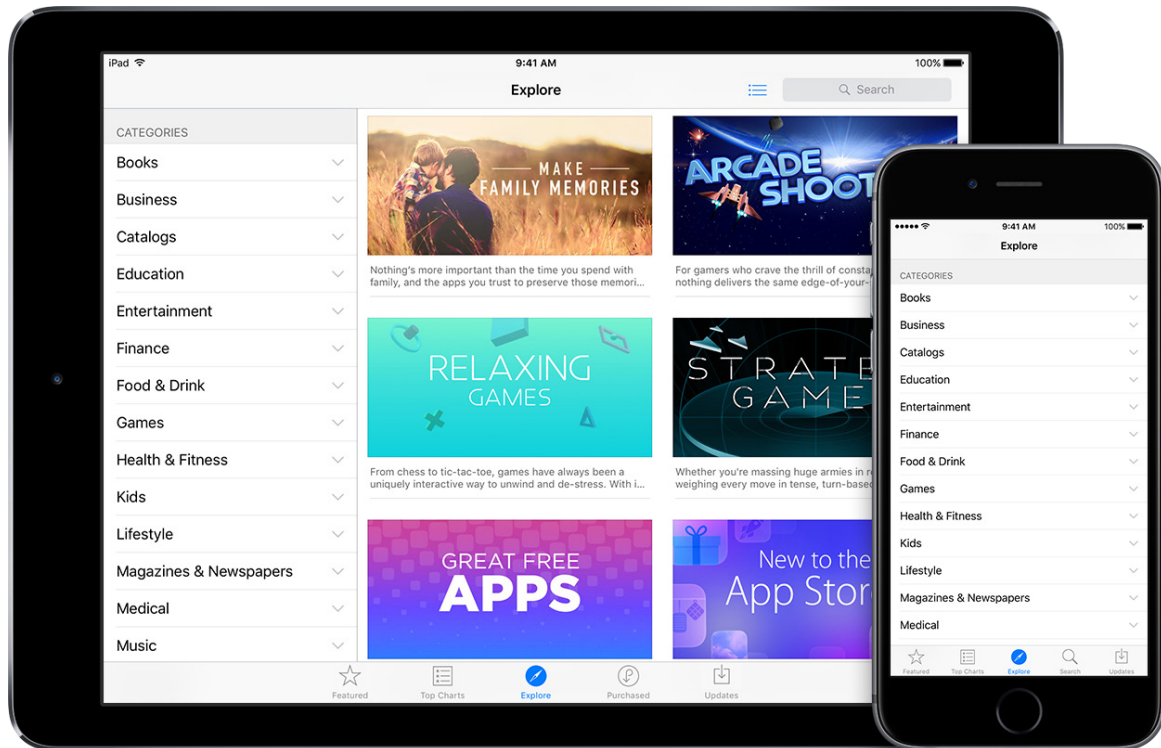


Photo Credit: [Apple Developer Site](#)

So how should you choose your primary category? Things to keep in mind:

- Where you believe your app naturally fits
- How target users will search for your app
- How competitor or similar apps are categorizing themselves

To improve discoverability, some publishers recategorize their apps to move into less-cluttered territory. For instance, in April [Twitter](#) was [recategorized from Social to News](#), effectively moving back to a top-ranked position.

For iOS, publishers can select up to two categories for apps, and three categories for games. Remember that you'll want to select categories that will be both relevant for your app, but not overly saturated.

For Google Play Store, publishers can only choose one category for their app, so it is even more critical to choose carefully.

Keeping Tabs on Competitors

Before you dive into selecting the categories for your app, you should first research what your closest competitors are doing. This will help you determine the competition in that category and show how users are searching for similar apps. Choosing a less competitive category could improve discoverability for your app.

In addition to the primary category, Apple introduced subcategories as part of its iOS 8 release, which divides the App Store into micro segments and allows developers to rank highly in specific fields. For example: [Yelp](#), which could be categorized in the cluttered Social Networking category or in Food and Drink (where its competitor [Foursquare](#) is listed), is categorized in Travel, where it maintains a secure spot in the top 10.

Creating a User Feedback Loop: The Influence of Ratings and Reviews

Now that we've gotten the more well known ASO tactics out of the way, let's focus on lesser-known tips.

You probably know that positive ratings and reviews affect your app's performance in the app store, but did you know you have more control over them than you think? Optimizing for higher ratings and reviews can improve your app's ranking as well as the amount of organic traffic it receives.

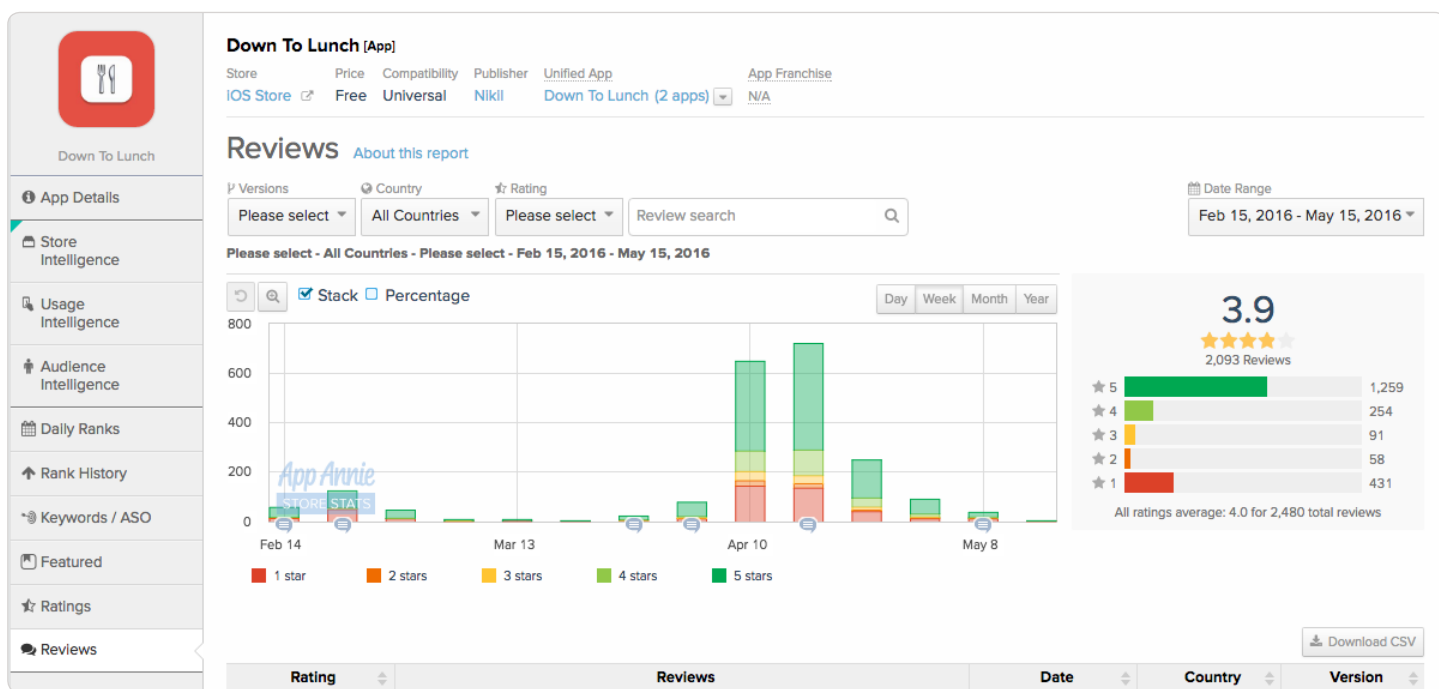
Want more? App Annie Has it:

