

GOING MOBILE

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MORE AND MORE gaming operators are launching Smartphone applications to attract the fast growing mobile player community with instant access

to sportbooks, casino games and poker tables. Business operations are supporting themselves with new job positions such as mobile game managers and mobile ; -..ate managers, and departments are being prepared to handle mobile support requests. Today, we are witnessing an industry getting ready for the mobile boom much predicted by industry experts and research groups.

As the industry is getting ready to deliver stable and robust mobile games to players, we can fully expect affiliates to follow this trend in the coming months. '.v.itti a:rY_:a:e systems are being updated to support mobile logistics with player registrations, deposits and wagering, but mobile marketing is still a new practice for most of today's affiliates.

Going mobile will allow existing affiliates to extend their services to the blossoming mobile player community, but how will players find your app and how can you maximise your exposure in the apps marketplace?

Strict restrictions for gaming apps

There has been much discussion as to how the strict stance of app stores towards gambling is crippling the gaming industry, and only a handful of operators have developed mobile apps that have been approved by the respective Q&A processes of the stores. Unfortunately, it isn't possible to get a pre-authorised confirmation from the app stores. Despite the fact that Apple has approved gaming apps in both the UK and Sweden, it is no guarantee that any gaming app will be accepted for these markets; this decision is made by the app store's Q&A process.

Understanding the mobile ecosystem

In order to successfully market mobile services, marketers must understand the mobile ecosystem. The mobile ecosystem is the Smartphone environment that explains how apps are being evaluated by the stores and how easily or, indeed, how difficult it is for users to find your app.

The ecosystem can be compared to search engine marketing concepts: as websites are achieving better search engine rankings with proper optimisation techniques, a good link building strategy and social media integration, mobile apps face different rating criteria in each app store.

Today, apps are the driving force behind the consumption of Smartphones. With half a million apps available in the Apple App store and a quarter of a million apps in the Google Android Market, app stores are an extremely important element of the mobile ecosystem.

Native app or HTML5 app

When going mobile, the app architecture is very important. Whether you develop a native or HTML5 app, they represent two very different marketing strategies. Native apps must be installed on the Smartphone and are bound to its operating system, similar to what we experience with Windows and Mac computers. HTML5 apps are mobile web applications that execute in the mobile Internet browser and are, therefore, executable across mobile device operating systems.

As a marketer, the decision regarding the app architecture will provide the framework for how it can be marketed. Native apps need to be downloaded from an app store or distribution site, whereas HTML5 apps are simply accessible by pointing a browser to the app URL.

HTML5 apps are not usually accepted in app stores, as this is primarily reserved for native apps. This means that your customers will not find you in the app stores if you have an HTML5 app. There are ways to package an HTML5 app into a native app to gain access to app stores, but this might be frowned upon by many users if it is not done properly.

Achieving top positioning in app stores

After submitting your app store application and receiving approval from the Q&A process, life can quickly get lonely if your preparations are not thorough. Think of app stores as large online shops with several hundred thousand items in stock. Each item is an app, sorted into categories, the smallest category having 15,000 listed apps. Now you need to make your app visible.

Let's look at some of the elements marketers could consider in preparation for an app submission.

The app launcher icon

Each app is presented with an icon. This icon becomes the visual identity of the app that users identify with in the stores and when launching the app on their Smartphones. Make sure that your icon follows good design principles and looks inviting for potential users.

Android app stores accepting gaming apps

Name	URL	Description
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Getjar	www.getjar.com	- A recognised app store with millions of visitors.
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Opera Mobile Store	mobilestore.opera.com	- The leading mobile browser recently launched its own app store. Increasing popularity.
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Freeware Lovers	freewarelovers.com/Android	- A popular app directory.
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Pdassi	android.pdassi.com	- A fast growing European-focused app store.
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Appoke Social App Store	appoke.com	- A popular social app store.
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Brothersoft	www.brothersoft.com/mobile/android	- Wide reaching app store with worldwide sub affiliates.
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Native vs HTML5: pros & cons

Native	HTML5
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Pro: Very fast as locally installed on phone	Pro: Cross platform
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Pro: Provides excellent user experience	Pro: No local installation is needed
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Pro: Utilises all phone features	Pro: Easy to manage and measure
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Con: Updates require new app installation	Con: A new language, needs some time to mature
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Con: Strict publishing rules for gaming apps	Con: Network traffic can be slow
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Con: Dependent on app store policies	Con: Not installed on local devices
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The app description

This is probably the most important part of your app submission. App stores usually support both a short and long description. With tight length restrictions, it is a challenge to write an excellent, concise description. Not only are users evaluating apps based on their descriptions, but the app store search engine will also index the descriptions in local app search engines. My recommendation is to

make enough time to prepare your descriptions before you start your submission.

Screenshots

This the first 'sneak preview' users see from your app. Make sure that Screenshots are up-to-date and use action screens that give the user an accurate preview of the game experience (and not Screenshots of the registration or deposit page, for example).

Promotional videos and images

More and more app stores now support additional promotional images and videos to integrate to your app inventory page.

Use this opportunity to provide additional information about your app and use videos, as this is an excellent presentation tool to explain what makes it unique.

Get started today

Mobile apps are still in their early stages. There are less than one million apps on the market, compared to over 100 million websites, so securing a good position in app stores is definitely possible if done correctly. However, don't merely submit an app to an app store and wait for traffic to build up. Work actively to promote your app in forums, blogs and social media sites. Optimise your descriptions and carefully monitor your download metrics to understand how the mobile ecosystem relates to your app.