

Everything You Need to Know to
UNDERSTAND AND REDUCE APP
UNINSTALLS

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INTRODUCTION

Mobile app marketing has grown increasingly sophisticated over the past several years. In the beginning, most apps were launched more with hope and a promise than with a robust measurement plan in place. Most early apps were games, and given that game marketing is dependent (to a large extent) on the ability to generate hype, there was less concern about what happened after the install than there was about maximizing position in app store rankings.

All that has changed. First, apps now represent a critical source of revenue for many companies. That demands that marketers view measurement and optimization as critical responsibilities.

Many gaming companies, for example, have recognized that a core group of consumers represent a disproportionate share of revenue. In response, they have created massive business intelligence (BI) platforms to more fully understand marketing effectiveness and user specific to their businesses.

Second, many other types of apps – from retail experiences to companion apps – have entered the space in large numbers. Such brands and marketers expect rich measurement as part of any digital initiative.

Third, the increasingly competitive app environment has led a growing number of app marketers – both inside and outside of the gaming sector -to seek and leverage marketing effectiveness data and insights about what people do in an app once it has been installed.



APSALAR UNINSTALL ATTRIBUTION ANALYTICS

Apsalar changed the dynamics of uninstall rate measurement in January, 2016, when we launched uninstall attribution to our popular mobile app analytics platform. Simultaneously, we have undertaken an education campaign to ensure marketers understand the importance of mobile app uninstall rates, why they matter so much, and how to use granular uninstall measures to drive better results from their mobile app marketing spending.

This paper plays a key role in that effort by answering the following five questions:

1 Why do uninstalls matter so much? What do they tell us about our businesses?

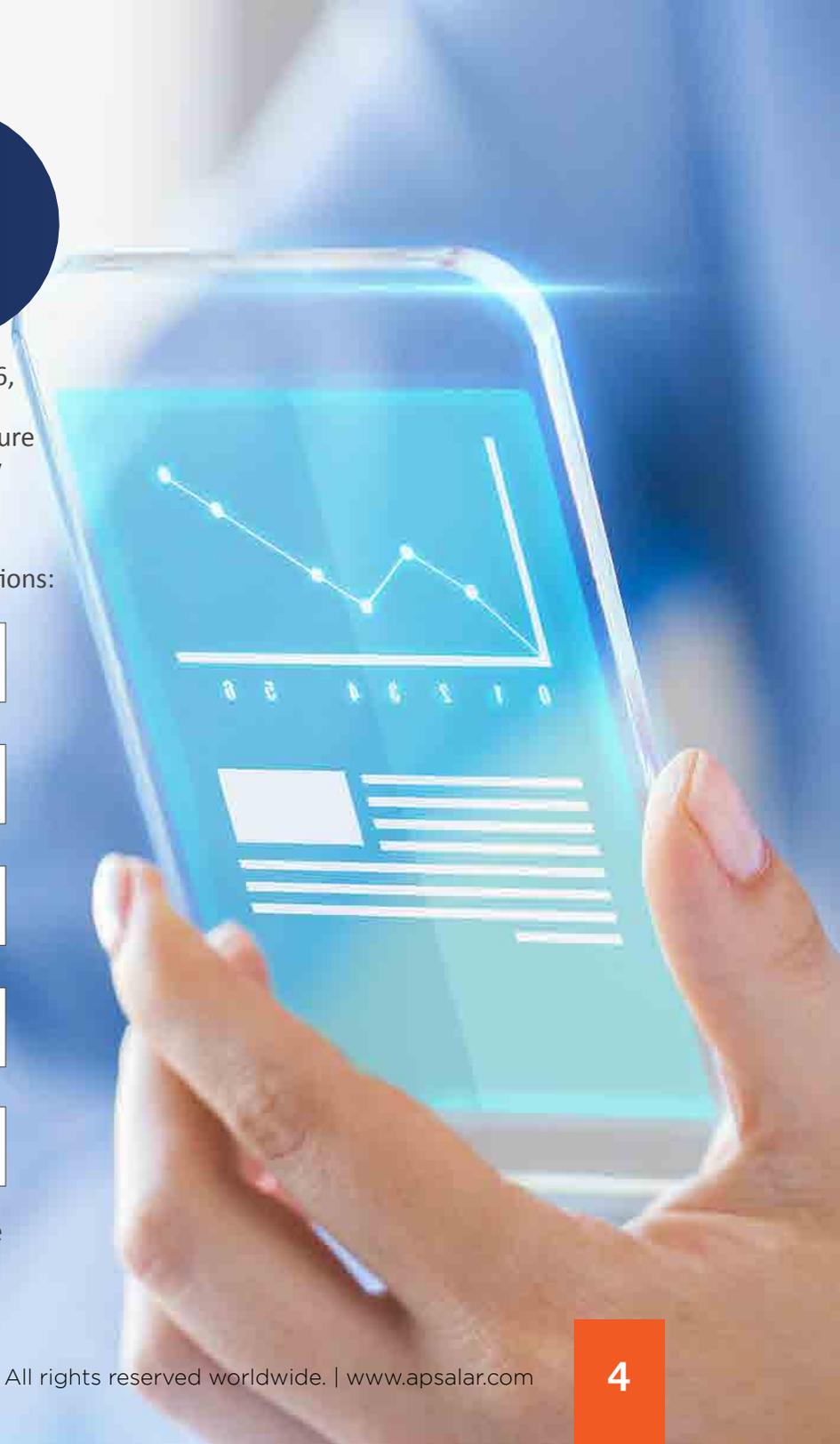
2 How many people uninstall applications, and why?