[3 Ways Ratings and Reviews Can Boost App Downloads](#)

Encourage Optimal Reviews and Ratings

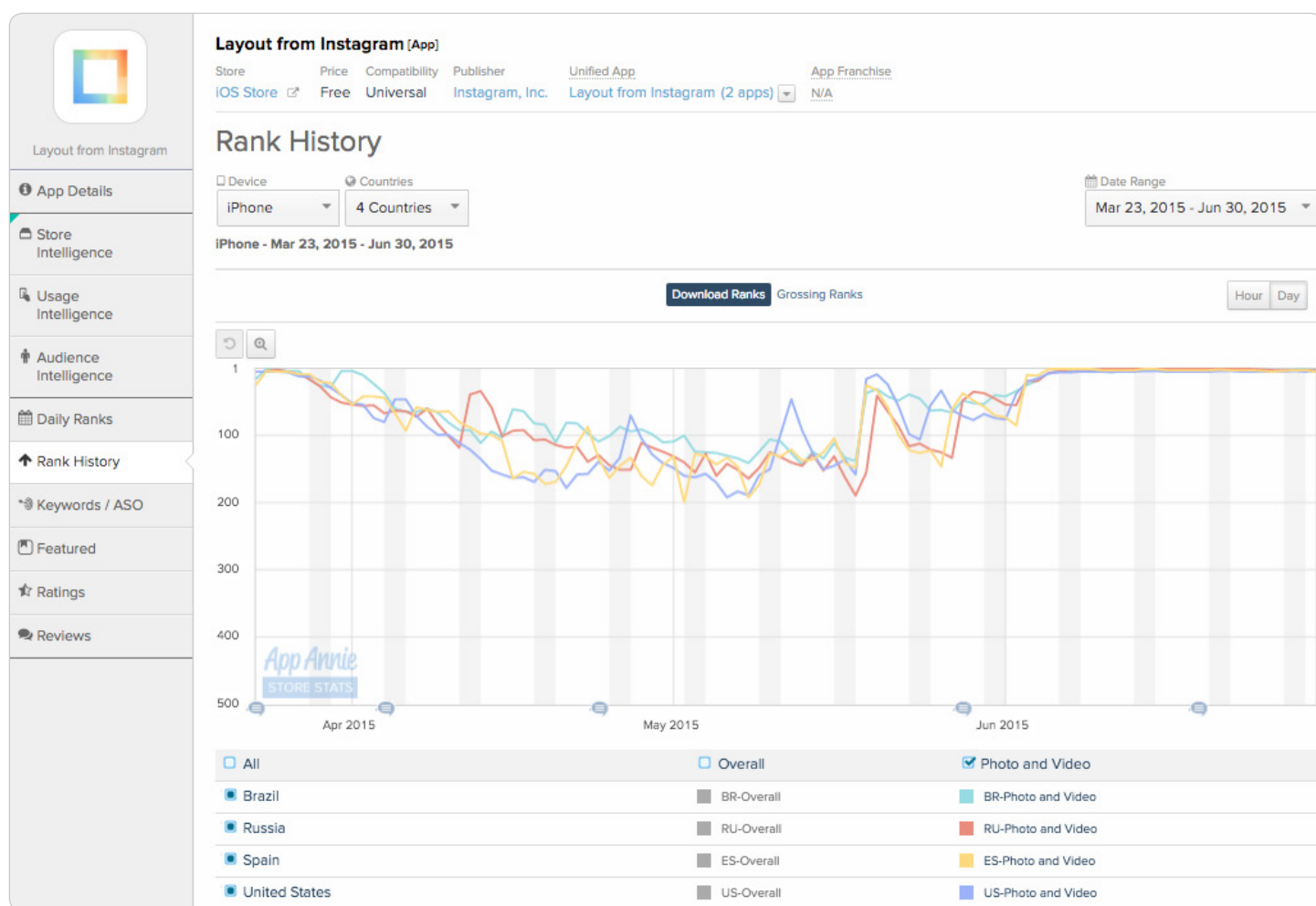
An app's initial debut rarely goes off without a hitch. There may be persistent bugs, performance issues on different devices, or features that don't yet exist but users would like to see. This can lead to some very low ratings and reviews in the beginning. Don't get discouraged — even unfavorable reviews may be rife with information on how to update your app. As long as you're swift and take user feedback seriously, changing public opinion can go smoothly.

