# App Store Optimization

## ✓ Done Right

*Learn how to master organic growth for your apps and mobile games.*

**BONUS CHAPTERS** from **Splitmetrics** & **Apptamin** included

# App Store Optimization

# Done Right

Understand how App Store Optimization really works and
how to implement a winning strategy within your business

Presented by: App Radar

App Radar

www.appradar.com

App Store Optimization Done Right

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# Foreword

I was there too.
I had no clue what I was doing.

I read it all.
Every bit of information I could find on the internet.
I studied it.
I tried everything.
I won.
And I lost it all.
After 150.000 downloads a day with 0 marketing budget, my app got kicked out of Google Play.
The funny thing is, I´ve never regretted that it happened this way.
It was a chance.
It was my chance.

I teamed up with some of my smartest friends.
This was the birth of App Radar.

I witnessed the rise and the fall of many so-called App Store Optimization experts.
Some of the concepts of the days back then are still being taught as the way App Store Optimization should be done.

As you can imagine, 10-year-old strategies have a high chance of failing in today's competitive app market place.
With that said, I am happy to take you with us on the journey of best practices in competitive App Store Optimization.


- Thomas

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CHAPTER 1

# Introduction

# Introduction

## What is App Store Optimization?

App Store Optimization (ASO for short) is the process of i**mproving the visibility of your app within a mobile app store**, thus helping it appear more relevant in searches by potential customers.

App Store Optimization is often referred to as SEO (Search Engine Optimization), which describes a similar marketing-related process of boosting your web content within search engine results.

Both processes share similarities like keyword optimization, backlinking and conversion optimization. The most important difference between SEO and ASO, however, is that SEO applies to online web search engines, whereas ASO applies to the performance of apps in mobile app stores like **Google Play Store or Apple App Store (iTunes)**. If this sounds too abstract, don't worry. Let's have a look at the following checklist explaining the main differences and similarities between ASO and SEO.

| **SEO** Search Engine Optimization | **VS** | **ASO** App Store Optimization |
|---|---|---|
| **Search Engine** | | |
| Google Search, Bing, Yahoo | | Apple App Store, Google Play |
| **On-Page** | | **On-Page** |
| Title Tag<br>H1, H2, H3<br>Keyword Density<br>Page Speed<br>Bounce Rate | | App Name (Title)<br>Description<br>Keywords (iOS)<br>Usage & Quality Metrics<br>Uninstall Rate |
| **Off-Page** | | **Off-Page** |
| Links<br>Anchor Text<br>Social Signals | | Backlinks<br>Ratings & Reviews<br>Download Stats |
| **Goals** | | |
| Traffic (Visitors) | | Downloads (Users) |

*The Differences between ASO and SEO*

# Why is ASO important?

Since **more than 2 million apps are available in iTunes Connect** and further **3,3 million apps are offered by Google Play Store** (Source: Statista), it's very likely that there is at least one similar app, trying to reach the same target users as you do.



*The number of available apps in the major mobile app stores*
*(Data Source: Statista)*

The primary goal of App Store Optimization is to **increase downloads and the number of users** of your app while optimizing your app's visibility. So, the first step to maximize your download stats is to get your app found by users. But how can you do this?

To understand how to get more users to install your app, you first have to understand how people are searching and finding apps.

*65% of apps are discovered through search*
*- Apple*

People are mostly hunting for specific apps in the leading app stores like Google Play Store and iTunes App Store. According to a more detailed study by Tune, **47% of iOS apps are discovered through app store search**. On **Google Play Store**, even **53%** of downloads are triggered by search. This makes clear that app store search is the most common method for discovering new apps.

## How users find apps



| 47% | 53% | 15% | 12% | 11% | 12% | 10% | 9% | 11% | 6% |

App Store Search | Word-of-mouth | Web Search | Top Chart | Featuring

*App Discovery Methods – How users find apps*
*(Data Source: Tune)*
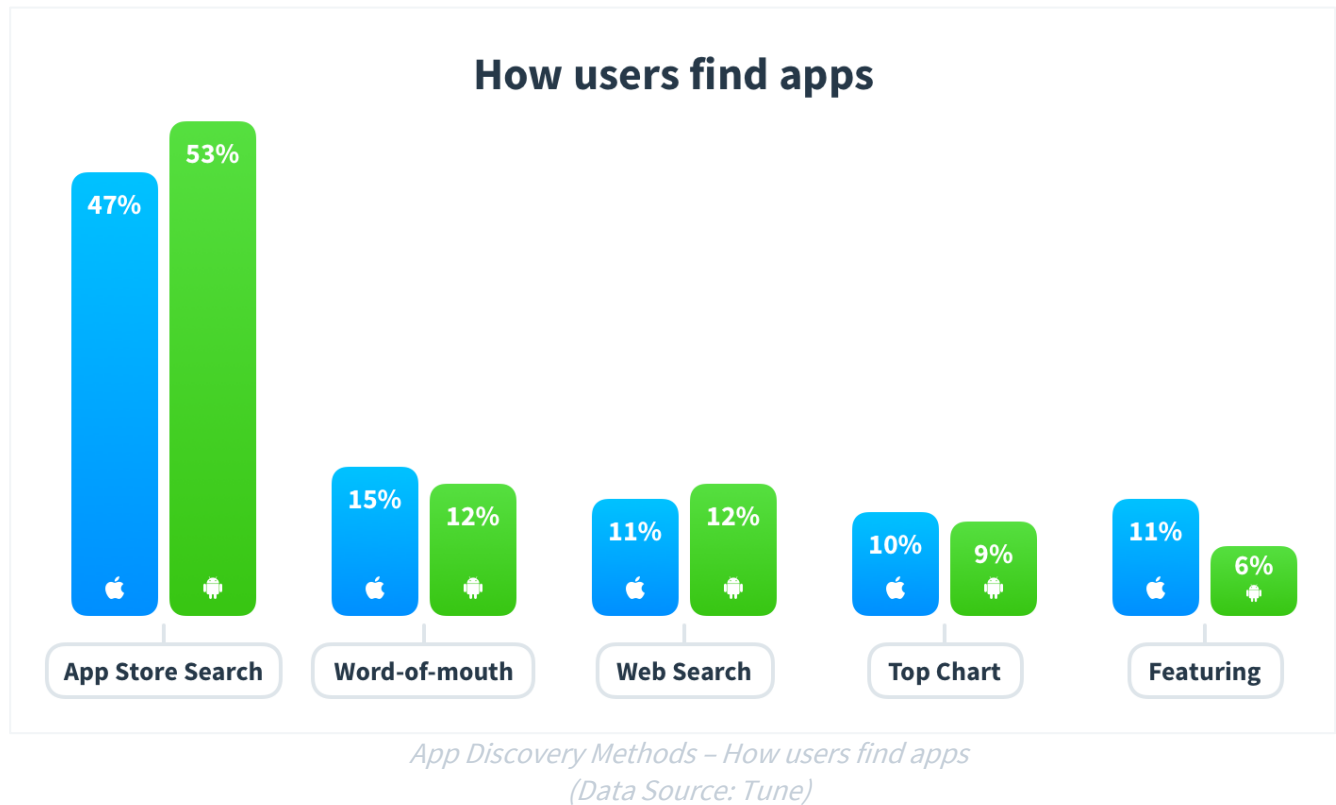
***By achieving a high position in relevant search results, category rankings and app store top charts, your app gets in front of interested people searching for new apps or games.***

An app's appearance and position in the app stores strongly impact its download number. The higher your app ranks in associated app listings, the more relevant it appears in customers' eyes. Higher ranking apps are not only considered more relevant, but also get more downloads since users usually don't scroll through all the available apps.

# Benefits of App Store Optimization

As you now know that most users find apps by searching the app stores, you probably realized that App Store Optimization is a must if you want to get your app in front of the right users.

Still not convinced? Let's have a look at how you could benefit from App Store Optimization before we dig deeper into the matter of ASO.



Optimizing your app for organic app store search is probably the most efficient marketing initiative for mobile apps and games. Why do we think so? The reasons are simple:

## *App Store Optimization Benefits*

- ✔ Organic downloads have a high impact on your user acquisition cost mix
- ✔  Organic uplift can leverage all other marketing strategies
- ✔ More downloads lead to higher visibility and higher visibility leads to more downloads
- ✔ Organic users show higher loyalty (more revenue)

For sure, there is no uniform method when it comes to acquiring new app users. However, App Store Optimization is an inherent part of most international App Marketing strategies – It should be a part of yours too.

CHAPTER 2

# Old-School ASO
# & What Went Wrong
# Over the Last Years

# Old-School ASO & What Went Wrong Over the Last Years

Most articles on App Store Optimization you find on the internet merely rely on what we call "old-school ASO tactics".

It is often said that extensive research and usage of popular keywords are the only means to boost downloads. Most articles claim that keywords should follow particular characteristics like high search volume and other traffic values. Some say you need to pick keywords based on fictional figures such as the chance of achieving higher rankings for it. One thing everyone agrees on, however, is that App Store Optimization is a tedious process requiring expert understanding of the relevant App Store search algorithms.

That leads many people to believe that App Store Optimization is a far too complicated and time-consuming marketing method in terms of seeing results. Consequently, they go for expensive paid advertising campaigns – this can be a huge mistake in your app's marketing mix.

### *We believe the days of old-school App Store Optimization are over.*

Regardless of expert analysis and opinions available, the app store algorithm is still a black box. Therefore, an **effective strategy requires rapid testing and changes**. This way, one can base their optimizations on *real* results, not speculative metrics or keywords. As long as you can analyze and optimize quickly, **it is possible** to do **ASO at scale** while relying on **real data only**.

Let's explain this further in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

# App Store Optimization Done Right

# App Store Optimization Done Right

Chances are high that you've already come across sources falsely claiming the following:

- ☠ App Store Optimization is about ranking difficulty & traffic values
- ☠ A complete detailed keyword research and analysis is necessary before you start your optimization
- ☠ You need to invest significant time to understand how ASO works

Many people believe this is how App Store Optimization works. But there's a catch: **These tips are outdated and might not lead to any significant results nowadays!** Here's why:

- ✔ Apple and Google don't provide REAL information on keyword difficulty and traffic (Except for Search Ads)
- ✔ Apple and Google don't provide information on which keywords lead to downloads (so far)

**What does that mean?**
If you follow the advice spread in outdated ASO articles and rely on ASO Tools providing made-up data, you will end up in the middle of nowhere.

**How can we help?**
Over the last few months, we've been working closely with some of the most successful players in the field of App Store Optimization to develop rock-solid tactics that will boost your apps in the stores. Our true goal is to make your product visible for millions of users searching for apps and mobile games in the app stores.

Let's find out how App Store Optimization is done right!

# Old-School ASO is dead: When did it all start?

The release of iOS 11 gave developers a choice: they could either keep old reviews or delete them.

Until then, this was not possible.

With every update, all past reviews were deleted. This meant the **app store marketing efforts had to start from zero again**. If you wanted your app to have the average star-rating displayed, it had to receive at least five reviews per localization (country). At the same time, it was not possible to publish app updates for the Apple App Store for a while. The mandatory Apple review cycle used to take around 2-3 weeks. App Store Optimization therefore required a lot of patience.

Luckily, **a lot has changed** in the meantime and **new possibilities for smart and agile app marketers emerged**. The review process now takes a few hours only (for the majority of updates) and you can keep app reviews and ratings from older versions.

In the Google Play Universe, there've been a lot of improvements too. Google Play adapted its app store ranking algorithm several times over the last few years. By now bad quality apps (high crash rates, rare app updates) get punished and apps with high user engagement rates appear higher in search results. At the same time, Google tends to show a greater number of metrics and performance indicators in its Google Play Console (former Developer Console).

Since late 2017, Google has been providing detailed traffic data like installs per keyword to selected Beta developers. Soon this will be released for all Google Developer Accounts. (The ASO Community refers to this as the "ASO Earthquake")

All these changes and improvements show that **high quality and good performance are of great value for marketing mobile apps**.

This leads up to the next point:

*If you want to bring your app further, you need to be fast and agile
in doing App Store Optimization.*

# Why should you change your ASO strategy?

Nowadays, the app store algorithm reacts to metadata changes much faster than it used to. That means when you do App Store Optimization tests by quick-editing app page metadata, you get almost instant feedback on the effects.

That's why we strive for implementing **a new way of doing App Store Optimization**. Here's an overview of changes when using a new approach to App Store Optimization (with App Radar).

## Old Way VS New Way
App Store Optimization     App Store Optimization

| Old Way | New Way |
|---------|---------|
| Spend endless hours on keyword research | Let App Radar's AI evaluate keywords for you |
| Analyze your competitors for days | Let App Radar assess your competitors for you |
| Wait weeks until you can analyze the results | Test your ASO strategy & see results within hours instead of weeks |
| Use various tools for different process steps | Optimize at high pace (all in one tool) |
| Spend days in becoming an ASO expert before you see results | Get motivated and supported by an ASO Scroe and merely solve the displayed issues to optimize efforts |

*Old-School App Store Optimization vs. the new Way of ASO*

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CHAPTER 4

# The App Radar
# App Store Optimization
# Framework

# The App Radar App Store Optimization Framework

To help you with establishing a high-end App Store Optimization process, we developed this **ASO Framework** for you. It guides you through four levels of App Store Optimization excellence and provides guidance and tips for optimizing your app or game for higher visibility and downloads in mobile app stores.