3 What do app uninstalls cost my business?

4 How does the Apsalar Uninstall Attribution measurement work?

5 What are some use cases in which uninstall rate can be leveraged to improve marketing ROI?

We hope that you find the information and ideas helpful in your efforts to drive maximum ROI from your marketing spend.



1

Why do uninstalls matter so much? What do they tell us about our businesses?

Uninstall rates are critical information because a user that uninstalls an app cannot help you deliver on your KPIs. The business goals for an app instance cannot be achieved if the person isn't a user anymore. While some marketers are incited purely on the basis of total installs, that is becoming increasingly less common as businesses look to apps to drive key business goals like revenue, engagement, or product satisfaction.

A Massive Business "Tax"

Think of uninstalls as a massive "tax" on your app business metrics. Each uninstall represents a loss of one user's engagement or lifetime value (LTV). Further, failure to consider uninstalls leads to major misallocations of resources. Without insights into uninstall rates, you might mistakenly allocate resources to tactics that don't drive your KPIs, or at least don't drive them as well as other tactics could.

Uninstalls and Store Rankings

There's another issue to consider. When it comes to determining app rankings, app stores have shifted focus from initial app popularity to long-term app and app install quality.

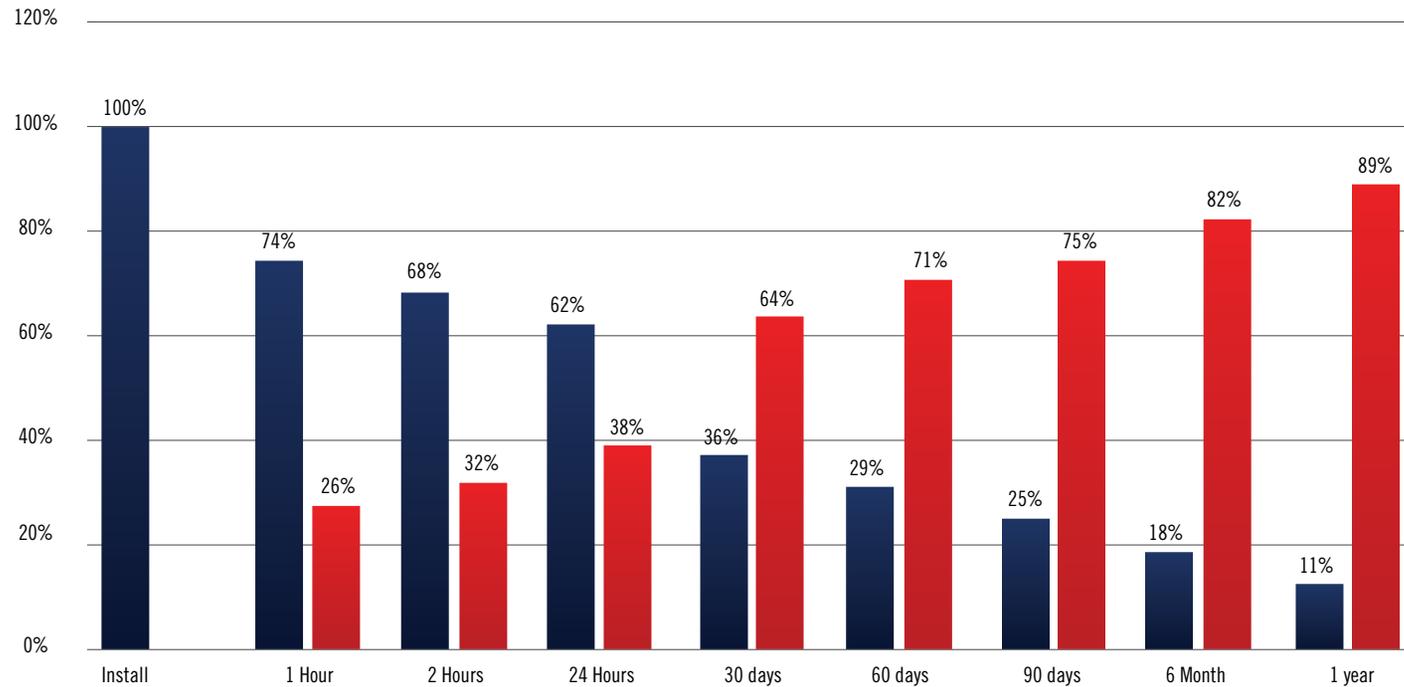
The algorithms treat uninstalls that occur soon after an install as more indicative of app problems than uninstalls that occur weeks or months later. An immediate install, it is surmised, is a better indicator of a low quality app. Uninstalls that occur 60 days or more after an install appear to have little importance in store rankings; that's because many apps are believed to have a finite "shelf life" of utility.