Social dining app [Down to Lunch](#) launched in May 2015 and attained viral growth across the US in Spring 2016. However, a few components within the app received negative feedback from users. For example, during initial account setup it wasn't immediately clear that users could invite their entire contact list to download the app. When the team addressed this concern, *Down to Lunch's* rating started to climb to a 4.0 while growing its ranking in the competitive Social Networking category on iOS.



Down to Lunch received an influx of negative reviews due to features its users felt were “spammy.” When concerns were addressed, negative reviews tapered off.

When [Layout from Instagram](#) on iOS released in late March 2015, 11% of its ratings were 1-star and 57.2% were 5-star. Some reviews asked for additional features or noted problems. Updates in April and May addressed these user concerns, and by early June ratings had improved to 68% 5-star for the period, with only 2.7% 1-star reviews.



Shortly after a May update, Layout from Instagram had a surge in rank within the United States, Russia, Spain and Brazil Photo and Video category on iPhone.

Reactively updating is not the only way to improve ratings. Great moments in an app can also spark positive reviews. For example, on a dating app you could ask for a rating after a successful match or first reply message. In a game, it may make sense to prompt users after they complete a hard level or unlock a power. The quality of your app's first ratings and reviews can vary, but it's very important to get honest reviews early.

Prompt Users for Direct App Feedback

Similar to prompting users to provide a rating after great moments in the app, you can also ask if they are enjoying the app experience. Your next prompt should reflect their answer: If a user currently likes the app, ask them to submit a review; if they're unhappy, direct them to give feedback on ways to improve.

“Responding to users on Google Play is one of our favorite ways to improve store ratings. With one-to-one customer service, we typically find the underlying reason for 1-star and 2-star reviews, resolve it with the user, and ask them to revise their rating. The result is a higher rating, and more importantly, an active and happy user.”

— *Alex Mackenzie-Torres, CMO, Moovit*

Gain Honest and Trusted Reviews

Reviews show potential users the pros and cons of downloading and using your app. What can be more troubling than bad reviews are no reviews at all, and when an app goes live the review section on your app page will be barren. Rather than waiting for an unknown user's first impression, ask your trusted network to submit reviews documenting their honest thoughts.

If your app has beta testers who know the ins and outs of the app, ask if they're willing to submit a review. Their experience will be more credible than a new user's, whether or not the feedback is positive or critical. Another good avenue is to approach professional peers whose opinions you trust — people who have made similar apps or are experts on the app's content — to see if they'll download and review your app.

Diligently Improve Ratings and Reviews

Turning negative ratings and reviews into positive ones will take time and consistent action. The faster you respond to user feedback and update your app, the happier users will be. In the end, more and higher reviews will result in better ranks and more downloads. Knowing just how and when to gain ratings and reviews is also important: key interactions are a great time to gain 4- and 5-star ratings.

Depending on the platform you develop on, the way you address user reviews may be slightly different. For instance, Google Play allows developers to respond to user reviews. Having a visible record of positive developer-user interactions may factor into a prospective user's decision to download an app.

One of the best ways to collect user feedback is through custom forums. For teams that don't have a dedicated engineer for that (or the additional budget), third-party software development kits like UserVoice are a good alternative.

ASO CHEAT SHEET: IMPROVING DISCOVERABILITY



CHOOSING STRONG KEYWORDS

Use multiple reference points. Be sure to reference user reviews, competitors and other resources when considering keywords. Most importantly, choose keywords you can realistically compete on.



SELECTING A CATEGORY

It's about fit, user behavior and your competitors. Before selecting an app category, consider your app's most natural fit as well as how your target users are most likely to find you.



GENERATING ORGANIC REVIEWS

Pay attention to what your users are saying. Track your rankings and reviews to see how users respond to new updates and features. Remember to mine this feedback for insights.

Be responsive. In addition to addressing user feedback behind the scenes, take the time to show that you're listening. This can be done through your blog and release notes — or through direct response on Google Play.



PROMPTING USER FEEDBACK

Target high points. Improve the likelihood of receiving a positive review by asking for feedback when a user is having a great moment with your app.



HOW APP ANNIE CAN HELP

Determine the best category for your app by researching your competitors' categorization using [Store Intelligence](#).

Leverage [Marketing Intelligence](#) to improve your presence in the app stores by identifying optimal keywords to add to your strategy.

Boost your app's rank by keeping tabs on user feedback within ratings and reviews using our free product, [Store Stats](#).



OTHER RESOURCES

[Google Play Developer Console](#)
[Instabug](#)
[iTunes Connect](#)
[Doorbell.io](#)
[Apptentive](#)



NEXT STEPS

Analyze the impact of ratings and reviews for competitor apps to build a more informed user engagement strategy and improve conversion rates. Sign up for [Store Stats](#) to get started.



MAKING A FIRST IMPRESSION: APP ICONS AND MORE

Someone in your life has probably told you at some point “You only have one chance to make a first impression.” The same applies to introducing your app to potential users.

The way you merchandise your app in the app store — choosing the words, images and videos to include — makes all the difference when it comes to convincing users to give your app a shot.

ASO isn’t just about getting your keywords and name right — it’s about using both visual and written elements to tell a story about your app and let users know what they should expect post-install.

In this chapter we’ll look at the various assets you can use in your app store preview, including your:

- App icon
- App name and description
- Screenshots
- Video

We’ll also cover best practices in testing to make sure you know what your highest-performing assets are.

Let’s start with what’s arguably your most important creative asset: your app icon.

App Icons

Despite containing only a few thousand pixels, your app icon wields immense influence over whether or not a user will download your app.

This is the first visual element people see when they view an app store listing. All those pixels have to come together to convey what your app is about, in the simplest manner possible.

But what makes an ideal app icon? We turned to Michael Flarup of app icon design agency [PixelResort](#), who's well known for his [app icon templates](#), for best practices.