## The App Store Optimization Framework

How to get your ASO strategy up and running for professional app store marketing

### Level 1: ASO Starting Point

- [ ] You know the basic mechanics of App Store Algorithms
- [ ] You make use of ASO-relevant metadata
- [ ] You set up continous keyword tracking

### Level 2: Analyze & Improve

- [ ] You regularly analyze keyword rankings
- [ ] You know how to fix minor ASO issues for keyword optimization
- [ ] You regularly check download rates and performance indicators

### Level 3: Grow Your User Base

- [ ] You localize app store information on a professional level
- [ ] You reached initial downloads & are focused on growing the user base
- [ ] You do A/B testing and know which page elements drive conversions

### Level 4: Keyword Selection Strategy

- [ ] You dominate a niche of keyword searches with your app
- [ ] You set up detailed competitor monitoring and know what to do better
- [ ] You regularly push app updates for continuous optimization

*App Store Optimization Framework for becoming an ASO expert*

# Level 1: ASO Starting Point

If you are just getting started with App Store Optimization, we recommend that you **first acquaint yourself with  ASO mechanics**. Let's start with factors that might influence the ranking of your app.

App stores, just like search engines, use sophisticated algorithms to sort search results based on the calculated relevance of a product for a specific query. This relevance is determined by several components like the appearance of the search terms in metadata, downloads, or ratings.

Even though the exact ranking algorithm is not public, **it is possible to deduce factors influencing app store rankings by evaluating experiments and various industry insights.**
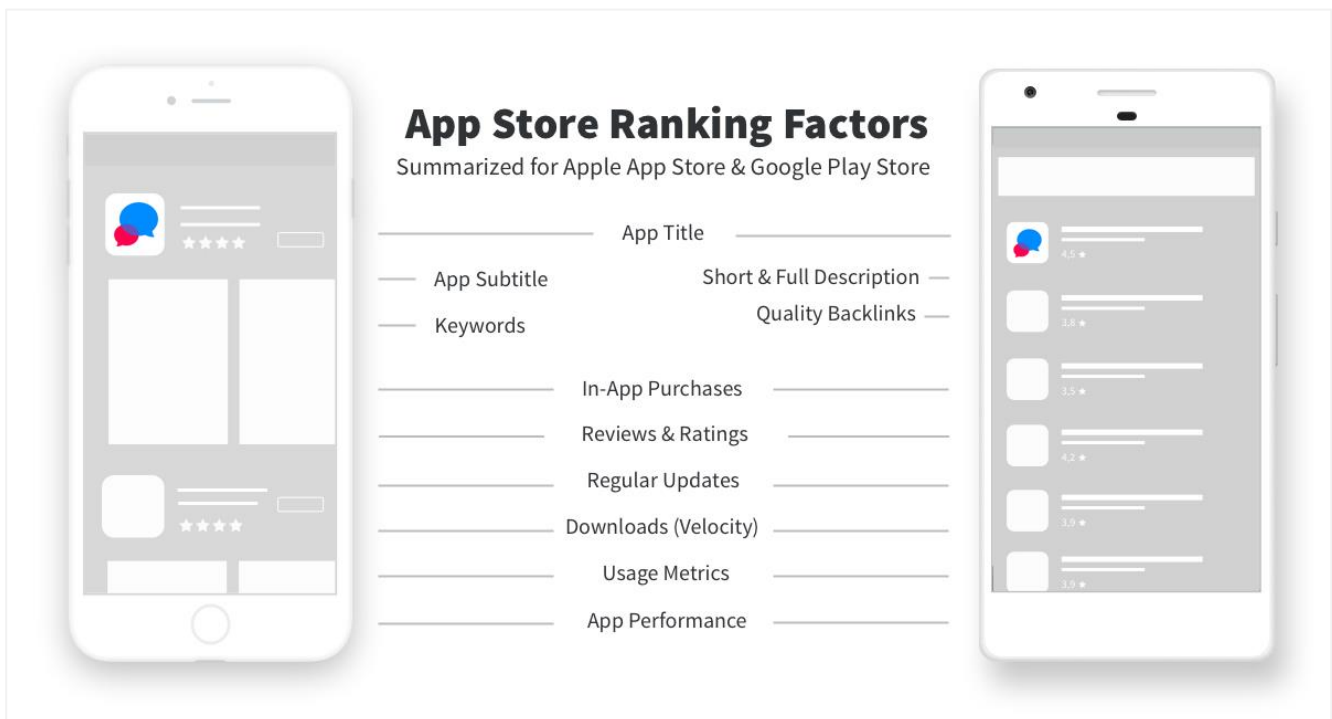


*ASO factors on Apple App Store and Google Play Store*

In the following section, the most crucial ASO ranking factors are explained in more detail.

## Make Use of ASO-Relevant Metadata

### App Title

Apps published in the Google Play Store are provided **50 characters** to form an app title. This gives you the possibility to not only create an app title that is readable and convincing for users, but also to include two or three relevant keywords that you would like to rank high for.

Your app's title plays a critical role in how users find it in a search result. It is the single most important piece of metadata used by app stores' ranking algorithms. **If your app is offered in**

**various countries, make sure to localize the app title as well**. By doing this, you increase the chance of being found by users who search for apps in their mother tongue.

Along with the app icon, the app name is the most striking app store element affecting user's first impression. As such, your app title should be readable and focused, giving the user a glimpse of what your app is about. Also, it should have a high recognition value, which will help users remember your app.
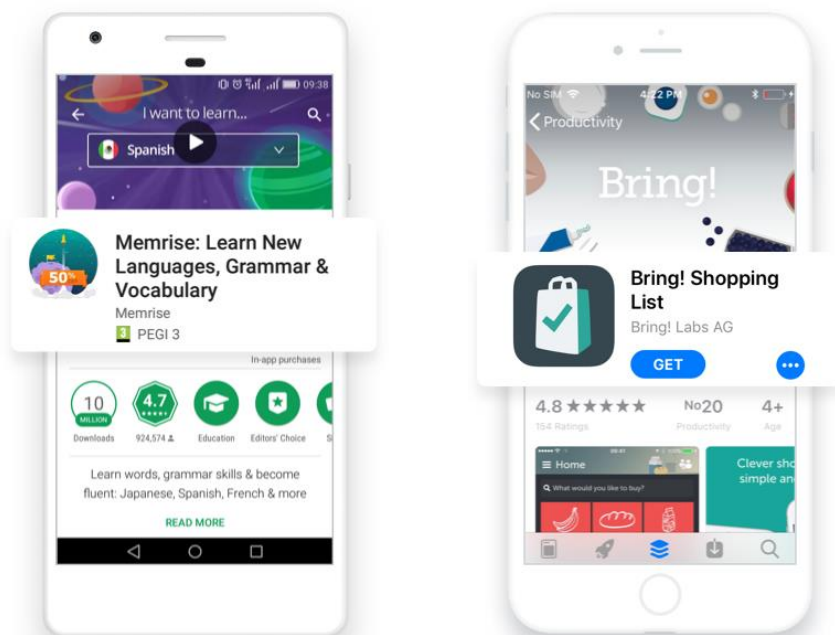


*Two great examples of well-designed app names*
*(Source: Memrise / Google Play, Bring! / App Store)*

The same applies to app names in the iOS App Store (iTunes Connect). The App Store Ranking Algorithm scans through your app title and determines matches with various search terms.

SEE ALSO: App Name » How to Write an App Title that Drives Downloads

iOS used to allow 50 characters in the app title, however, in fall 2017 (with the release of iOS 11), a **30-characters limitation** was introduced. This was not good news for app marketers as many apps names contained more than 30 characters.

# iOS Subtitle

A subtitle is an addition to the app name itself. It is always displayed below the title throughout the iOS 11 App Store.
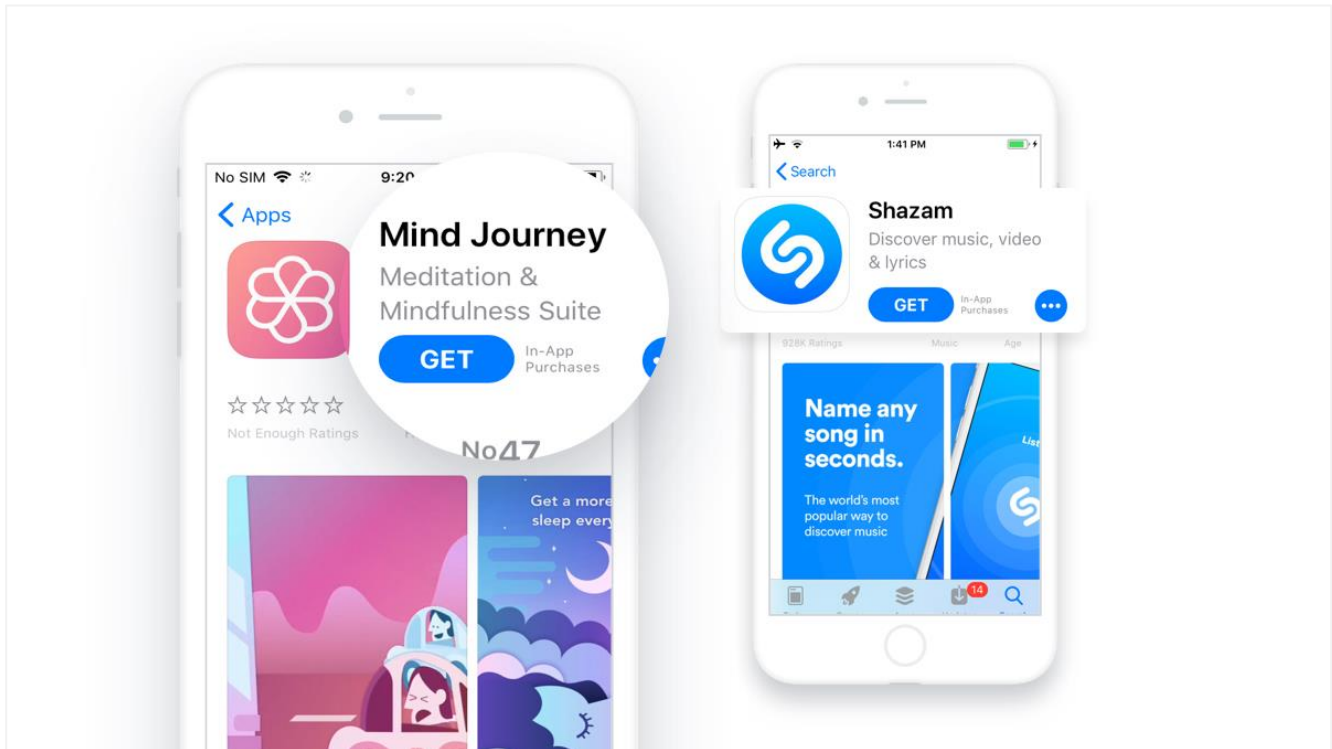


*Great examples of well-designed subtitles*
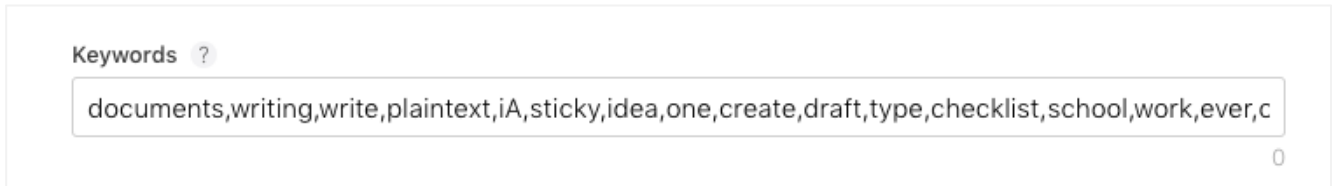*(Source: Mind Journey & Shazam / App Store)*

What makes the subtitle important is its **influence on keyword rankings**. Experiments have shown that a subtitle has a greater impact on ranking than the keyword field and a similar impact as the app name. Thus, there is a good chance that your app will rank high for keywords used in the subtitle.

SEE ALSO: iOS Subtitle » How to Write a Subtitle to Tweak iOS 11 ASO

Essentially, this means that by combining the strengths of subtitle and app name, you can create numerous possible keyword combinations. Still, there's a 30-**character limitation**, meaning you need to keep your subtitle short and precise. The best tactic is to use **two to three catchwords that resonate with your audience and describe what your app is about**. However, you need to test and adapt this field regularly.

## Choosing iOS Keywords

Keywords are almost a magic word in App Store Optimization. However, in this chapter, we are talking about the keyword field in iTunes Connect in particular.