Data appear to show that uninstalls are more important for the Google Play ranking algorithm than for the Apple App Store. Google Play is widely believed to leverage a much more complex algorithm for rankings, but most analysts believe that the App Store also incorporates uninstall rates in its model.

2

How many people uninstall applications, and why?

Global Average Uninstall Rates Over Time



Source Kantar ITR, 2015

A number of companies have conducted uninstall rate time studies. A Kantar/ITR study showed that an average of 26% of new users uninstall in the first hour. That rate rises to 38% in the first day, 64% in the first month, and about 89% over 12 months.

Those figures represent the average across all app types. These rates vary based on global region and app category, among other factors.

Uninstalls Skew to the Developing World

Geographically, the highest uninstall rates tend to occur in developing markets like India, China, Brazil and Russia. This is not because consumers in those regions are more fickle. Rather, the smart phones that are popular in those markets, which tend to be lower cost, often have much smaller memory. As a result, users must often delete an existing app in order to install a new app. For this reason, as well as the enduring popularity of incentivized download programs, we see more apps reinstalled in these regions.

App type and utility also seem to have strong effects on overall uninstall rates. The chart below summarizes research from a variety of sources that indicate which types of apps have high uninstall rates, and which have lower rates.

LOWER Uninstalls

- Paid apps
- Social apps
- Evergreen info (news, weather)
- Money and travel
- Single player games
- Amateur/personal multimedia

HIGHER Uninstalls

- Free apps
- Dating
- Major brand apps (low utility)
- Health and education
- Multiplayer games
- Pro Multimedia

Some have hypothesized that the frequency of app usage can be a great predictor of uninstall rates and timing. Within an app category, like gaming, the correlation can be fairly strong.

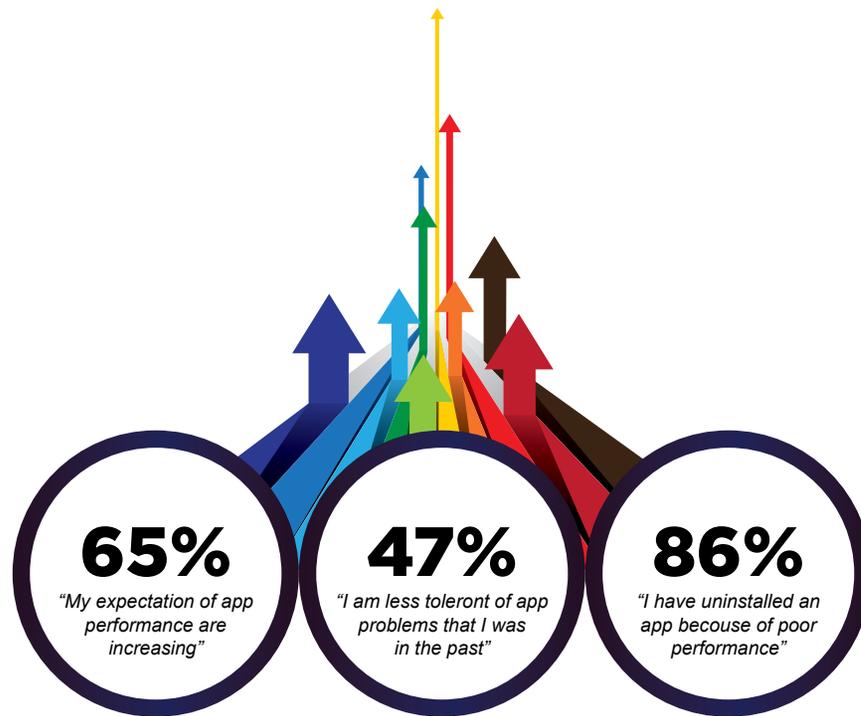
Across categories, however, that is far less true. The reason for this is likely that some types of apps (like travel and personal finance apps) are only relevant infrequently, so their frequency of use is naturally lower than for, say, a casual game.

