



App developers' experience with apps

The ACCC is examining potential competition and consumer issues relating to mobile app shops or marketplaces, such as Apple's App Store and the Google Play Store.

The ACCC wants to know more about app developers' experiences interacting with app marketplace suppliers (in particular, Google and Apple) in developing and distributing apps to Australians. We are interested in issues like choice of app marketplaces, collection of user data, and app developers' experiences with app marketplace review and ranking processes.

How to participate

There are two ways you can provide the ACCC with your views:

1. **Completing our online survey** – this will take about 10 minutes. You don't need to answer all questions. You can find the survey [here](#).
2. **Providing a written submission** – submissions can respond to the issues outlined in this factsheet, or on any other aspects of app marketplaces. They can be emailed to digitalmonitoring@acc.gov.au.

This inquiry is a public process, so all responses will be published as submissions to the inquiry. However, you may be able to make a claim for confidentiality in certain circumstances. More information about the confidentiality arrangements for the inquiry can be found in the Issues Paper.

Responses are due by 2 October 2020.

Below is an outline of the issues we are examining, the sort of information we are seeking from app developers, and questions you may wish to consider when preparing your response.

Issue 1 – Choice of app marketplaces?

We're interest in to the practicalities of developing apps for different operating systems/marketplaces, and whether practically app developers (of the businesses they are developing apps for) can successfully launch an app on only one app marketplace (or by bypassing the Apple App Store and Google Play Store)

Questions to consider:

What are the advantages or disadvantages of developing an app for only one app marketplace? How often do you develop an app for only one app marketplace?

What are the advantages or disadvantages of developing an app for multiple app marketplaces?

To what extent is it possible/practical to develop and distribute an app without using the Apple App Store or Google Play Store?

What strategies (if any) are used by app marketplace suppliers to entrench app providers or app developers in their broader platform ecosystems?

Issue 2 – developing apps for particular marketplaces

In addition to the Google Play Store and the Apple App Store, Google and Apple offer a range of other services and goods, such as

- their own apps, such as the Gmail app on the Google Play Store,
- consumer devices like smartphones, tablets, smart watches and laptops,¹
- software, such as operating systems and related tools to build apps for those operating systems,² and
- services, such as ad tech services and analytics services for app providers seeking to monetise the apps via advertising

We're interested in to the practicalities of developing apps for app marketplaces, including whether the related nature of services provided by app marketplaces affect how you choose to develop and distribute the app.

Questions to consider:

What services do app market place suppliers offer app developers? What benefits are there from using the services as offered by app marketplace suppliers?

Are you required to use any services of particular app marketplace suppliers in order for an app to operate effectively?

Do you find bundling of services by app marketplace suppliers encourages you to use these services over others in developing apps?

Issue 3 – In-app purchases

Both Apple and Google require app providers wishing to offer paid additional functionality in an app to use 'in-app purchases'. Apple and Google both collect 30 per cent of these payments, or in the case of subscription services, 15 per cent commission from the second year onwards.

We are interested in how these requirements affect both how you develop apps (and how businesses ask you to develop their apps) and to what extent these requirements affect you competing with apps made by Google and Apple.

Questions to consider:

What terms, related to payments in the app, are app developers required to comply with?

How does having to use in-app purchases affect how you develop an app?

Have you developed apps that are required to use in-app purchases? Have you developed apps that involved consumer payment that are not required to go through in-app purchases?

Issue 4 – Reviewing of apps

A number of app marketplaces, including the Google Play Store and the Apple App Store, have processes to assess and screen apps before they are placed on the marketplace.

¹ For example: iPhone, iPad and Apple watch for Apple; the Pixel smartphone and Google Home smart assistant for Google

² For example: Google and Apple both provide software development tools so that app developers can develop apps that operate on the respective operating systems: Apple, [Tools & Resources](#), accessed 30 July 2020; Google, Android Developers, [Android Studio](#), accessed 30 July 2020.

We're interested in your experience with getting apps onto app marketplaces; including whether app marketplaces have any policies in place which affect your ability to develop the app as you would otherwise. We're also interested in your experience with challenging any decisions not to allow apps onto a marketplace.

Questions to consider:

What is the process for getting an app into an app marketplace?

What information are you provided about the review process?

What review processes are in place before an app can be placed on an app marketplace?

What processes, if anything, are in place to appeal a refusal of an app?

To what extent do app developers/providers feel constrained by app marketplace review processes? Please provide detail relating to each marketplace used.

Issue 5 – Ranking of apps

A key service of app marketplaces, which affects whether a consumer sees an app, is determining how apps are displayed to consumers on the app marketplace. This can include 'featuring' particular apps,³ as well as ranking apps.

We are interested in your experience of the app ranking/featuring process, and the amount of information you are given about how to achieve a good ranking/featured status.

Questions to consider:

How important is a high rank on an app marketplace to the success of an app?

How important is 'app featuring' to the success of an app?

What information are you provided by app marketplaces about how each of these processes operate?

What ways are there for you (or the business directing you to develop the app) to improve the ranking of an app?

Issue 6 – collection and use of consumer data

Consumer data plays an important role in targeting digital display advertising to its intended audience, and measuring its results. We are interested in the data collected from app use, who obtains that data and the relevance of that data for your business model; as well as the control you have over what data an app marketplace can access.

Questions to consider:

What range of consumer data can be collected from the use of an app?

a) To what extent is this data accessible to the app marketplace supplier

b) To what extent is this data accessible to the app providers

c) For what purposes is this data collected?

Does the amount of data you collect (or that a marketplace collects) change depending on whether it is a paid or a free app?

³ Both Apple App Store and the Google Play Store 'feature' apps in their app marketplaces

Are terms and conditions in place with app marketplaces, relating to access of data by app marketplace suppliers, which affect your development of the app?

As part of your development of the app, do you provides disclosures to consumers regarding data collection in the app?

To what extent are you able to limit the amount/types of consumer data shared with the app marketplace suppliers?

More information

[March 2021 report into app marketplaces issues paper](#)