*How your keyword field in iTunes Connect could look like*

**Every iOS app is given 100 characters of space to define terms that it should be indexed for.** But it would all be too easy if you just put keywords into the keyword field and that's it. Besides general factors influencing the sorting like downloads, usage metrics, ratings and reviews, the position of keywords in this field is taken into account as well.

**Expert Tip:** *Avoid duplicate terms in the app title, subtitle and keyword field. Make sure your app can be found for the highest possible amount of keyword combinations and phrases.*

## App Description

An app description is part of the essential metadata fields that you have to fill in as an app owner when launching it in app stores. It **provides users with structured information about your app** and **gives them an idea of your app's content and functionality**.

SEE ALSO: App Description » Why You Shouldn't Forget About That Copy

App descriptions are often treated shabbily when doing App Store Optimization. That's ok for ASO on a basic level. However, you have to consider that an app description provides the app stores with relevant information on how your app should be categorized (at least in terms of Google Play App Store Optimization). Still, you shouldn't forget to update it in iTunes Connect from time to time as well.

The iOS App Store does not scan your text for keywords, mainly because you can specify them in a separate keyword field when you release your app. This, however, doesn't mean you should leave your description aside. It is still an invitation for potential users to install your app.

App description is a notable factor for mobile SEO. Consider that **1 out of 4 people still discover and install apps from search engine results**. Not optimizing your app description might cost you up to 27% of potential users.
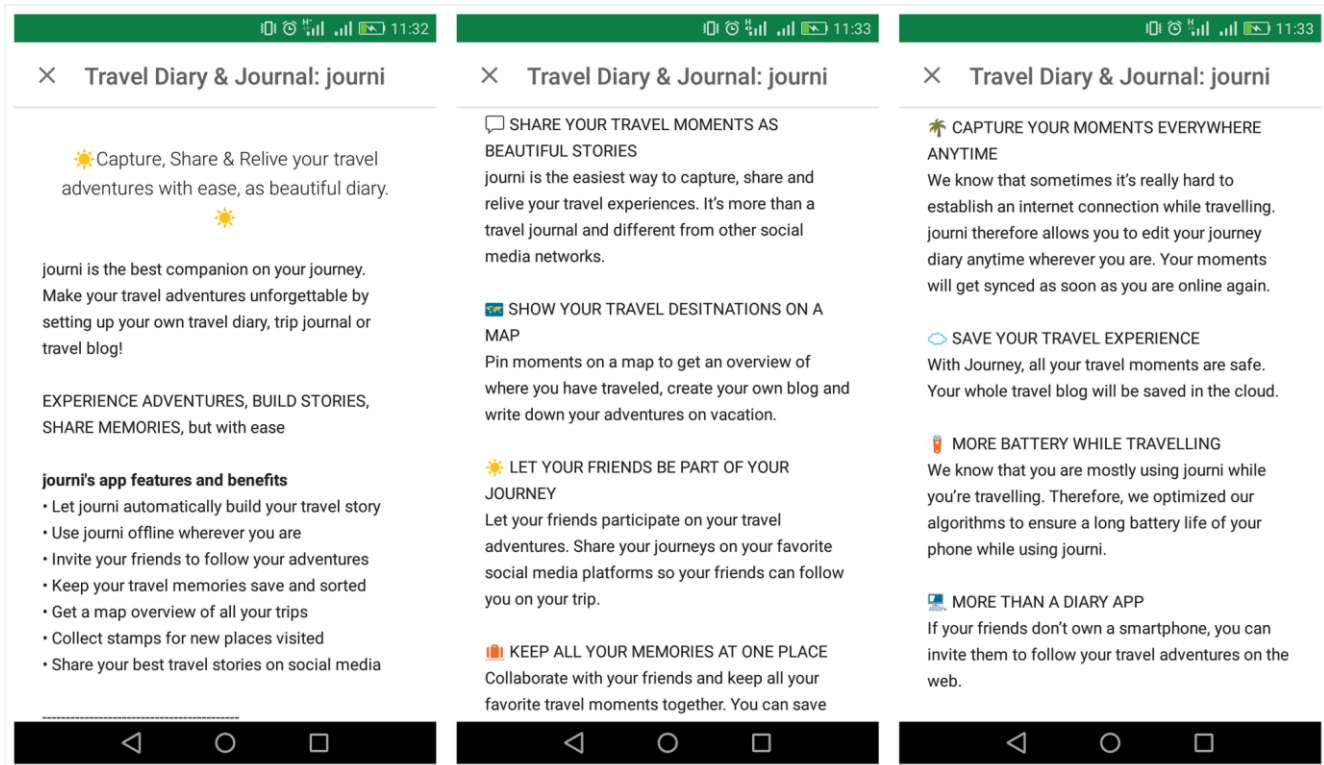


*An example of a well-written short and full description*
*(Source: Journi / Google Play)*

## Short Description

What's even more crucial for influencing keyword rankings in Google Play Store is the short description field.

When launching your Android app in the Google Play Store, you should keep in mind that the first sentence above the fold is the most important part of your app description. It encourages app page visitors to explore more of your app page.

# Set Up Continuous Keyword and Competitor Monitoring

The goal here is to develop a reliable
keyword set with terms and search queries for which you want to check your ranking.

Set up keyword tracking in an ASO Tool like App Radar. But don't overthink keywords at this point. The Apple App Store will notify you right away if you are ranking for those keywords or not. Fill your keyword tracking set with phrases according to what's relevant for your app (instead of looking for the most popular keywords in a particular category).

Make sure your keyword tracking set includes terms and phrases that consider the following:

### *Checklist for Setting Up A Keyword Tracking Set*

✔  What's your app called?

✔  What are the main features?

✔  What are similar apps called?

✔  What's your app's category?

✔  Which terms do people commonly use in this category?

✔  What are similar words to describe your app features?

**Tool Tip:** *This is what App Radar's keyword engine considers when suggesting you keywords to track.*

Besides setting up keywords to track in your ASO Tool of trust, it's recommended to keep an eye on your competitors. Continuous competitor monitoring ensures that you always know who's leading the race in app store search rankings and chart positions.

This is how you should choose competitors to monitor. Ask yourself the following questions and select the apps that share the most similarities with yours for monitoring.

✓ Which apps provide similar features and content as your app?

✓ What's the user base of these apps like?

✓ Which apps rank for the same keywords as you?

✓ Who is competing for the same keywords rankings as you?

**Tool Tip:** *This is what App Radar's keyword engine considers when suggesting you competitors to track.*

# Level 2: Analyze and Improve

## Analyze Keyword Rankings

To take your App Store Optimization efforts to the next level, you first need to **analyze how your app is actually found in app store searches**.

The most crucial factor is to understand that you need to rely on real data. That means you shouldn't trust made-up data estimating your app's ranking. It's essential to know how users find your app positioned in search rankings of a specific App Store Territory or country.



*Let us explain this further:* Imagine two users are searching for a "*Running App*" – One from U.S. and one from U.K. Even though both use the same English search phrase, one is looking for an app in the U.S. App Store while the other one is using the U.K. version. **How an app ranks in search results is measured in each country individually.** Thus, it is not a given that both searches will see the same results.

As visibility can dramatically vary between markets, monitoring your app store appearance in various countries by targeting keywords in different languages will help you **find out whether users can see your app within app store searches or if you need to improve your localizations further**. Regardless of what kind of ASO strategy you are following, here are some aspects you should consider when analyzing your keyword rankings:

## *Checklist for Analyzing Keyword Rankings*

✔  How have my keyword rankings changed since the last update?

✔  Have there been significant ranking drops?

✔  Did rankings for keywords (which you added to essential metadata too) increase?

✔  What are the most popular keywords in your set and how do you rank for them?

✔  For which keywords do you rank in a top 5 position and who else is found for these terms? (What are the top-ranking apps for that keyword?)

✔  Which keywords generate a great ranking for your app? Is your app also found using similar search phrases?

# Fix Issues That Have a High ASO Impact

Now that you have an idea of what you should pay attention to, conclusions must be drawn and actions taken.

To **best use your app information for driving success in ASO**, you should make sure you get the basics right. Check whether you are using all available metadata fields efficiently. Go through your metadata and start optimizing your app information. The following checklist will help you find optimization potential.

**Checklist for Quick-Fixing App Store App Information**

✔ Am I double-using any terms in specific fields?

✔ Is there any data missing?

✔ Did I really exploit all the keyword space available?

✔ Am I targeting the right keywords?

✔ Does my app information hold important keywords?

**Tool Tip:** *App Radar can provide professional help with spotting and correcting ASO-Issues in your app information. This will be reflected in your "Optimization Score" for various localizations, which can save you time and lost downloads!*

As soon as you got the basics down and made sure you used all the app information fields efficiently, it's time for the next step. Evaluate the keywords you are already using in your metadata but are not ranking well for. Replace the poor-performing ones with new terms and see what this results in.

Extend your keyword tracking continuously. If you add new terms to your metadata, don't forget to track appropriate keyword combinations to see the effects of your ASO update!

## Check Download Rates and Consider Performance Indicators

As we mentioned earlier in this ebook, there are various off-page and on-page factors influencing how your app ranks in the app stores. Looking at off-page factors, your **download stats** are considered one of the most **crucial quality indicators** by both the Google Play Store and Apple App Store. That is why it is necessary to check your download numbers regularly.
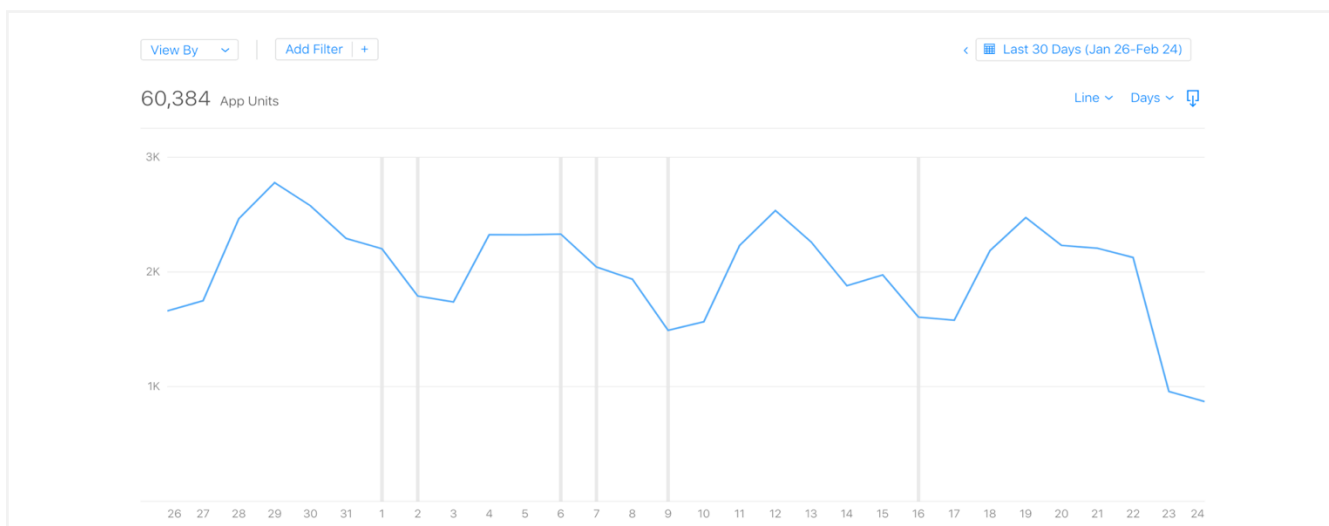


*Check your download stats regularly – Are downloads decreasing?*

You should regard app downloads not only as means to improve your app store visibility but also as a crucial conversion driver. When checking the performance of your app store marketing, you need to consider the following success factors:

*App Store Marketing Success Factors*

✔ Average Keyword Rankings and Changes

✔ Impressions (How many people found your app in the app store?)

✔ Page Visits (Do people show interest in your product?)

✔ Installs & Download Rates (How many downloads did you receive?)

✔ Downloads per Country / Territory (From which country do you receive the most downloads from? Where do people download your app the least?)

✔ Organic Installs (How many installs did you receive organically?)

✔ Distribution of Download Sources (Where do app downloads come from?)

By evaluating these performance indicators, you can gain valuable insights on how to further improve your app store marketing.

# Level 3: Grow Your User Base

## Localize Your App Information

Many times, apps and their app store listings are issued in English only. But, if you take into consideration that the **English language is spoken by roughly 5 %** of the world's population, do you really think your app could cross borders for international success if you only offer it in English?

Since you can localize your app in various languages, on both, the Apple App Store and Google Play, App Store Localization is an essential aspect of selling your app successfully.