People uninstall apps for a variety of reasons.
Based on a review of research from a variety of sources, there appear to be five core reasons:

5 Core Reasons Why People Uninstall



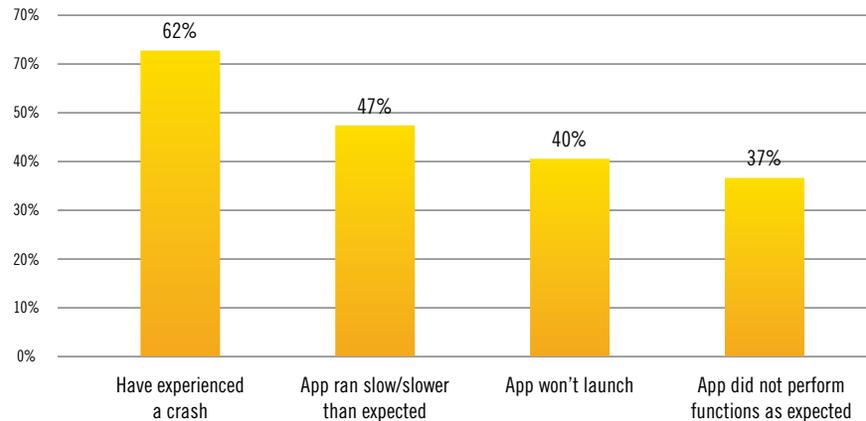
App performance issues: People expect apps to function beautifully every time. When an app won't launch, launch quickly, crashes frequently, functions slowly, or offers bad UI/UX, data show that people quickly lose interest. A 2014 App Dynamics survey of app users in the US and UK showed that 2/3 of consumers say their expectations of app performance are increasing, and that almost 9 in 10 had uninstalled an app because of poor performance.



Source: App Dynamics, 2014. Data are for US and UK.

Another study, from Compuware, provided more insight into the specific performance issues that led to user dissatisfaction. The study queried consumers from the US, UK, France, Germany and India. Crashes and slow app performance were the most frequently cited issues.

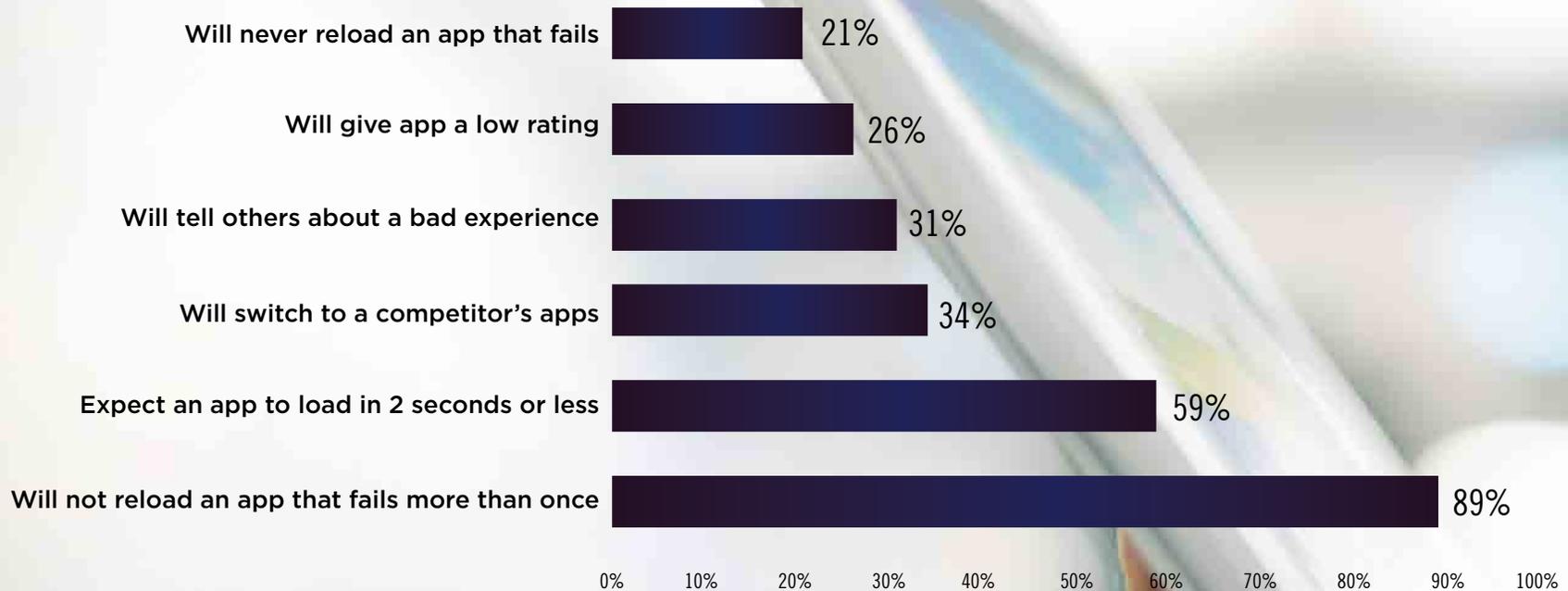
Percent of App Users Reporting App Performance Problem - Past 6 Month