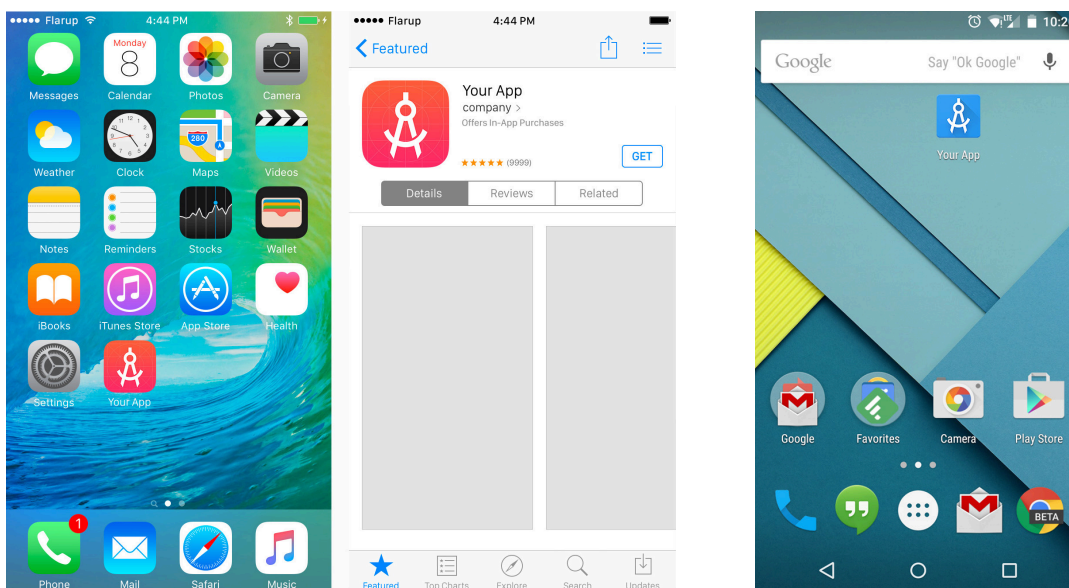


Photo Credit: [App Icon Template](#)

Want more? App Annie Has It:

[ASO: How to Pick an App Name, Icon, Screenshots & Keywords](#)

[How to Design Your App Icon](#)

Tips For Designing the Optimal App Icon

- **Keep It Simple:** Complex icons can be difficult to distinguish on smaller devices (or when nested in folders on a smartphone or tablet) and should be avoided.
- **Design for Scalability:** One of the most important aspects of an icon is scalability. Because the icon is going to be shown in several places throughout the platform — and at several sizes — it's important your creation maintains its legibility and uniqueness. Overly complicated icons often fall victim to bad scalability.
- **Be Recognizable:** Your icon will be vying for attention among thousands of other icons with the same 1,024-pixel canvas. While scalability is a huge part of recognizability, so is novelty. Try out several variations on your design. Line them up in a grid and glance over them, seeing what design aspects catch your eye.
- **Check the Competition:** Make sure you're up to speed on what your direct competitors — plus top apps — are doing. Having an icon that's too similar to another app can cost you valuable brand awareness.
- **Stand Out From the Crowd:** This almost goes without saying, but try to make something unique. Mimicking a style or a trend is perfectly fine, but make it your own. Your app icon is constantly competing with other icons for the users' attention, and standing out can be a perfectly valid argument for a design.
- **Test, Test, Test:** The quickest way to find the app icon that will perform best is through sequential A/B testing; however, note that the way you can execute on this will vary by app store. Android developers have it a bit easier, as Google Experiments allows you to easily set up tests and collect results. iOS developers will have to use a third-party option. Of course, sometimes you need to balance science and intuition in order to create an iconic app icon.



Spotlight on a Great App Icon: Color Switch

Mobile game [Color Switch](#) is an excellent example of an effective app icon that excels in nearly all areas: It's **simple**, **scalable** and **recognizable**.

In this instance, simplicity and scalability are connected. *Color Switch*'s dead-simple design allows it to look good at any size on any device.

The fact that the icon is tied to key elements of gameplay makes it immediately and meaningfully recognizable. It cleverly tells users what they're about to experience before they open the app.

"We've found the best app icon tests come from trying out completely unique variants from the original. Once we identify a winning image, we then test minor modifications until we arrive at what we consider an optimized winner. We often back-test the new designs against the original control icon to validate the results."

— Jeff Gurian, Senior Director of Marketing at Kongregate

Screenshots

While your app icon may pique attention, the screenshots drive home the core features and benefits. Each screenshot should highlight a specific benefit and use supplemental text, whenever possible, to help explain key features to the user.

Get the Most Bang For Your Buck With Screenshots

- **Use All Available Spaces:** You can include up to five screenshots in the iOS App Store and eight in the Google Play Store to promote your app. Use them all to maximize visibility and sell your app's value.
- **Prioritize Key Messages:** The first two screenshots are the most visible; in fact, they show up in search results for the iOS App Store. Make sure your more important selling points are featured in these screenshots.
- **Tell a Story:** Screenshots are your opportunity to tell an engaging story to your target audience before they interact with your app. Make sure your screenshots address their needs.

Want more? App Annie Has It:

[How To Design the Best Screenshots](#)

[A/B Testing Screenshots to Improve Installs](#)

Spotlight on Screenshots: Boom Beach

In just five images, Supercell's [Boom Beach](#) is able to communicate key game features and wrap it into a compelling narrative. The first two screenshots can also stand alone to entice prospective users to install.

Rather than rely on in-game screenshots, Supercell composed custom graphics that use gameplay screenshots with eye-catching characters and text in the foreground.

Finally, the publisher made a deliberate choice in terms of image orientation. Though the device is played in landscape mode, the screenshots appear in portrait mode — potentially a decision resulting from A/B testing.



Boom Beach uses compelling visuals and text to succinctly communicate the core features of the app to prospective users.

Video

Both Google Play and iOS App Store permit the use of a short video to highlight the key features of an app. This is your chance to give users a sneak peek into the in-app experience. Videos are no small investment, so make sure you take a few tips into consideration before committing to video.

We turned to [Apptamin](#), well-known for its app videos and trailers, for pointers on how to create an awesome — and effective — app marketing video.