SEE ALSO: <u>How to Boost App Downloads with Localization</u>

Localization or international ASO means that you add and **optimize your app's store information in various languages** within the app store. Thus, you can define metadata, keywords and add screenshots or preview videos for every language. In this way, you adapt the appearance is to a specific market and language.
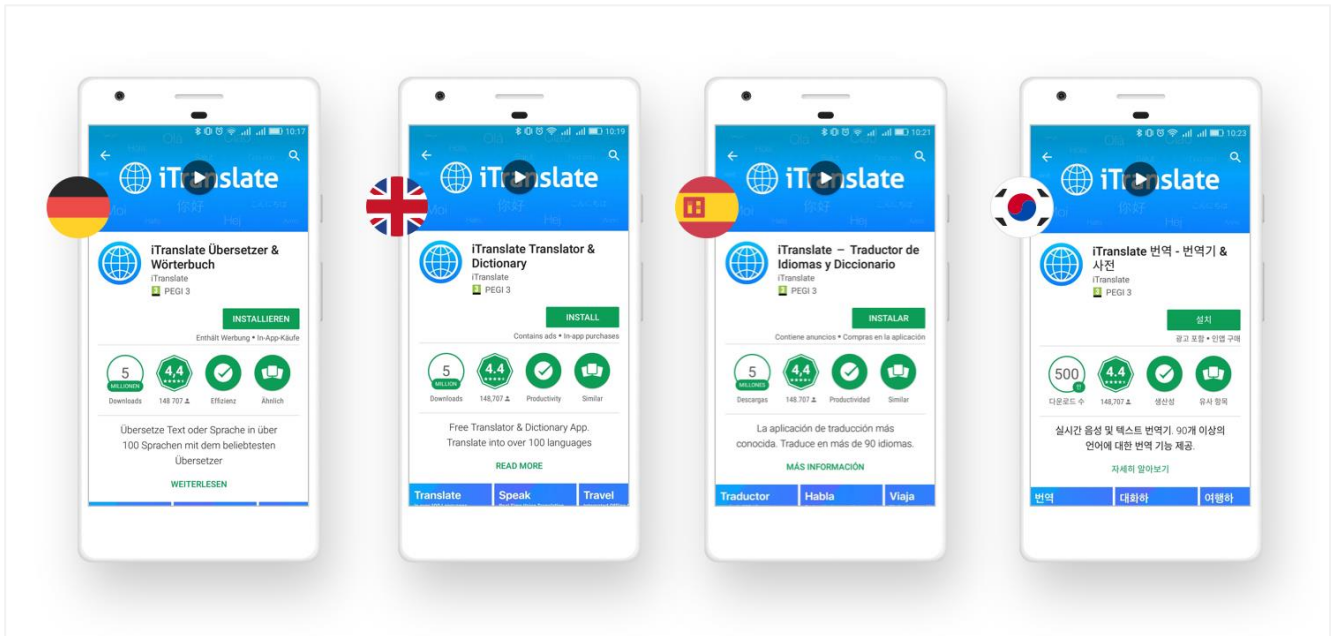


*Example of a professionally localized app*
*(Source: iTranslate / Google Play)*

When you adapt your app store information to local markets and optimize keywords of your app store localizations besides the primary language, you have high chances of ranking at the top of several app stores or being featured in various app store territories. This can significantly increase your user base worldwide.

However, Localization not only **increases your app's visibility** in terms of keyword rankings but is also **crucial for conversion optimization**. Translating essential app information makes it easier for users to understand your app's purpose, content, and features. For example, when people searching for a particular keyword find a high-quality screenshot or an app video in their language, they perceive it as more trustworthy – it is very likely that this impression will lead to a conversion.

**Tool Tip:** *App Radar offers a platform that gives you all the support to make the process of App Store Localization as easy and smooth as possible for you*

## Case Study: How Localization Will Increase Your Downloads

Here's a small-scale case study confirming the significance of localizing app store metadata:

Our customer already offered their fitness and dieting app in several App Store territories. The app was available in various languages and the company strived to attract a bigger target audience. Despite all efforts, their download rates in these localities didn't significantly rise.

With the help of App Radar, they found out they were targeting the wrong keywords and therefore didn't achieve enough visibility. Afterwards, the company implemented the ASO updates and professionally localized their app store metadata.

### *This resulted in downloads increasing by 200%.*

## How International ASO Can Be Done Easily

When doing App Store Optimization on a professional level, **localization is a must**. Regularly adapting metadata in various languages and editing several localizations sounds exhausting at first. However, with the right tools this process can take less than half the time.

**Tool Tip:** *Using App Radar, you can quick-edit metadata and app information of multiple localizations at once and simply export it to iTunes Connect or Google Developer console.*

Moreover, it lets you cooperate with translators for your app store listings directly on the platform. If you would like to work with a preferred translator, you can send him/her a request to simply fill in the translation forms in a separate interface of App Radar (without having access to any other information about your App Radar or iTunes Connect / Google Developer Account). After the translation work is done, you can simply sync it with the rest of your app information and publish it with your next app update.
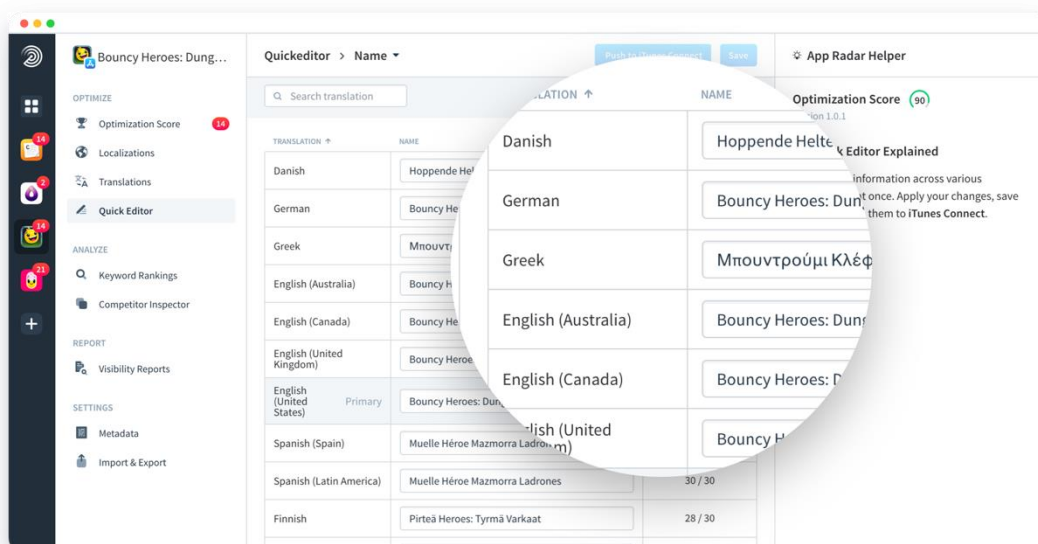
# A/B Testing & Conversion Optimization

The competition in the app market has become intense over the last years. It's no longer enough to stuff popular keywords in your metadata in order to bring your app in front of your target users and generate installs. **App Store Optimization has become an increasingly competitive, iterative process of testing and optimizing** each element on and off your app store page.

If App Store Optimization were to be considered a funnel, this chapter would represent the last step: convincing users interested in your product and driving conversions.
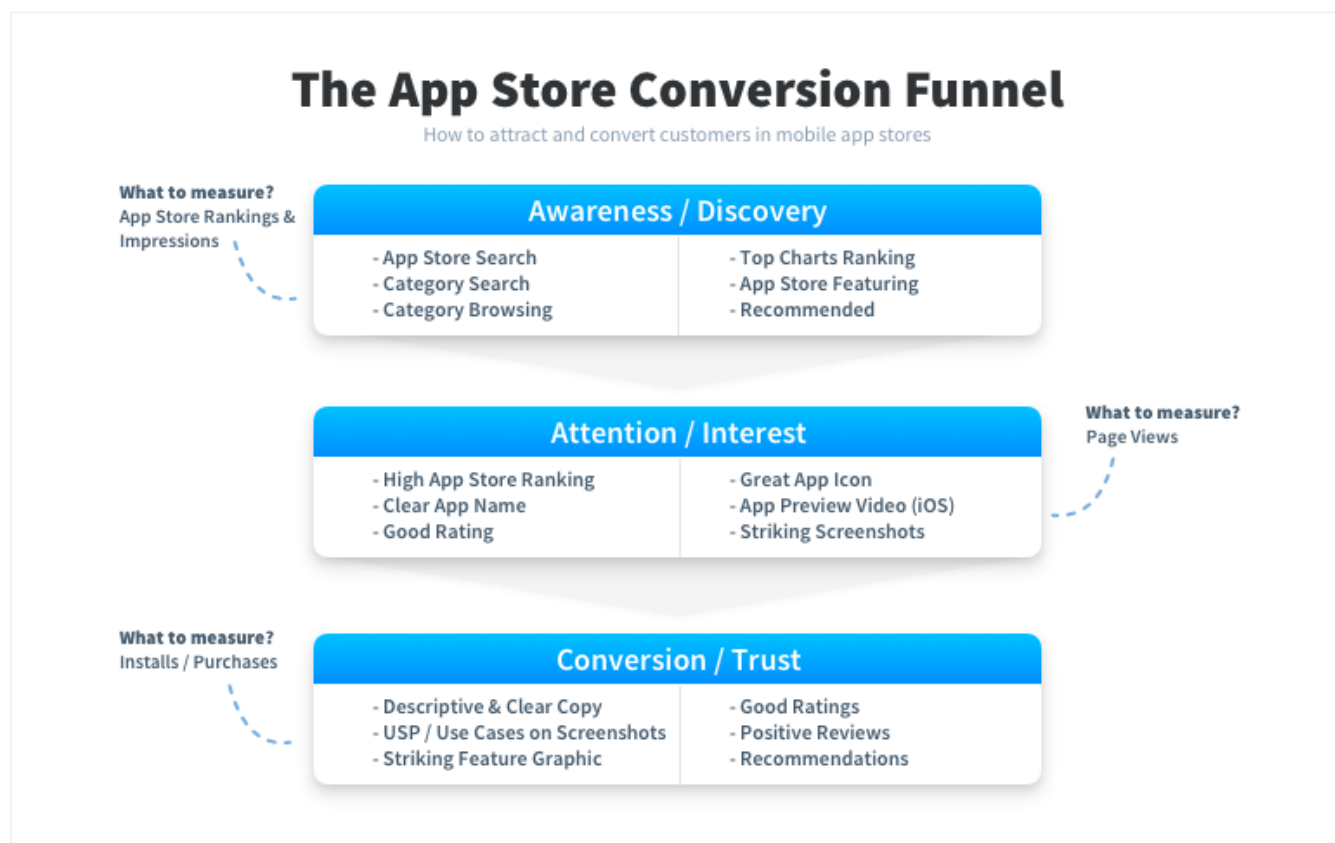


*The App Store Conversion Funnel – How to attract and convert users in mobile app stores?*

Let's assume you successfully increased your app's visibility in terms of keyword rankings and maybe even got featured in some countries due to your localization efforts. That drives great attention to your app resulting in an increase in impressions and page views. But your conversion rate is still low. What can you do? It's time to **test conversion driving elements on your app store page** and **convert more leads into users**.

What might come to your mind now is A/B Testing. A/B testing or split-testing is a method of comparing two hypotheses in order to identify which option performs better in terms of conversion rates.

The idea behind split-testing is simply to distribute an audience equally among two or more variations of an app product page element like screenshots, app title or description. Since your audience members are unaware of the testing, you can identify which version relates the most to your target audience and has the highest conversion rate.

SEE ALSO: Learn How App A/B Testing Works

## Which App Page Elements Commonly Drive Conversions?

**The first impression matters most.** This isn't just worldly wisdom, but also applies to gaining the trust of your leads. In order to identify which parts of your app page have the power to drive conversions, you have to be aware of what a user sees at first glance.



