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Shopping apps slim down, running risk of inhibiting experience

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Shopping apps must provide features that make up for its large space

By [Brielle Jaekel of Mobile Commerce Daily](#)

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Retailers with mobile applications that take up a significant amount of space on smartphones can mitigate the problem by moving features to the cloud and using eight-bit images, but larger apps with unique functionality may have an edge.

Walgreen's is the latest example of a retailer slimming down its app to save room on consumers' smartphones, which can significantly reduce the risk of being the first to go when users run out of space, although the benefits of doing so may be moot in a few years. Retailers that are looking into slimming down should be careful not to do so in a manner that inhibits the user experience, as those with beneficial features that stand out from the competition can be successful despite a larger app size.

"It is interesting to note that the benefits of slimming down might be temporary," said Lou Orfanos, vice president of product at [Localitytics](#). "Both storage and bandwidth are becoming cheaper and more widely available, even in emerging markets.

"As a result, we are seeing a trend where new phones have more storage than their predecessors," he said. "Though that suggests that some of the advantages to slimming down could disappear in the next few years, it is still important to cater to as wide an audience as possible today."

SlimFast for apps

Retail app developers should consider slimming down their size based on their target demographic and competitors. For instance, users in developing countries value their bandwidth a lot more because it is expensive so the smaller the app, the better in these countries such as India.

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While apps that take up much more space than competitors are likely to be skipped over for slimmer ones, those that are larger but also offer quality features that provide quite a bit more functionality can win out.

"It really depends on the app and the target user," Mr. Orfanos said. "For example, in developing countries, many users are very focused on mobile data costs.

"So, download size can be a barrier to entry for apps that are trying to gain users in places like India. It also depends on how your app compares to direct competitors," he said. "For example, if your app is 25 percent bigger than your three closest competitors and you are not offering some sort of unique functionality, you should probably consider slimming down.

"On the other hand, if your app is bigger than your competitors', but that is because your app has unique features or functionality that users love, then it might be worth the extra heft."

Weight-loss plan

Developers can leverage a few tactics to slim down their apps, such as using eight-bit images instead of 32-bit when possible, but it is important to not overdo it because it can affect the quality of how the app looks. Retailers can also remove extraneous features that are not often used, but can also disappoint the few users who depended on those functionalities.

However, retailers that adopt cloud-based apps can see significant results as it likely can save functionality without taking up users' smartphone space.

app store 420



"Apps can be made 'slimmer' by moving parts of the app to the cloud," said Anna Abrell, marketing manager at Poq. "We recommend that all retailers offer cloud apps.

"But this is very hard to achieve when working with design agencies, as it requires use of a sophisticated technology platform," she said. "All of the retailers we work with offer extremely lightweight apps, because the apps run on our cloud platform."

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