Source: Compuware 2014 - Data for US, UK, Germany, France, India

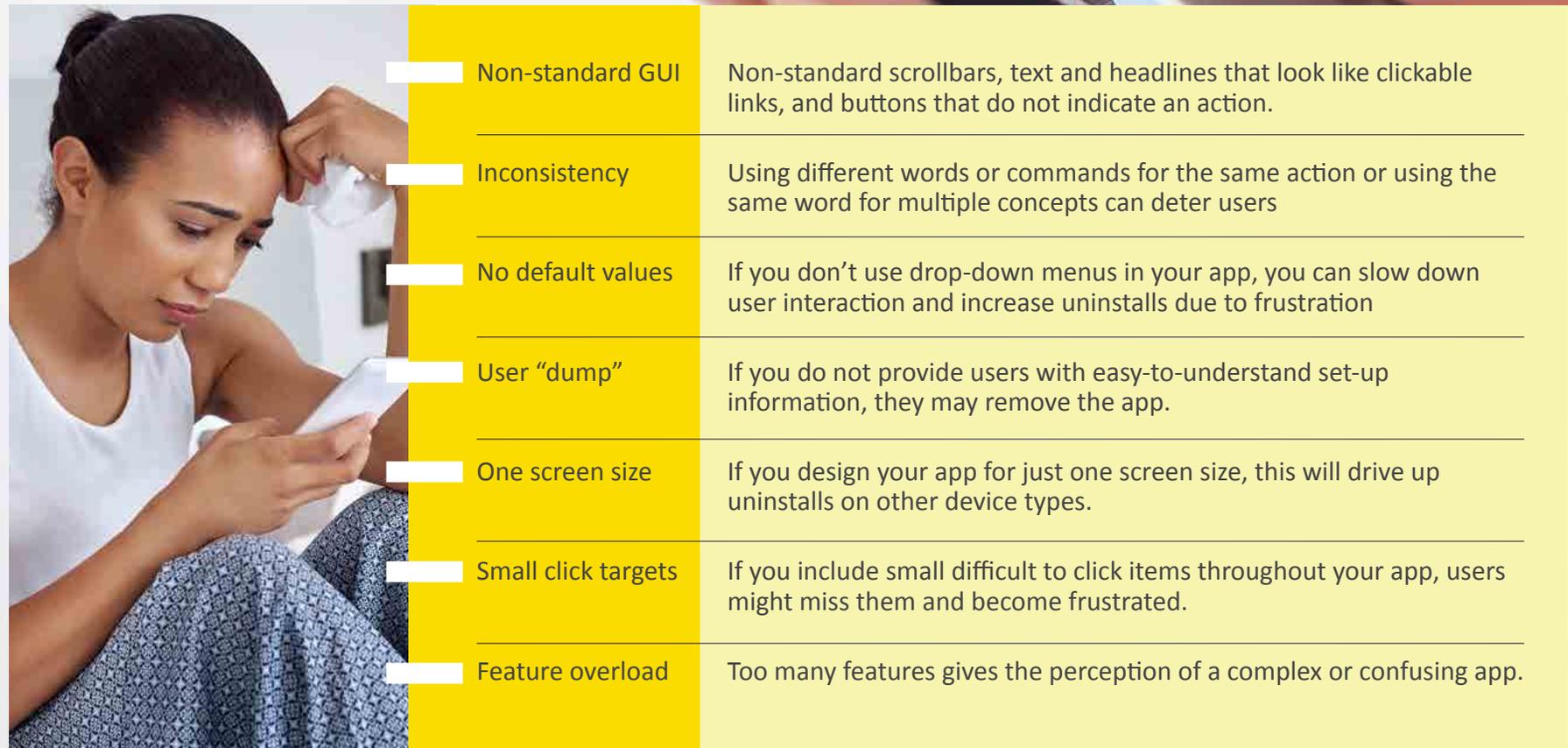
The same study showed that consumers tend not to be a forgiving bunch.
A survey showed the following:

Percent Who Agree With the Statement



Source: Compuware 2014 - Data for US, UK, Germany, France, India

Regarding UI/UE optimization, we've put together the following grid outlining key UI/UE issues that can result in higher uninstall rates. Use these (and good old common sense) to think about how to reduce uninstalls when designing or optimizing an app user experience:



 Non-standard GUI	Non-standard scrollbars, text and headlines that look like clickable links, and buttons that do not indicate an action.
 Inconsistency	Using different words or commands for the same action or using the same word for multiple concepts can deter users
 No default values	If you don't use drop-down menus in your app, you can slow down user interaction and increase uninstalls due to frustration
 User "dump"	If you do not provide users with easy-to-understand set-up information, they may remove the app.
 One screen size	If you design your app for just one screen size, this will drive up uninstalls on other device types.
 Small click targets	If you include small difficult to click items throughout your app, users might miss them and become frustrated.
 Feature overload	Too many features gives the perception of a complex or confusing app.

Unmet User Expectations

Some apps are good and some aren't. User expectations of app utility are quite high and continue to rise as consumers set ever higher bars for app developers and publishers to clear. An app that doesn't do what it promises won't last very long on a user's phone.

Onerous Onboarding

People expect using an app to be easy, including during the initial sign-up or configuration period. Uninstall rates are higher when companies require a social sign-up, or don't offer the option of social sign-up, or when the amount of personal information requested during the initial launch seems too high. What constitutes too much information varies by user, but uninstalls tend to be higher when companies request information that does not appear to be germane to the core functions of an app. For example, an app that requests location information without making clear why it is valuable to share it.

Better Apps Available

Your app must constantly compete with other apps that can perform similar tasks and create similar value. When better apps are available, users tend to replace mediocre ones.

Completed App Experience

Many apps, especially in the gaming category, have a finite shelf life. When you finish every level of a game, or when an app performs a function that is no longer relevant to the user, the app is uninstalled.



What Uninstalls “Cost”

We’re going to do a little math here, based on the assumption that as a marketer you can immediately impact paid installs but not unpaid uninstalls. The idea is that overall uninstall rates for organic installs are driven by product satisfaction or dissatisfaction, whereas the rate of paid installs that are uninstalled can be affected by immediate marketer decisions. Second, we’ll assume that the objective for all apps is to drive revenue. We are fully aware that these assumptions are generalizations, but using them can give us some insight into the cost of not understanding and proactively working to address uninstall rates.

Apsalar data show the following splits between organic and paid installs by category:

- Total Apps: 61% Organic/39% Paid
- Gaming Apps: 67% Organic/33% Paid
- Retail Apps: 40% Organic/60% Paid
- Travel Apps: 61% Organic/39% Paid
- On-Demand Services: 47% Organic/53% Paid

Assuming that a marketer’s decisions can affect the uninstall rates of the paid installs, every 10% of the uninstall rate can reduce overall app revenue by an average of:

- Total Apps: 3.9%
- Gaming Apps: 3.3%
- Retail Apps: 4.0%
- Travel Apps: 3.9%
- On-Demand Services: 5.3%

If you can make decisions that reduce your paid uninstall rates by 10%, 20% or 30%, you can make major revenue gains.

4

How does the Apsalar Uninstall Attribution measure work?

As I mentioned earlier, Apsalar has launched uninstall measurement as an available metric in its renowned Apsalar Attribution platform. The measure is measuring by calculating the percent of installs that have uninstalled during a period of time, and is stated as a percentage.