*Which app
information users see at first glance*
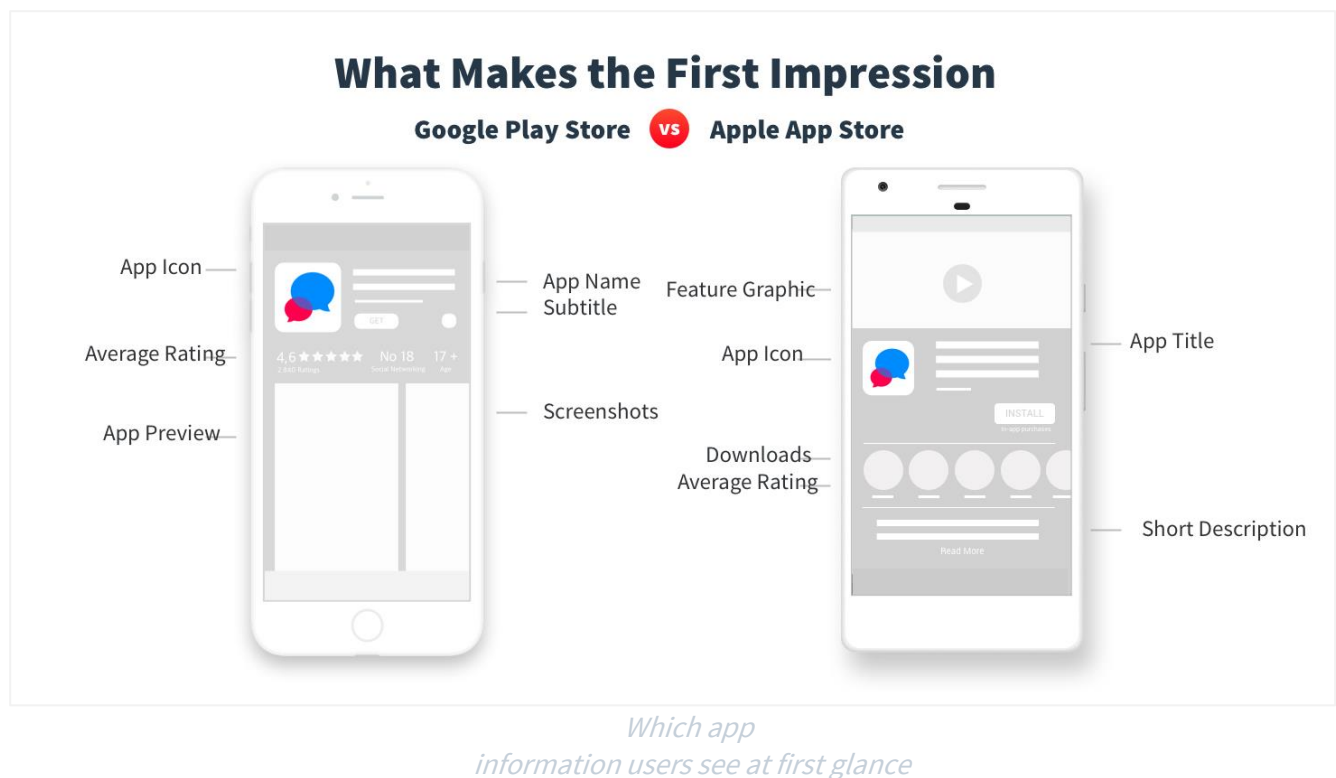
Considering that approximately half of all app page visitors make their decision on purchasing an app based on what they see above the fold, it's even more important to get the first impression right.

Moreover, you will need to know the differences in ASO between Google Play Store and Apple App Store as well as keep in mind the culture of local markets. What works great for leads in the U.S. doesn't necessarily fit your Chinese target audience.

SEE ALSO: Differences in iOS & Android ASO You Need to Know (Google Play vs. App Store)

# How to do A/B Testing?

It's important to figure out each subsequent move before proceeding with A/B testing of an app. Here are essential elements of any A/B testing strategy:

### *Steps to Follow in App A/B Testing*

- ✔ Analysis and brainstorming

- ✔ Creating variations

- ✔ Running the experiment

- ✔ Results evaluation

- ✔ Implementing collected data

- ✔ Running follow-up experiments

# Level 4: Keyword Selection Strategy

To reach the level of professional ASO, you need to have your keyword tracking up and running to know exactly which search terms you are ranking for best.

## Dominate an App Niche then Optimize Keywords based on Popularity

There are many strategies and tactics out there that promise significant growth in app downloads and revenue. Through our experience and testing, what has worked best for us and most of our clients is the following:

*First find and dominate a niche, then gradually expand to high-volume keywords.*

What does that mean? Almost every app marketer out there wants to rank for highly searched keywords, expecting tons of downloads within days. However, the truth is quite different. Since most popular search terms are claimed by big players, your app is facing huge competition.

This led us to the conclusion that search volume of a given keyword is not necessarily the metric to focus on in App Store Optimization. Instead, we recommend finding keywords for which you can competitively rank for. Why? Let's take a moment to consider how app stores display their search results.

## How Search Results are Displayed in the App Stores

In the Apple App Store (iTunes) for example, up to two apps are shown in search results above the fold. This leads **users to focus mainly on the first two search results**. Thus, if you want your app to receive more downloads, it's better to rank on #1 position for a less-popular phrase than to end up somewhere at rank #10 at for a highly-searched general keyword.
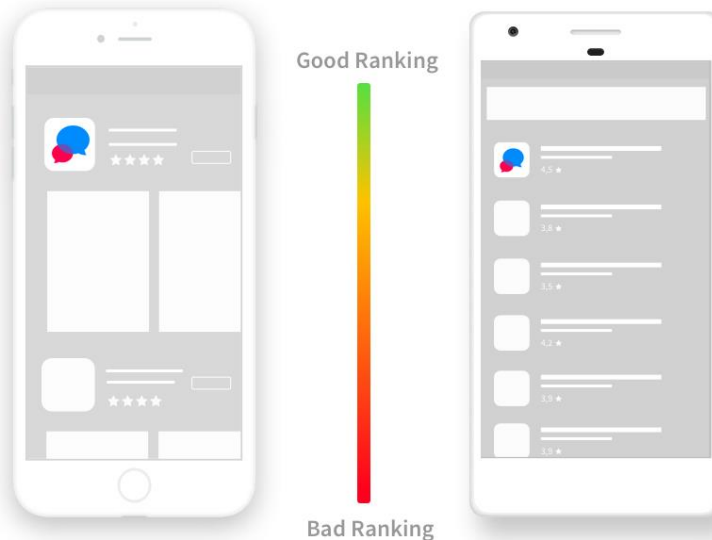
*How Search Results are Displayed on the App Store and Google Play Store*

In Google Play Store, users see way more apps at first glance. However, the competition among free apps in the number one mobile app store for Android apps is enormous. Thus, Android users tend to be less picky when it comes to installing apps. The first app displayed in the search results, therefore, has a higher chance of being downloaded without the user collecting detailed information.

What does it mean to dominate a niche? Dominating a niche with your app means that it claimed a top ranking for various (long tail) keywords related to specific features and use cases. By doing so, your app can receive a significant number of downloads as it reaches users that already know what they want. Thus, you are **targeting a specific user segment that is highly likely to install your app**.

## Is Keyword Search Volume Irrelevant for App Store Optimization?

It's important to bear in mind that the popularity of a keyword **is relevant but it should not be your main focus at the very beginning**. Only after you start receiving steady downloads and know your app ranks for highly-relevant search terms, it's time to think about improving your keyword set in terms of popularity. Thus, you try to increase your rankings for search terms, which are frequently used.

**Expert Tip:** *Be careful choosing keywords based on their popularity. It's a waste of time if you haven't optimized everything else yet. (Your app will need a significant number of downloads, users and ratings to compete with big players)*

# Detailed Competitor Monitoring

You're not alone in the game of App Store Optimization. With millions of apps offered in the leading app stores, chances are high there are products similar to yours. However, that's ok as long as you know how to stay ahead of your competition.

In order to identify who's leading the fight for customers in search rankings and app store top charts, it's necessary to have an ASO Tool set up for competitor monitoring.

Detailed competitor monitoring is the basis for professional keyword optimization. When you know how your product ranks for relevant keywords in direct comparison to competitive apps, you can find the best tactics to improve the visibility of your app.

**Tool Tip:** *Use features like App Radar's Competitor Inspector to find out who's dominating specific keyword rankings and why.*

Clearly define keywords that you want your app to rank for. It's best to consider a mix of both low and high popularity search terms. Analyze who else is listed for these search terms and identify why these apps are ranking for those keywords. Check if they used it in the search term and compare app store ratings (and downloads). This way you can find out what you could improve to bring your app forward.

# Push ASO Updates regularly

App Store Optimization is not a one-time event, but an iterative process. In order to get the best insights about what works and what does not, you should push app updates regularly.

*We recommend releasing updates for your main app information every two weeks.*

By planning app updates ahead, you are more flexible in testing keyword combinations and ensuring potential download drops are less crucial.

**Do I need to develop new features for every app update?**
To make changes to the app information on iTunes Connect you need to create a new app version. That requires uploading your app and having it reviewed by the Apple Review Team for every update. However, you don't have to develop a completely new version of your app features with every ASO update. If your app works fine, it is enough to upload your existing app version again and just edit the information displayed on the App Store.

In any case, you should update your app information on a regular basis. The iTunes Connect Review Team sped up their review process, which resulted in most app updates being approved within 24 hours.

In Google Play Store, you can edit app information anytime and don't need to upload an APK for publishing updates. Nevertheless, you should take quality checks of your app seriously. It has already been reported several times, that Google Play punishes app crashes and bad quality with decreasing app rankings. Therefore, fix bugs regularly and make the necessary performance and design improvements.

**Expert Tip:** *Have an eye on your app's performance. Bad quality and high crash rates in apps are bad for both, customer retention and user acquisition. Google Play for example harms bad-quality apps with ranking drops.*

Keep in mind, **you not only strive to attract new customers, but also want to keep the existing ones. Regular bug-fixes and great design are the basis for customer retention**.

# How App Radar Can Help You Along The Way

## What is App Radar?

App Radar is a unique all-in-one App Store Optimization tool, built to help developers and marketers boost their app's organic growth. Over the last two years, we have been creating the most advanced App Store Optimization tool you can get in the market.



Right from the beginning, our goal was to deliver the most accurate data regarding keyword rankings at scale.

## Designed for Winners

App Radar was designed to create winners in App Store Optimization. We have already witnessed our customers achieving great results.

### *10x faster app updates*
### *57x more daily Downloads*
*compared with other ASO Tools like Sensor Tower or App Annie*

## How is this possible?

You might be asking yourself now why we shared these numbers here. The answer is pretty simple: we are proud of our customer's success and want to share the experience we gained throughout the last years with you.

We have been developing App Radar together with winning app companies in order to fine-tune our tool for reproducible success of your app business. And you know what the best part is? Apps that used the previously described process were able to achieve up to 50x increase in their daily downloads in only a few months!

Curious how they did it? Here is our main finding:

*The faster you can perform tests and figure out what is working and what isn't, the faster you can grow your organic app downloads.*
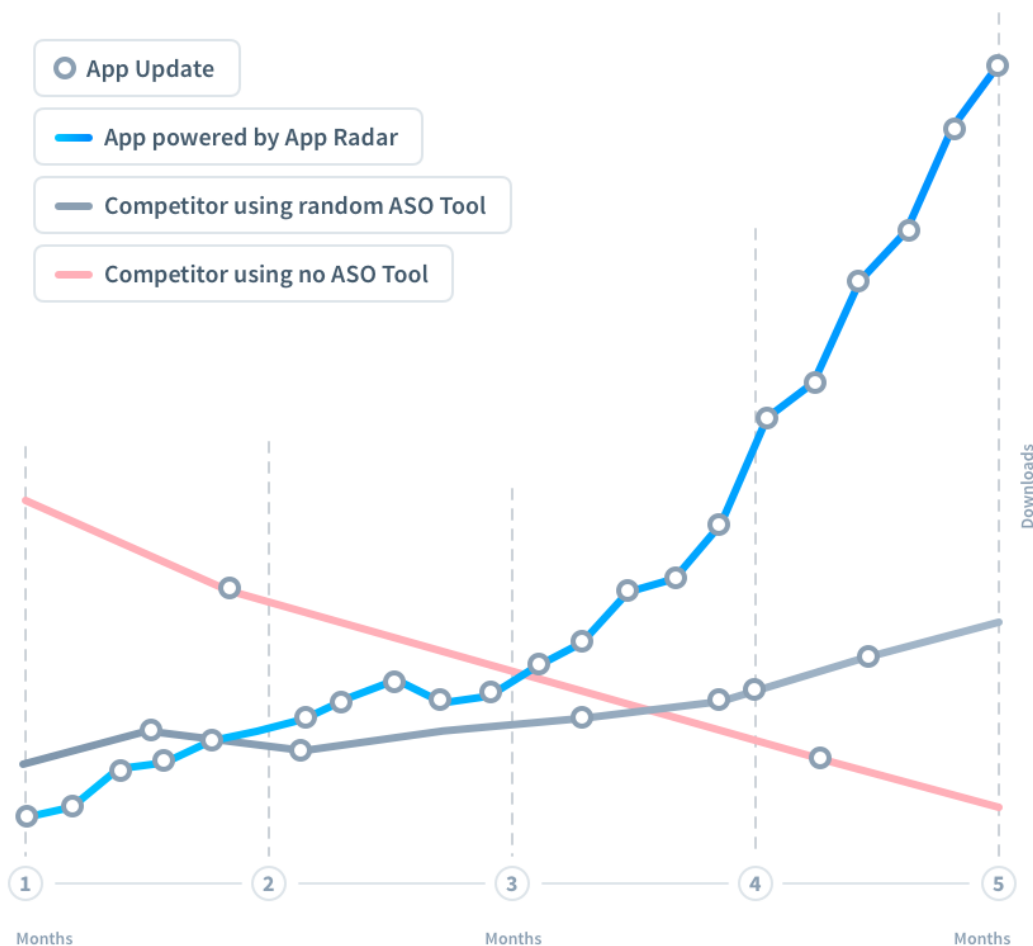


*This guiding principle is used by the winning app and game publishers all around the world.*

