

Apple's tightly controlled App Store is teeming with scams

Nearly 2 percent of Apple's top-grossing apps on one day were scams — and they have cost people \$48 million

By Reed Albergotti and Chris Alcantara
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Apple chief executive Tim Cook has long argued it needs to control app distribution on iPhones, otherwise the App Store would turn into “a flea market.”

But among the 1.8 million apps on the App Store, scams are hiding in plain sight. Customers for several VPN apps, which allegedly protect users' data, complained in Apple App Store reviews that the apps told users their devices have been infected by a virus to dupe them into downloading and paying for software they don't need. A QR code reader app that remains on the store tricks customers into paying \$4.99 a week for a service that is now included in the camera app of the iPhone. Some apps fraudulently present themselves as being from major brands such as Amazon and Samsung.

Of the highest 1,000 grossing apps on the App Store, nearly two percent are scams, according to an analysis by The Washington Post. And those apps have bilked consumers out of an estimated \$48 million during the time they've been on the App Store, according to market research firm Appfigures. The scale of the problem has never before been reported. What's more, Apple profits from these apps because it takes a cut of up to a 30 percent of all revenue generated through the App Store. Even more common, according to The Post's analysis, are “fleeceware” apps that use inauthentic customer reviews to move up in the App Store rankings and

give apps a sense of legitimacy to convince customers to pay higher prices for a service usually offered elsewhere with higher legitimate customer reviews.

Two-thirds of the 18 apps The Post flagged to Apple were removed from the App Store.

The most valuable company in U.S. history, Apple is facing unprecedented scrutiny for how it wields its power and is fighting to hold onto it, including in a blockbuster trial that concluded last month. Regulators and competitors have zeroed in on the App Store in particular: Unlike app stores on other mobile operating systems, Apple's store faces no competition and is the only way for iPhone owners to download software to their phones without bypassing Apple's restrictions. Through it, Apple keeps a tight grip on software distribution and payments on its mobile operating system, called iOS.

Apple has long maintained that its exclusive control of the App Store is essential to protecting customers, and it only lets the best apps on its system. But Apple's monopoly over how consumers access apps on iPhones can actually create an environment that gives customers a false sense of safety, according to experts. Because Apple doesn't face any major competition and so many consumers are locked into using the App Store on iPhones, there's little incentive for Apple to spend money on improving it, experts say.

Adaptado de: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2021/06/06/apple-app-store-scams-fraud/>

1) According to Apple chief executive Tim Cook:

- a) If the distribution of iPhones is not controlled, the App Store will turn into "a flea market."
- b) If the long argue is not controlled, the App Store might turn into "a flea market."
- c) If the App Store is not controlled, the App Store would never turn into "a flea market."
- d) If app distribution is not controlled, the App Store could turn into "a flea market."

2) What is happening, according to customers?

a) Apps are infecting their phones with viruses and providing users money to download extra apps they don't need.

b) Apps are sending the messages about infections in order to make them download other apps and pay for them.

c) Apps are paying for software the users don't need in order to infect other users' devices.

d) Apps are been hidden in plain sight to make users complain in Apple App Store reviews.

3) Some apps:

a) Authentically describe themselves as being part of important organizations such as Amazon and Samsung.

b) Genuinely characterize themselves as being related to great corporations such as Amazon and Samsung.

c) Deceitfully portray themselves as belonging to important manufacturers such as Amazon and Samsung.

d) Are legitimately related to relevant companies such as Amazon and Samsung.

4) According to an analysis by The Washington Post:

a) A little less than half of the total highest 1,000 grossing apps on the App Store can be considered deceitful.

b) Not more than one per cent of the total highest 1,000 grossing apps on the App Store will be fraudulent.

c) The vast majority of the total highest 1,000 grossing apps on the App intend to deceive users.

d) A small part of the total highest 1,000 grossing apps on the App Store are dishonest schemes.

5) According to the text, what is a "fleeceware" app?

a) Apps that convince customers to pay higher prices in top-quality products that are worth their money.

b) Apps that have higher legitimate customer reviews and charge customers reasonable prices.

c) Apps that forge reviews with the intent of fooling users into paying for their services.

d) Apps that are infected with viruses and malware that steal users' passwords.

6) What happened to the 18 apps that were denounced by The Washington Post?

a) Most of them were withdrawn from the App Store.

b) The vast majority of them were later promoted by the App Store.

c) Just some of them have been dropped from the App Store.

d) Exactly half of them were banned from the App Store.

7) According to experts:

a) Apple has insufficient encouragement to polish up the App Store.

b) Apple is willing to spend a lot of money on improving the App store.

c) Apple designed an environment that promotes a genuine sense of security in the App Store.

d) Apple brags about the mediocre shape of the App Store.