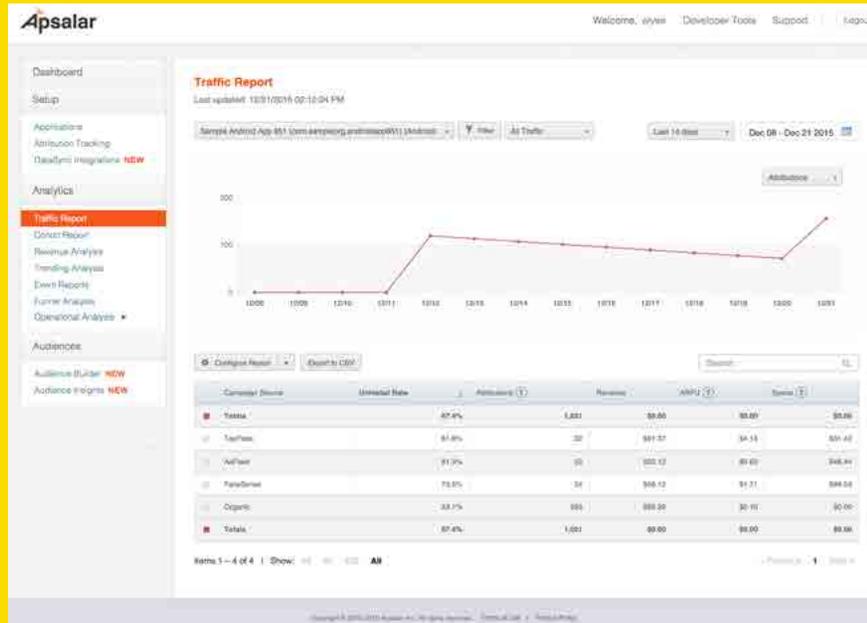
You can use Apsalar's many reports and custom report generating capabilities to compare uninstall rates for:



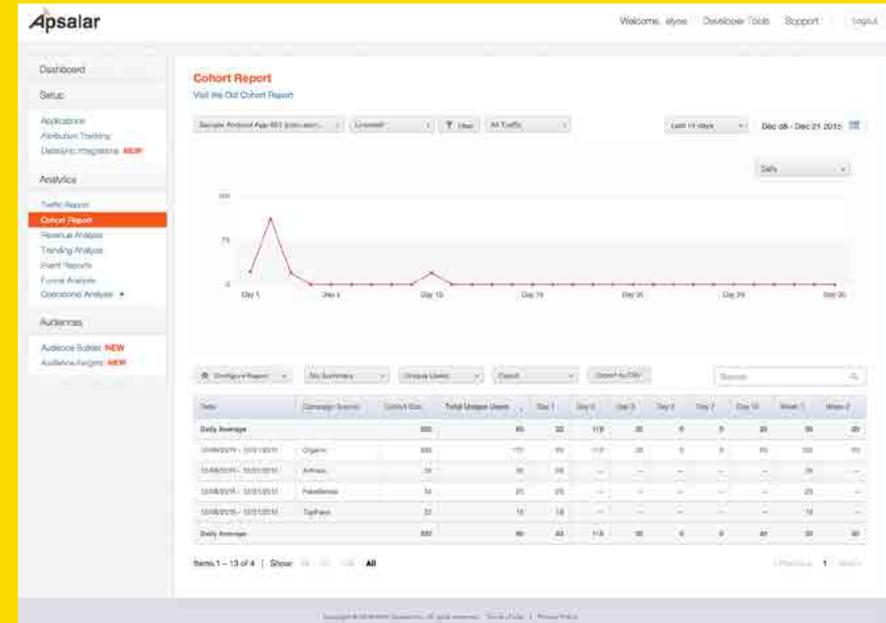
Comparison	Example Analysis
By Channel	Mobile web versus Mobile App Advertising
By Vendor	Helping Networks with High Uninstall Rates Improve Performance
By Buying Model	Uninstall Rates of Incentivized Install Programs
By Cohort	Paid versus Organic Installs
By Region	India Versus Indonesia

Apsalar clients can examine uninstall rates over any time period they wish. Further, uninstall rate is available as a metric in all traffic reports and cohort reports, so the user is free to create analyses specific to their business.

Here is an example screenshot from our Traffic reporting, showing how you can compare uninstall rates across different vendors.



And this is an example cohort report showing how you can measure user decay over time.



These are just two examples of reports you can pull using uninstall rate metrics. You can examine rates in the UI or download data to Excel or a BI platform.

One of the best things about Apsalar Uninstall Attribution is that clients get access to the data for free. There is no additional charge for the measurement. Further, getting started is quite easy. Clients simply update the Apsalar SDK in their apps and input a project number and server key right in the Apsalar UI.