## Most Accurate Keywords Ranking Analysis

We are happy to say that App Radar is the only tool delivering accurate keyword ranking results that match the search results your users get on their smartphone no matter in which country they are located.
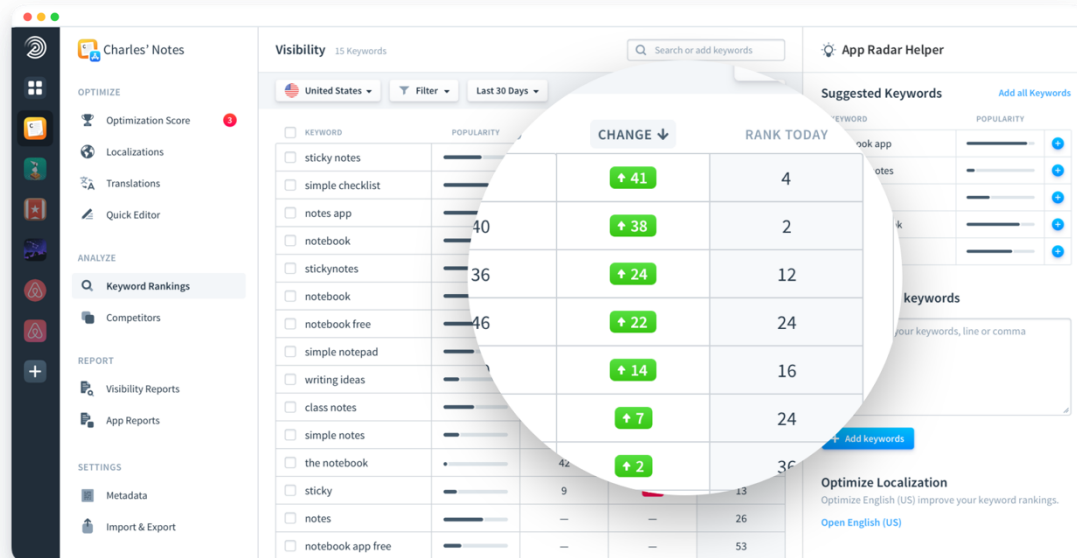


## Optimize Faster with iTunes Connect and Google Play Console Integration

We are proud of the fact that App Radar is the first ASO Tool to be integrated into iTunes Connect and the Google Play Developer Console. This allows users to edit metadata and app information directly from the tool where it is analyzed, giving them a massive advantage in terms of the speed and responsiveness with which they can update and optimize their search result rankings. More responsiveness, more downloads – it's as simple as that.



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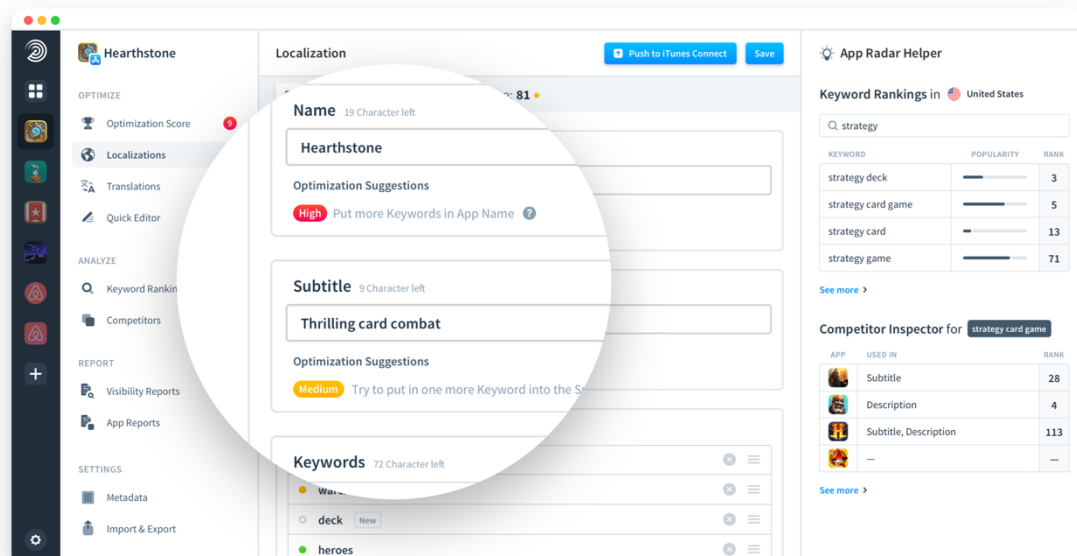
## Hassle-free App Store Optimization Scaled Up By AI

Over the last few months, we have been working on creating an AI-based App Store Optimization helper that guides you through the process of ASO and helps you find optimization potential in your app store metadata. This feature has helped many of our users achieve massive organic growth through ASO without necessarily being experts.
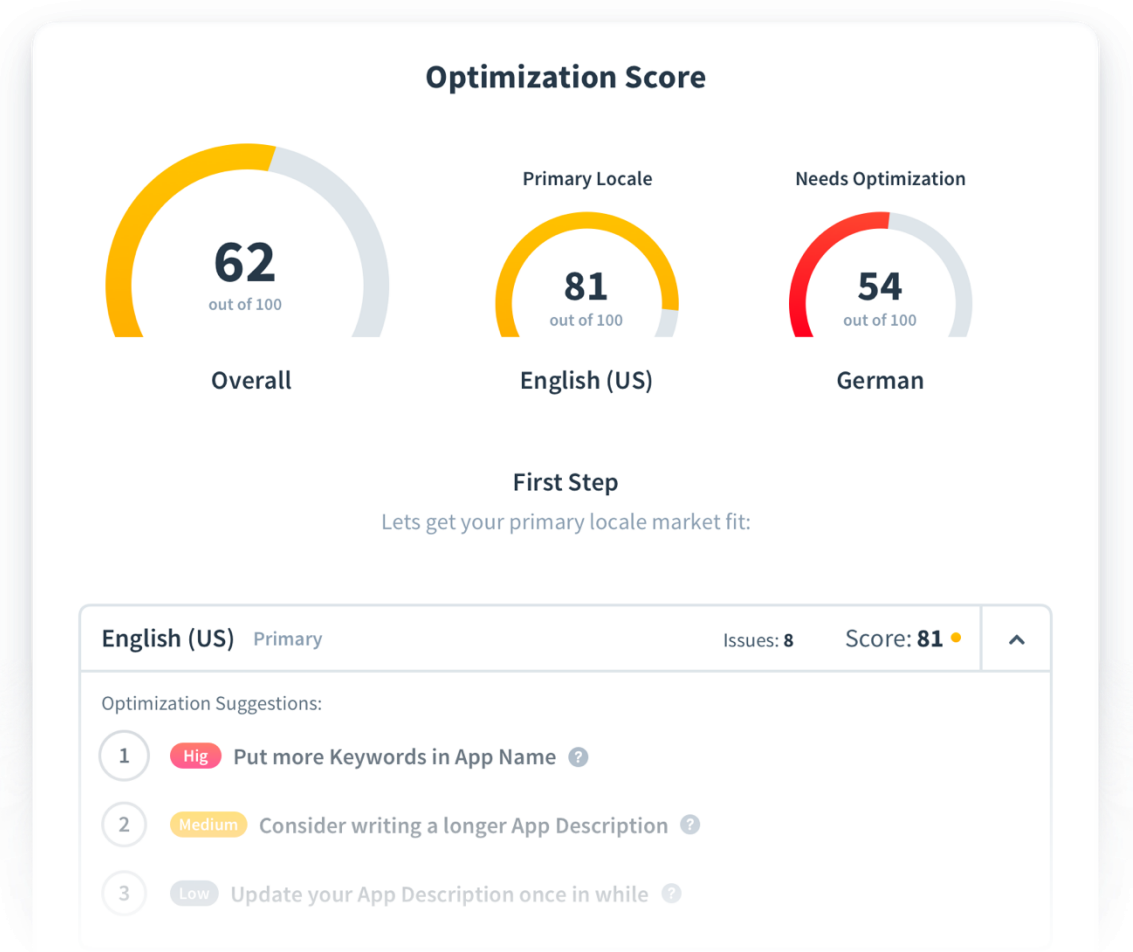
# Key Takeaways

Long story short, here are the key takeaways summarizing what we mentioned in our ASO Done Right eBook.

✔ More downloads lead to more visibility - more visibility leads to more downloads.

✔ Winning at App Store Optimization isn't only about finding the right keywords.

✔ Winning at App Store Optimization is directly linked to the speed you can perform ASO experiments.

✔ Use the #1 App Store Optimization tool used by successful mobile app and game businesses to outperform your competition.

## Be part of the revolution or get kicked out by your competitors.

Are you ready to put all the tips we provided you into practice? Then it's time to try out our unique App Store Optimization tool.

**Get Started**

App Radar

ADVANCED ASSET OPTIMIZATION

# Bonus Chapters

# Bonus Chapter: The Secret of Converting App Icons and Screenshots

When it comes to App Store Optimization, **every single detail matters**. It's a fact that even a slight adjustment may become a game changer. Nevertheless, there are constant debates on the most impactful product page elements that help you grow an app organically.

Some mobile marketers do believe that description is what really matters, whereas some growth hackers are convinced that the app **icon** beats all page elements when it comes to potency and significance. The latter assumption makes a lot of sense for **the conversion of store search results and search ads**.

However, when a user is already on the product page, screenshots tend to capture the most attention due to their extensiveness and a large proportion of occupied page space. In fact, a fair amount of users base their app installing decisions primarily on the quality of screenshots.

> *The visual nature of this highly impactful element wins over users in many cases as visual communication runs the show nowadays.*

*Yet, what makes a high converting icon or screenshot?! We will try to answer this question in this bonus chapter, written by Liza Knotko marketing manager and expert in A/B testing from SplitMetrics.*

## Perfecting Screenshots

Intelligent optimization of screenshots tends to boost app conversion by 18% on average. This is not completely surprising as visual communication affects people more than its written counterpart.

It's proven that **less than 2% of users tap the "read more" button** and some ignore app descriptions entirely. Thus, when app store visitors get to your product page, the screenshots are responsible for grabbing users' attention and persuading them to install your app.

Here is the list of the most important aspects of screenshots that favor engagement and eventual conversion boost:

# 1. App Store Screenshots Orientation (Portrait vs. Landscape)

Choosing between portrait and landscape screenshots is a common dilemma app marketers face. Some publishers end up submitting horizontal screenshots as vertical ones forgetting about convenient user experience, so it's not the best option.
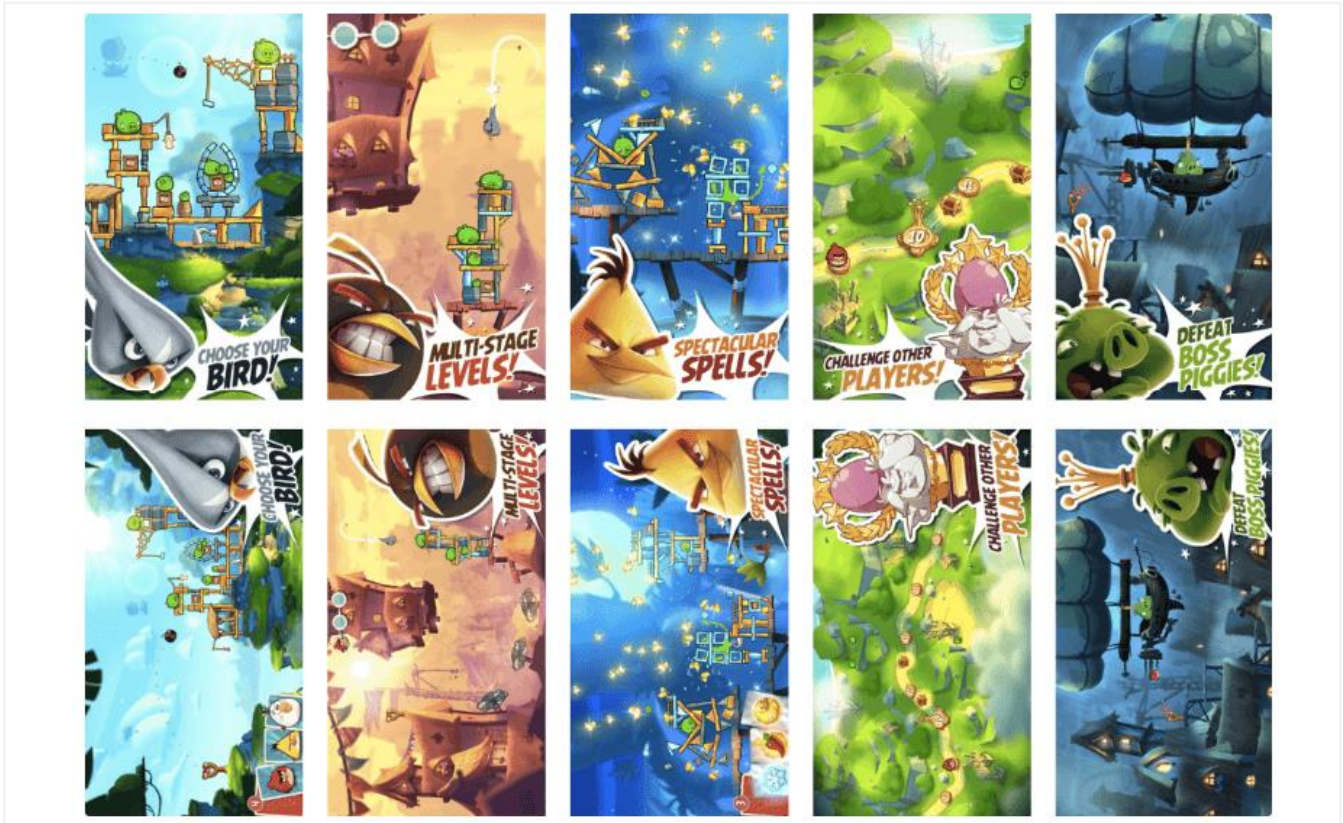


Source: splitmetrics.com

For instance, Rovio tested landscape screenshots vs. portrait ones before launching Angry Birds 2. The results contradicted gaming industry trends as vertical screenshots showed better responsiveness. It turned out that Angry Birds users don't belong to the hardcore gamers group and are not used to horizontal screenshot orientation on app stores.