Pacing and Structure

- The first five seconds are critical. You want to compel the viewer to watch the next few seconds, then the next few, and so on.
- In a similar vein, be mindful of length. Currently 00:15–00:25 is the industry standard. Use those seconds wisely.
- Keep the pace brisk, but not too fast. Just enough speed to keep the viewer interested without losing them.
- Focus on the best features first. And be selective, since it may not be feasible to mention all core features in your video.
- Tell viewers what to do next. Whenever possible include a direct call to action.

Production

- If you're going the in-house route, keep your video simple. As tempting as it may be to use lots of effects and transitions, they may look cheap.
- Music is an important element in setting the tone. Find something that evokes the right emotion; avoid overused music.
- Since some users are watching with the sound off, use text and motion graphics to explain key points that may be covered by audio.

Fine Print

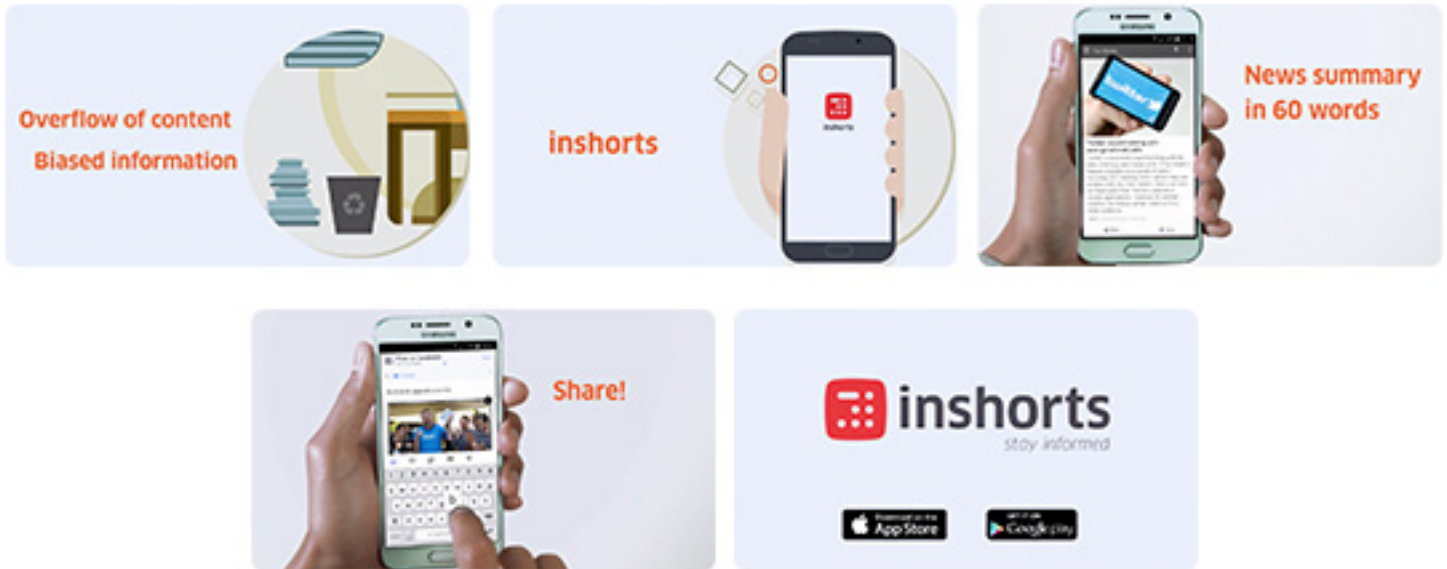
- It should go without saying, but be sure not to violate copyrights with your images, music or words.
- Follow all app store guidelines for app preview videos.

Spotlight on Video: Inshorts

The preview video for [Inshorts](#), a service that condenses and delivers news in under 60 words, quickly highlights the app's core value and benefits.

The video begins by setting up common problems, then introduces the brand as the clear solution. Each frame showcases value and key features, accompanied by action-oriented copy.

A strong ending frame closes the video with the tagline, “stay informed,” and tells viewers where to download the app.



Inshorts’ [preview video](#) succinctly communicates its value proposition.

Testing Your Creative Assets

Chances are, your first asset designs won’t be the final ones. It’s crucial to continuously test new designs to identify the ones that attract high-quality users and convince them to download your app.

We asked [StoreMaven](#), an A/B testing platform for marketing assets, to share tips and best practices for testing creative assets to improve ASO.

App Store Design: Providing Content Users Crave

Onboarding doesn’t begin when users open your app for the first time — it begins at the app store. Providing the right mix of app metadata (e.g., your name, description and creative assets) helps to reduce friction during discovery, download and first use.

Finding the right assets, driving the most relevant messages and matching user expectations are crucial. According to [data from StoreMaven](#), testing app store elements can increase your conversion rates and prevent conversion decrease over time.

Two Types of Users

The most fundamental thing to understand when you begin working on app store design is that the **majority of users will not interact with your full content** — and that's okay! Those who do interact are the ones you need to impress.

There are two distinct groups of users to any store page:

- **Decisive Users:** They will view only the most visible elements and decide whether or not to download based on their first impression. Decisive users either click the install button (Instant Install), or leave the page (Instant Drop) — no other action is taken. According to StoreMaven, **60% of users won't swipe past your first two images**.
- **Explorers:** They will interact with your content before deciding to download (Explore and Install) or leave the page (Explore and Drop). Explorers will watch the video, scroll through the gallery, and interact with description and reviews. They make a more informed decision than Decisive users, who may have a false impression of your app which could lead to disappointment and uninstalls.

For that reason, an Explore and Install user is of higher quality than an Instant Install user. They have higher long-term potential to be a strong user and are significantly less likely to bounce after initial download.

The decision of whether to Instant Install, Instant Drop, or Explore (as well as the quality of that exploration) is based on the user's first impression of your store pages, **making those visible elements the most important**.

Different Views for Different Stores

The first view of your app makes Google Play and iOS App Store users fundamentally different. Developers are often confused to find that their best performing Google Play creatives perform drastically lower on the iOS App Store.

On Google Play, users get a full picture upon page load — a prominent featured graphic on the top of the page, with a short description text on the bottom. According to StoreMaven, this full view makes Google Play users 40% more likely to be a Decisive user, and make a quick decision, than iOS users.