In the process of screenshots optimization with mobile A/B testing, the app got 13% better conversion, meaning millions of additional installs in absolute figures. As a result, the game gained 2.5M additional users just after the first week of launch.

Taking into consideration the renewed look of the search results page, it makes sense to consider using landscape screenshots instead of portrait ones. This easy trick helps publishers to stand out in the search results and can eventually lead up to 45% more installs.

## *We shouldn't forget that the App Store changed immensely with the emergence of iOS 11.*

Moreover, the usage of banner-like landscape screenshots can help to repel your game's closest competitor, turning their app listing into a blind spot. Social Point decided to test this theory on their game Monster Legends. They launched a search results experiment with two variations to test the original portrait screenshots set against a banner-like first screenshot in a landscape mode.
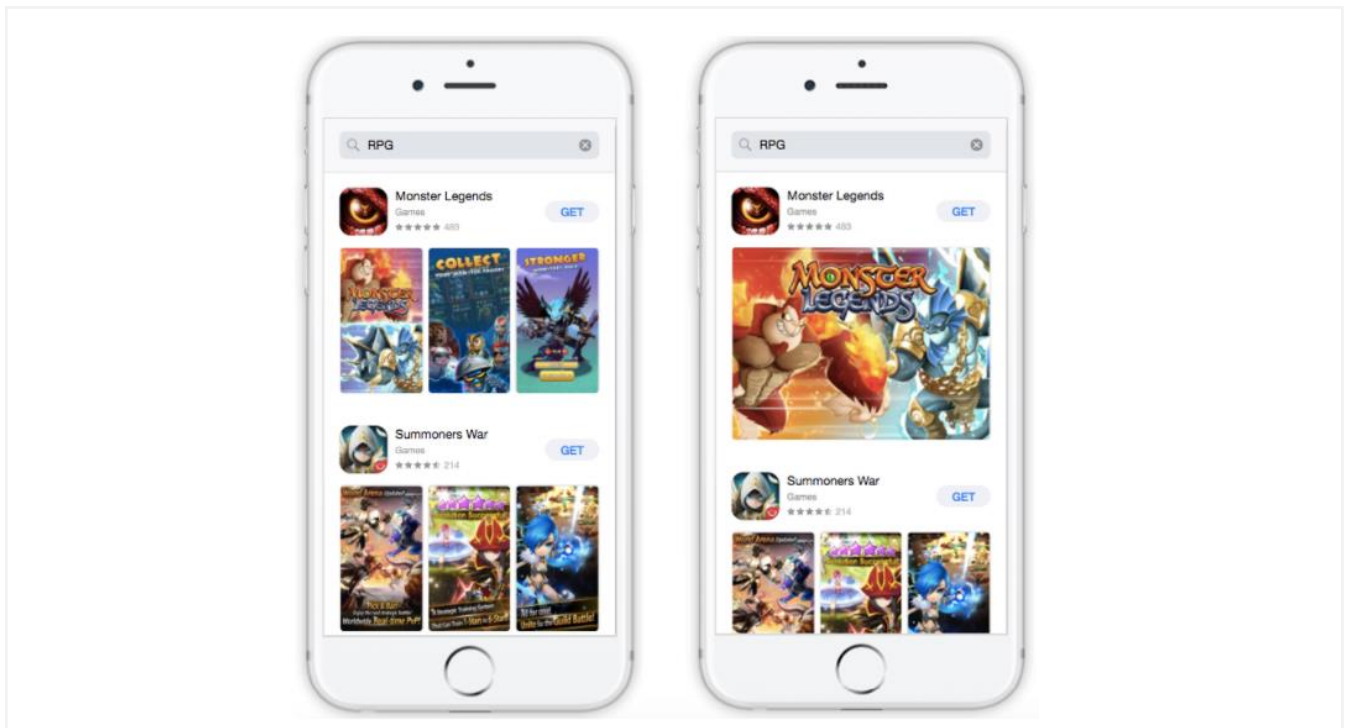


*Source: SplitMetrics experiments*

The latter variation beat the first one and reached 15.4% conversion. The result of the closest competitor was only 4.7% which proved the initial hypothesis about impressive banner-like screenshot performance in the search results.

## 2. App Screenshot Colors and Backgrounds

Colors and Backgrounds depend on the style of your app. Sure, you're not restricted to the same color palette used in your app design. However, it's good to start with it as it's an easy yet effective way of conveying your app's essence.

If your app is playful, the screenshots should reflect that by, for example, using vibrant custom colors in every screenshot. The minimalistic nature of an app can also be applied to your app screenshot's color layout.

The colors you use should resonate with your target audience. It's especially important when you localize your product page.



Source: splitmetrics.com
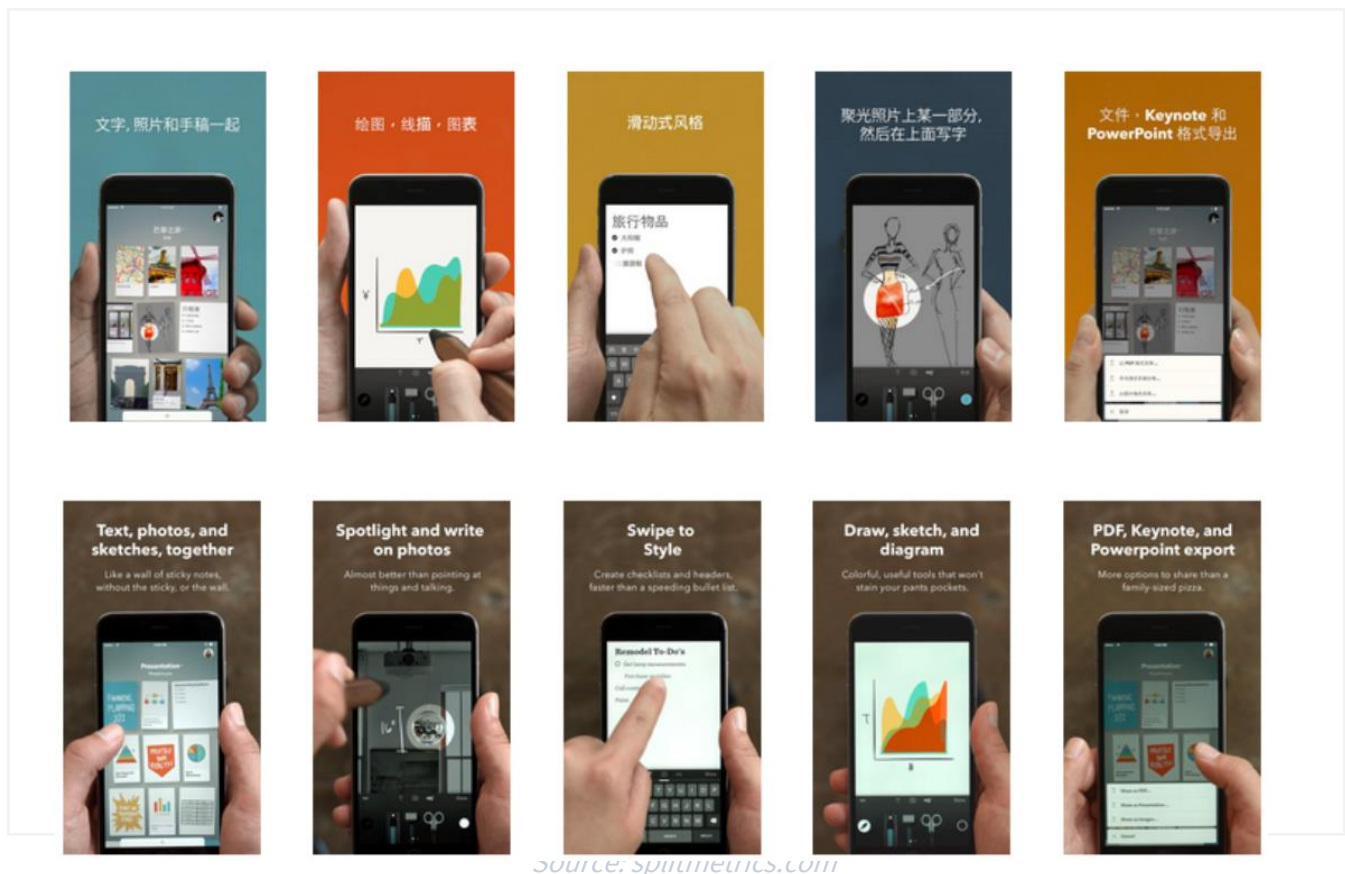
For instance, FiftyThree managed to get 33% better conversion after localizing their Paper app for the Chinese-speaking market. As a result, the English version of screenshots differs dramatically from the Chinese one. It turned out that a multicolored background works much better than a monochrome one on the Asian market.

*It can't be stressed enough how important it is to experiment with seemingly insignificant alterations when it comes to screenshots optimization.*

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# 3. App Screenshot Captions

A caption is a powerful way of telling your audience about the benefits and advantages of your app. Once you decided to add captions to your screenshots, make sure that they are:

- ✓ easy-to-read,
- ✓ short and clear,
- ✓ contain call-to-actions,
- ✓ emphasize app's features with verbs.

Short, action-packed captions were used in the optimization of SongPop2 trivia game. For example, a brief verb-packed caption "LISTEN, GUESS, AND COMPETE" replaced the extended one. As a result, the app obtained 10% better CVR.



Source: splitmetrics.com

# Icons Optimization

Icon refinement normally results in **13% conversion increase** so be careful selecting it. After all, an app's icon is one of the first things potential users see and it acts as a logo.

> *A good icon should not only grab the attention of app store visitors instantly, but it should also convey the essence of your app or genre of your game.*

Simplicity, lack of excess elements and ability to stand out from competitors without losing touch with conventional principles of your store category are to become your guiding principles in the process of designing icons.

You shouldn't underestimate the importance of your app icon being understandable. It needs to be clear immediately, what the app is about in order to drive downloads. Some apps increased their conversion rate by 10 % when fixing the problem of misunderstanding the app icon.



Source: splitmetrics.com

If you study the icons of the top games, you'll notice that the overwhelming majority use the same pattern: an icon depicts characters with their mouths open. It may seem silly, but it works. You can use this trick in the designing process. Such "action mouth'' can bring up to 9% conversion uplift. So, **testing of different characters on your icon** is a highly recommended path which can lead to remarkable results.

For example, MyTona ran a series of icon experiments for their game, Seekers Notes: Hidden Mystery. They started by testing a human character against a pumpkin head. Then they switched to a smiling witch. No matter which character they used, the app icon performed significantly better if the character was smiling.



Source: splitmetrics.com

This experiment once again proved the efficiency of the 'action mouth' strategy and the significance of testing characters.

# Afterthought

When you get down to the optimization of icon and screenshots, remember that individual changes may result in considerable app conversion growth. Nevertheless, a complex approach to ASO is a must if you aspire to become a real high-flyer.

*Mind that it's impossible to nail a perfect icon-screenshots combination without intelligent A/B testing using specialized A/B-Testing Tools.*

The main recommendation here is to be diligent and consistent. Test only one element and make only one change at a time, as experimenting with different concepts at once will probably give you ambiguous results requiring multiple follow-up tests. Then you'll see app's conversion skyrocketing in the App Store and Google Play without any extra effort.

*About the author:*

*Liza Knotko is a Marketing Manager at SplitMetrics, an app A/B testing tool trusted by Rovio, MSQRD, Prisma, and Zeptolab. SplitMetrics helps mobile app developers hack app store optimization by running A/B experiments and analyzing results. Liza is also a maker of AppGrowthLab - one of a kind free app growth course.*

# Bonus Chapter: How to Lead your App Store Videos towards Perfection

In the context of improving your app store listing (or search results on iOS 11) for more conversions, video is one of your strongest visual elements. What makes it a great tool to convince users is that you can control the experience and can both educate users and show them what's unique about your product.

This chapter deals with taking your app store videos towards perfection in context of App Store Optimization.

Creating a great app preview video is a challenge but it's critical for App Store Optimization on both the Apple App Store and Google Play Store. While the production could be costly, having a great app video still pays off. Since users who watch your video and then choose to install are of higher quality, app videos not merely improve conversions, but can also show an increase in LTV.

> *"Adding a video increases Exploring behavior and reduces Decisive behavior. Visitors who watch the video are 3x more likely to install."*
> *- StoreMaven (pre-iOS 11)*

## App Store Preview ≠ App Promo Video

There are some strong fundamental differences between **App Previews** (videos used on the iOS App Store and the tvOS App Store) and **Promo Videos** (videos used on the Google Play Store).

Before creating the best video for each store, you first need to consider how videos are displayed there. Both stores have different layouts and different requirements for app videos.

On the Apple App Store, app previews are device-specific and they need to follow the app's orientation. Promo videos on the Google Play Store, however, are YouTube videos, thus forced to a horizontal orientation. This makes a big difference and may require two different video formats that **best match the format of the expected store**.

Not only the format, but also the placement of app videos varies between the App Store and Google Play. An iOS app preview is shown in search results along with the first two screenshots. On the app page, up to three preview videos can be displayed in the screenshots section.
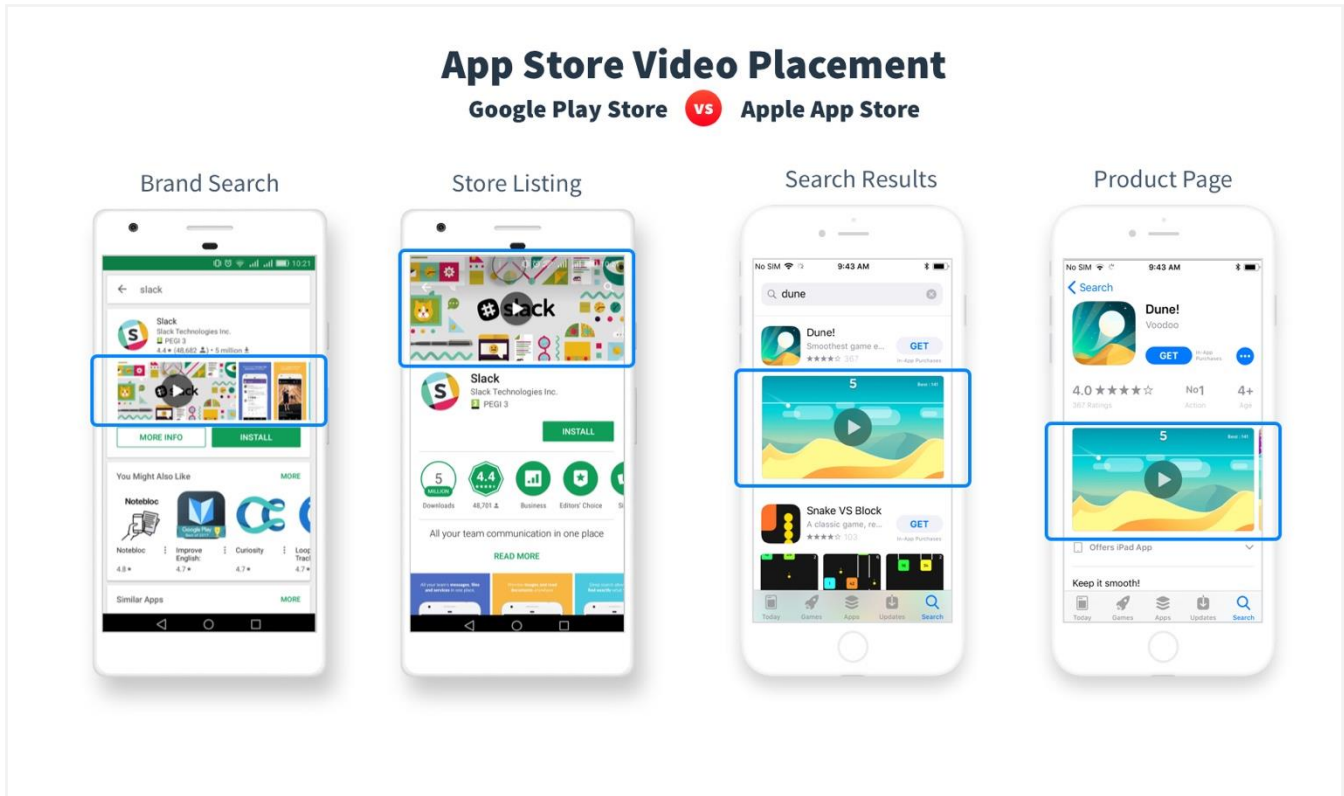


*How videos are displayed on the App Store and Google Play*

### *Since iOS 11, the app preview auto plays in mute even in search results (if the user has chosen this option)*

On the Google Play Store, there is no video displayed in search results for common phrases. Only for certain brand searches the video thumbnail is visible along with one or two screenshots. In the Google Play store listing, the promo video is "hidden" behind the feature or promo graphic. Only a play button indicates there is a promo video available for this app.

> RECOMMENDED READ: If you want to read more about the differences between app store videos in Apple App Store and Google Play, read this blog post by Apptamin.

Except for how the video is displayed in both stores, there are significant contrasts in video guidelines between Apple App Store and Google Play. While Google mainly provides tips for your promo video, Apple is stricter.

| Apple<br>App Preview Guidelines | VS | Google<br>Promo Video Guidelines |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Video Length** | | |
| up to 30 seconds | | ~ 30 - 120 seconds |
| **Video Content Recommendations** | | |
| You are supposed to use mostly screen captures of the app itself | | Keep your videos short and focus on the most compelling features first |
| You can / should add textual overlays or animations to explain things | | Show only Android devices and badge (required for Google Features) |
| Videos must be appropriate for ages four and older | | Total flexibility in designing app videos compared to App Store |
| **File Upload & Update** | | |
| Upload file to iTunes Connect (Up to 3 Videos possible) | | Upload to YouTube (then provide link in Google Play Console) |
| Video change requires app update | | Can be changed anytime |
| **Video Format** | | |
| Vertical or Landscape Orientation but needs to fit device specific format | | Landscape Orientation & YouTube Video Format (1920 x 180) recommended |

*The differences between app video guidelines on the App Store and Google Play*

# App Store Video Best Practices

As you've seen, there are some key differences between app videos on the App Store and the Google Play Store. Here are some best practices and pitfalls to avoid regarding both app videos for Android and iOS apps:

## Best things first

Keep in mind users can stop watching your app preview anytime. So go straight to the point and put the most important benefit first. Don't wait until the end to show what's unique about your app.

*Around 80% of users don't watch past the first 12s*
*- Splitmetrics (pre-iOS 11)*

## Know what your competitors are doing

To stand out with your app preview, you need to check your competition. What are videos of other apps in your category or niche like? Find out how you could improve on it and get inspiration.

## Keep it short

You need to keep your app preview short - you only have **a few seconds to convince users** (Apple limits them to 30 seconds). That means you can't show everything from your app. Focus on the main value proposition and a maximum of three features or benefits.

**Expert Tip:** There's no need to waste time by showing your app icon in the first sequences of your app store video – it's already on your app page. Better use the short time to display your app's main value.

## Make it understandable (even without sound)

Having a short and easily readable copy can help viewers understand your app's benefits faster.

This is especially important for iOS because **app previews will now autoplay muted** in both the search results and the app store listing. Apart from that, your potential users might be checking your app somewhere in public or with their device on mute. So, make sure your app preview video is understandable without sound.

## Show relevant app content and gameplay

Create content or **show gameplay that puts your app in its best light**. Don't show an empty app and make sure excellent content is populated when displaying your app.

You need to excite potential users about what they can get. Also, make sure that the actions like scrolls or swipes shown within the app are smooth when your app preview is based on captured footage.

This is even more important for apps on the App Store than on the Play Store because app previews stay within the app.

## Keep it simple

Be **mindful explaining features or functionality** of your app. You are an expert, but most users are just discovering your app. Make sure potential customers who don't know your app yet can easily understand the app's concept.

**Expert Tip:** Get some feedback from people who don't know your app yet to ensure the app store video is easily understandable and convincing for new customers.

## Make them download your app

This sounds obvious. But when you create a highly-converting app preview you need to keep in mind that **people are just one tap away from downloading your app**. Make sure you push them over the edge by including a clear call to action at the end.

Best is to tell them explicitly what to do next with "Download today" or "Play now".

## Mind the small screens

While on iOS, app previews are mostly based on captured footage, this isn't a common pitfall. On the Google Play Store, however, you have much more creative freedom in designing your app video. Thus, when creating an app preview, don't forget that users will most likely watch it on small screens.

*Views of the Play Store videos on desktop are very often below 1%.*

Only few users will watch your promo video on a desktop device. So make sure everything shows well on a small screen.

# Don't forget about the poster frame

Since iOS 11, the poster frame will show for a split second (or longer depending on the internet connection). Except for that, **users have the option to turn off the autoplay function** in iOS 11 App Store. In addition, in Google Play the app preview does not support autoplay but a feature graphic is shown with a play button.

**Expert Tip:** Make sure the first frame in your app store video or the feature graphic already makes the user want to see more.

*About the author:*

*This bonus chapter was written in collaboration with **Sylvain Gauchet**, co-founder of Apptamin - a creative agency specialized in-app videos. Together with his team, he finds engaging ways to present mobile apps and games so their clients can increase their conversion and improve user acquisition.*

ALL CHECKLISTS AT A GLANCE

# Appendix

### Checklist for Setting Up A Keyword Tracking Set

✔ What's your app called?

✔ What are the main features?

✔ What are similar apps called?

✔ What's your app's category?

✔ Which terms do people commonly use in this category?

✔ What are similar words to describe your app features?

### Checklist on How to Choose Competitors to Monitor in ASO Tools

✔ Which apps provide similar features and content as your app?

✔ What's the user base of these apps like?

✔ Which apps rank for the same keywords as you?

✔ Who is competing for the same keywords rankings as you?

### Checklist for Analyzing Keyword Rankings

✔ How have my keyword rankings changed since the last update?

✔ Have there been significant ranking drops?

✔ Did rankings for keywords (which you added to essential metadata to) increase?

✔ What are the most popular keywords in your set and how do you rank for them?

✔ For which keywords do you rank in a top 5 position and who else is found for these terms? (What are the top ranking apps for that keyword?)

✔ Which keywords generate a great ranking for your app? Is your app also found using similar words?

### *Checklist for Quick-Fixing App Store Metadata*

✔ Am I double-using any terms in specific fields?

✔ Is there any data missing?

✔ Did I really exploit all the keyword space available?

### *App Store Marketing Success Factors*

✔ Average Keyword Rankings and Changes

✔ Impressions (How many people found your app in the app store?)

✔ Page Visits (Do people show interest in your product?)

✔ Installs & Download Rates (How many downloads did you receive?)

✔ Downloads per Country / Territory (From which country do you receive the most downloads from? Where do people download your app the least?)

✔ Organic Installs (How many installs did you receive organically?)

✔ Distribution of Download Sources (Where do app downloads come from?)

### *Steps to Follow in App A/B Testing*

✔ Analysis and brainstorming

✔ Creating variations

✔ Running the experiment

✔ Results evaluation

✔ Implementing collected data

✔ Running follow-up experiments

# The App Store Optimization Framework

How to get your ASO strategy up and running for professional app store marketing

## Level 1: ASO Starting Point

- ☐ You know the basic mechanics of App Store Algorithms
- ☐ You make use of ASO-relevant metadata
- ☐ You set up continous keyword tracking

## Level 2: Analyze & Improve

- ☐ You regularly analyze keyword rankings
- ☐ You know how to fix minor ASO issues for keyword optimization
- ☐ You regularly check download rates and performance indicators

## Level 3: Grow Your User Base

- ☐ You localize app store information on a professional level
- ☐ You reached initial downloads & are focused on growing the user base
- ☐ You do A/B testing and know which page elements drive conversions

## Level 4: Keyword Selection Strategy

- ☐ You dominate a niche of keyword searches with your app
- ☐ You set up detailed competitor monitoring and know what to do better
- ☐ You regularly push app updates for continuous optimization

# About the Authors

**Thomas Kriebernegg**

CEO & Co-Founder @ App Radar

Thomas is the CEO & Co-Founder of App Radar. He started working in the field of online marketing back in 2000 - specializing in Community Building and Search Engine Optimization.

After he finished his studies in information management, he fell in love with the App Store platform and shortly after that with the topic App Store Optimization.

The possibility to easily launch an international product and the endless possibilities linked to it still fascinates him and drives his vision of how analyzing, managing and optimizing apps should look like in the future.

**Silke Glauninger**

Marketing Manager @ App Radar

Silke is not only our marketing manager here at App Radar, but also holds a master's degree in business informatics. She is a marketing enthusiast who is curious about mobile innovations.

Together with the team of App Radar, which she joined back in 2015 as one of the first employees, she continuously looks for new ways to simplify App Store Optimization tasks and loves to write about mobile app marketing.

## Are there some questions left?
## Drop us a line at hello@appradar.com

We would be happy to hear your feedback and thoughts.

**Keep on Optimizing!**
- Cheers, Silke & Thomas

# App Store Optimization

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