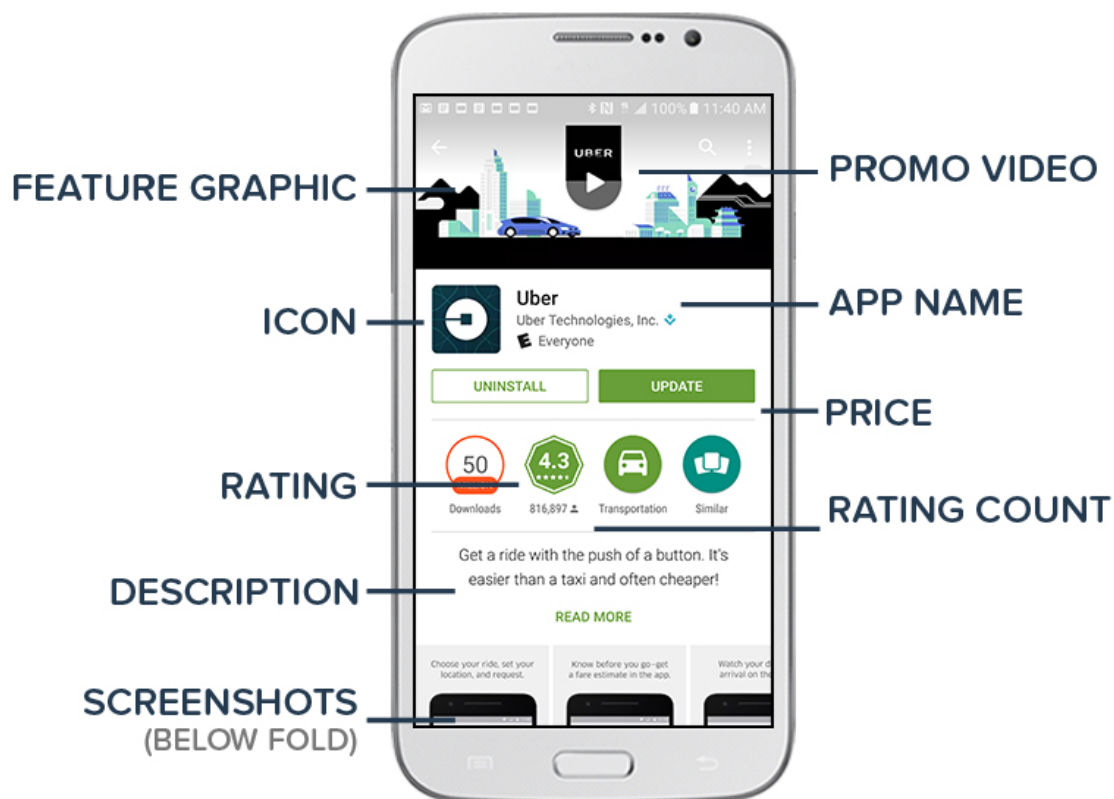
Tips For Creative Testing Based on App Store

Based on the app store you use, your testing focus may change — and your creative assets will likely change as well. Keep these tips in mind.



Google Play

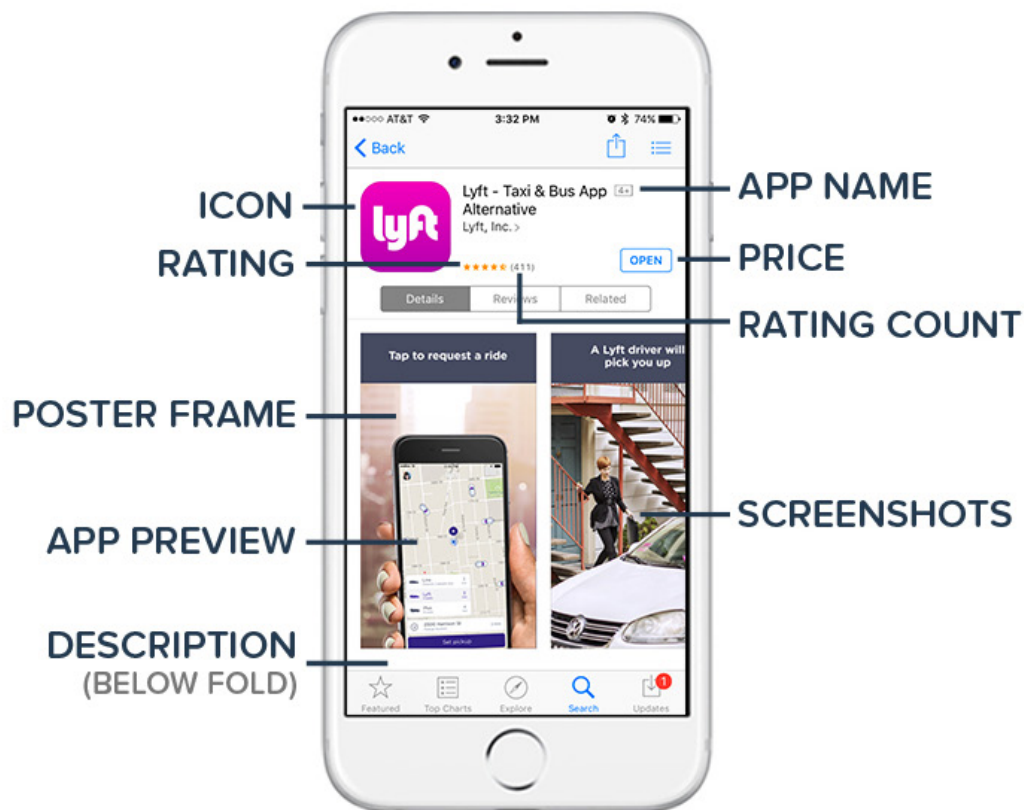
- **Featured Graphic** - This is the top image banner on the page. If you have video, this image sits under the 'play' button. As the first image users will see, it should display the best aspect of your app. Testing your featured graphic can increase app store conversion by 40%.
- **Video** - Video appears at the very top of your Google Play page and, unlike on iOS, is the main exploration users take. Keep videos short (about 10% of users will drop off every five seconds!) and show your strongest messages first. Video — but only when done well — can impact conversions by 23%.
- **Icon** - Your icon is crucial for a good conversion rate. Plus it's the one element that stays relevant after a user downloads. Testing icons can increase conversions by 15%.
- **Short Description** - 100% of your users will see the short description text (the 80 characters before the "read more" button), and only an average of 5% will expand your full description. Changing this text can increase conversions by 16%.





iOS App Store

- **First Two Screenshots** - On average, 33% of users scroll through your gallery and only 9% see your full gallery, so your first two images by far have the most impact and can improve your conversion rate by 35%.
- **Poster Frame/Video Presence** - When you add a video to iOS, it takes the place of your first image, fundamentally impacting the way users engage with the page. In iOS, the poster frame (the image beneath the video) must be a frame from your video. You absolutely must be aware of this when designing your video. While only 7% of users will actually watch your video on iOS, 100% will see your poster frame. Testing poster frames can increase conversions by 35%.
- **Icon** - On iOS, your icon has more prominence than on Google Play. Your icon has even more visibility here, increasing your conversion potential by 17%.
- **Short Description** - Only 2% will expand to read more so make the first line count.



ASO CHEAT SHEET: MAKING A FIRST IMPRESSION



APP ICONS

Keep it **simple**, **scalable**, **recognizable** and **unique**.

Keep testing until you find the most effective variation.



SCREENSHOTS

Maximize visibility: That means five screenshots in the iOS App Store and eight in the Google Play Store.

Tell a story, but start with the close: Your screenshots should have an engaging narrative, but make sure to show your two best screenshots first.



VIDEO

Keep them short, sweet and punchy.

Choose **simplicity over flash**.

Sound and text are equally important.



TESTING

It's important to continuously test new designs to optimize for the highest performing creative assets. Your testing strategy will shift based on the app store you focus on. Keep the potential of each asset in mind and prioritize accordingly.



HOW APP ANNIE CAN HELP

Use [Store Stats](#), one of our free offerings, to inform your asset optimization strategy by researching your competitor's icons and screenshots within the app store.

Dig deeper into the performance of your own app by connecting to [App Analytics](#). Check to see if your latest screenshot update impacted downloads and usage.



OTHER RESOURCES

[StoreMaven](#)

[SplitMetrics](#)

[Store Listing Experiments](#)

(Google Play only)



NEXT STEPS

Grow conversion from page views to downloads by leveraging competitive research for apps across countries, and see how your own asset updates impact usage with [App Analytics](#).



GOING GLOBAL: HOW ASO FACTORS INTO MARKET EXPANSION

Part of developing an app expansion strategy is successfully moving into other markets. Just because your ASO strategy works in one market doesn't mean it will extend well to others.

This is where **localization** comes in. Localization is the **process of adapting your app, content, creative assets and marketing tactics to new locations or markets**. In addition to language differences, localization takes into account cultural differences.

Global ASO supports two primary goals:

1. Improving discoverability for your app in a market where you already have a presence.
2. Developing a strategy and tactical plan for launching your app in a new market.

Improving Discoverability in an Existing Market

Your global ASO strategy, which includes the same core components as your overall strategy, should be tailored to play to cultural nuances within the major regions where you have a presence.

While it may seem like you don't need to localize beyond language — for instance, don't *all* under-25s love social media? — cultural norms and references can affect how users respond to your app.

This is another area where diligently paying attention to user reviews can play to your advantage. For example, in the international sensation [Trivia Crack](#) from Etermax, many user reviews were positive in Spanish-speaking countries, but negative in other markets. Why? Because consumers didn't gravitate to topics that related more to Latin America and Spain, such as “soccer.”

Once Etermax realized this, they allowed users to submit their own questions to the app — and *Trivia Crack* shot up in rankings, especially in the US. The team also brought on localization managers to make sure all questions and answers were both culturally relevant and accurate.

We turned to app localization experts at [OneSky](#) for their best practices and tips to keep in mind when expanding into new markets.

It Starts With Translation

Even if people in your target country use an English-language app, they may not use English-language search. Localization starts with app store optimization (ASO) in foreign languages. First, translate the title, description and keywords to help users find your app easily. Next, translate the text within your app for a better overall experience.

Depending on the country, the iOS App Store may index for more than one language. Apple provides a list so developers can see which languages are indexed for each store. For example, Japan's iOS App Store indexes in both English (US) and Japanese — which means that you actually have 100 characters for the keyword field *for each language*. And this is true for most app stores: If you use multiple languages, you end up with more than 100 total characters for keywords. **Utilize this double-up opportunity wisely.**

Start by translating to the official language of the country. When you've completed that, and monitored download and rating progress, add other languages. Each country has a smaller international base that speaks specific dialects and unofficial languages.

Optimizing for Conversion

Once you've localized your keywords and app title, you'll want to consider localizing other elements

of your app to appeal to specific regions. To do this, think about ways to customize your screenshots, videos and app icon to relate more to regional culture.

Localizing assets like screenshots make it immediately clear to users that they'll be able to use your app in their local language. That giant Empire State Building on your app store page? Consider replacing it with the Eiffel Tower when your expansion strategy takes you to France.

Researching New Markets To Launch In

If you're considering launching your app in a new market, the best place to start is with research. Get an understanding of regional competition, categories your competitors are listed in, and the strength of the local active user base.

This initial round of research will inform updates you make to keywords, descriptions and assets for your app and help you grow exposure and convert prospects into downloads.

If you want to see which keywords will resonate more in a new market, scan for keywords and phrases that competitors are using, and see how their apps are ranking for these keywords. Additionally, you can use your own reviews to quickly see which keywords people are already using to describe your app by filtering by country.

Gaming publisher King released a special version of [Candy Crush](#) for the South Korean market built specifically for the [KakaoTalk](#) messaging platform. This special effort in localization [paid off in spades](#).

It can't be emphasized enough: Just as ASO is more than keywords, localization is more than translation. The culture and attitudes of a given international market may mean a change in features, naming or even approach.

“When penetrating new markets, app store optimization is more critical than ever as it affects a massive multiplier on all sources of new users and the momentum behind them, both paid and unpaid. ASO requires a deep understanding of your target users and how they find apps in their respective marketing — I cannot overemphasize the importance of having a depth of local insight and review in this process.”

— James Peng, Head of User Acquisition, Match Group

ASO CHEAT SHEET: GOING GLOBAL



TRANSLATION

Translate key text to improve

discoverability: Keep in mind that even if users understand English, they may still search in their native language. Translating the title, description, keywords, etc. will allow users to find your app easily.

Capitalize on markets that index multiple languages: The iOS App Store may index multiple languages, depending on the country. Use that valuable real estate wisely.



CREATIVE ASSETS

Make assets locally relevant: Adjust your screenshots, videos and app icons to make them as relevant and impactful as possible in the regions you're targeting.



NEW MARKETS

Start with research: See what competitors are doing as well as the apps your target audience gravitates toward. Be sure to check keywords, descriptions, reviews and the creative assets being used in market.



HOW APP ANNIE CAN HELP

Easily search keywords among dozens of countries on iOS and Google Play to identify the best keywords to target for your localization strategy and improve visibility with [Marketing Intelligence](#).

Track keywords at the country and category level to develop a tailored presence in the app store using [Marketing Intelligence](#).

Develop an expansion strategy using competitor activity as a benchmark with [Intelligence](#).



OTHER RESOURCES

[OneSky](#)

[Smartling](#)

[Transifex](#)



NEXT STEPS

Optimize your localization strategy by using [Store Stats](#) to identify competitive insights and market trends to improve your app's discoverability around the world. Sign up for free now.



MEASURING SUCCESS: WHY ASO IS A LIVING PROCESS

So you've updated your creative assets, improved your ratings and reviews and successfully boosted your app's downloads and rankings. All done, right?

Not exactly.

ASO is an ongoing process, something that requires nurturing and attention and, you guessed it, optimization. This means:

- Monitoring your keyword rankings (and your competitors')
- Spotlighting new features and UI enhancements
- Updating and testing creative assets to highlight app updates
- Analyzing reviews and rankings and leveraging feedback
- Adjusting the marketing levers that drive downloads and spark reviews
- Localizing your app's metadata to increase discoverability and conversion across regions

Implementing a holistic and iterative ASO program will not only improve organic discoverability, it will increase your chances of convincing users to download your app.

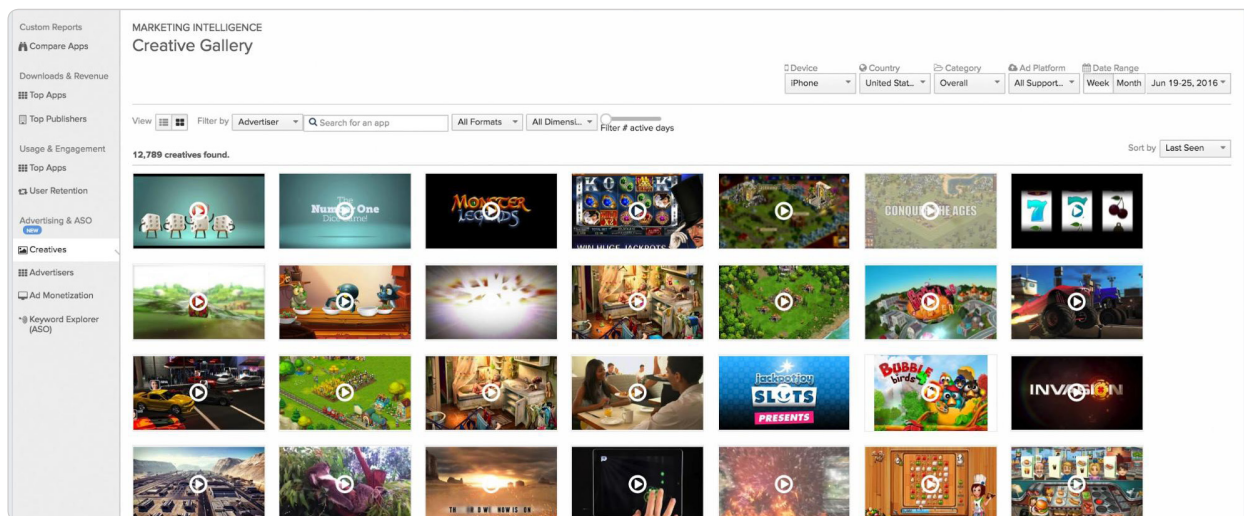
In an increasingly cluttered app store, it's no longer enough to choose the right keywords. You also need to think through how you're telling a story to target users around the world. And the only way to improve over time is to stay on top of your rankings, reviews and ratings — as well as your competitors'.

As the industry standard for mobile app intelligence, App Annie can make monitoring your ASO performance easier than ever. You'll be able to see the impact of key changes to keywords, categorization and creative assets, and uncover new avenues to success.

New to ASO? [Sign up](#) and get started today. Ready to take your program to the next level? [Request a demo for Marketing Intelligence](#).

Introducing Marketing Intelligence From App Annie

Optimize your app store presence and gain visibility into your competitors' user acquisition campaigns with Marketing Intelligence.



With Marketing Intelligence You Can:

- **Boost your app's discoverability** and continually improve your app store presence with the help of our ASO tools
- **Keep tabs on competitor advertising** activity by tracking when and where ads are running
- **Identify new business opportunities** by uncovering the networks where advertisers are running user acquisition campaigns
- **Gain transparency into your campaign** to find out exactly where your ads are running at the publisher level

Key Features:

- **Robust ASO tools** to help you assess keyword search volume and rank difficulty
- **Creative gallery** that helps you get insight into your competitors' advertising initiatives
- **Detailed view of top advertisers and publishers** to better inform your user acquisition strategy
- **Metrics to help shape your advertising strategy** by analyzing the percentage of impressions running across an advertiser, publisher or ad network

Take your app store optimization strategy to the next level.

[Request a demo](#) of Marketing Intelligence today.

App Annie