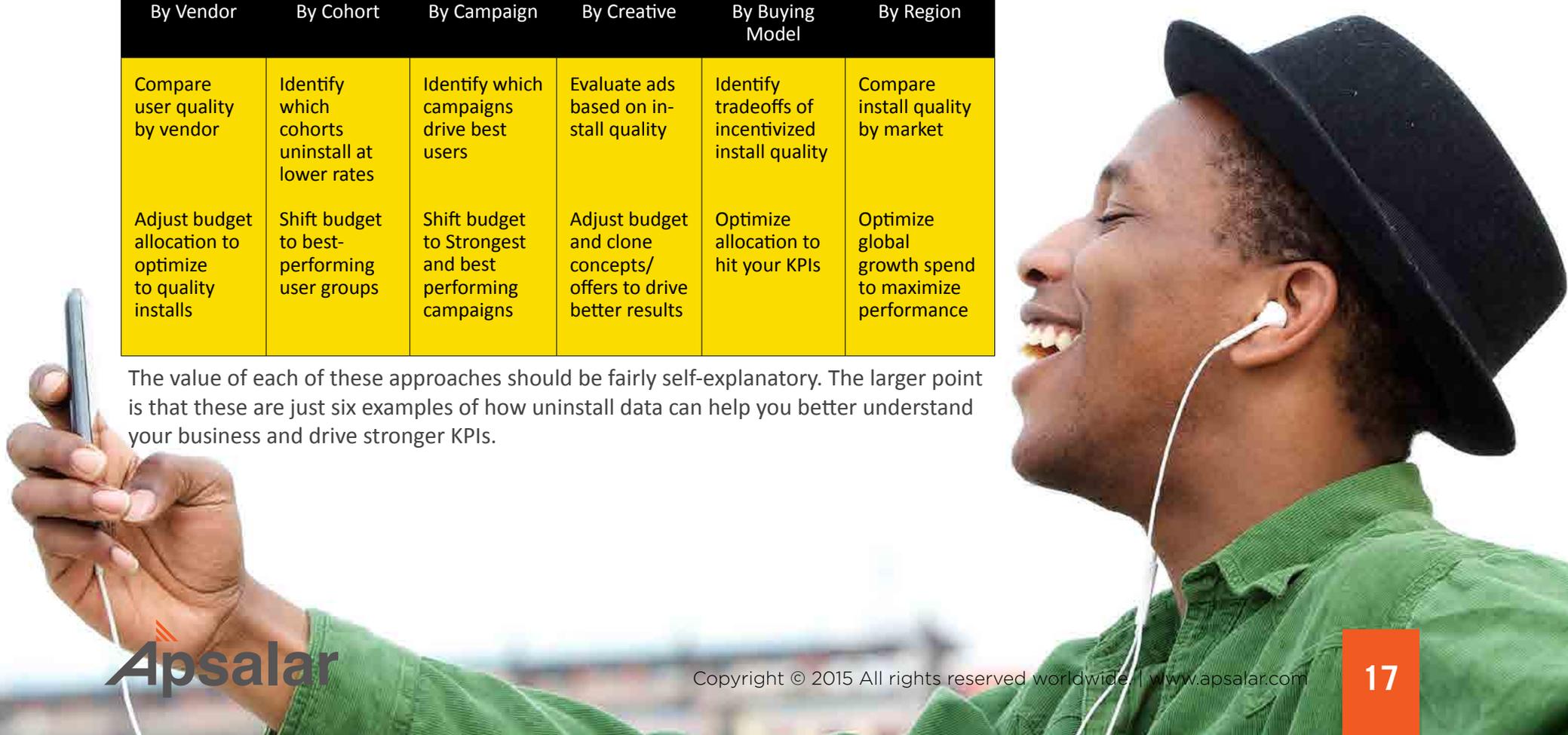
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What are some use cases in which uninstall rate can be leveraged to improve marketing ROI?

Now the fun – or at least most actionable – part. How can you put uninstall rate data to work driving your KPIs? I want to review with you 6 key use cases on how to use relative uninstall rates to optimize your marketing programs. The grid below outlines each and how you can use the results to power more effective marketing investments.

By Vendor	By Cohort	By Campaign	By Creative	By Buying Model	By Region
Compare user quality by vendor	Identify which cohorts uninstall at lower rates	Identify which campaigns drive best users	Evaluate ads based on install quality	Identify tradeoffs of incentivized install quality	Compare install quality by market
Adjust budget allocation to optimize to quality installs	Shift budget to best-performing user groups	Shift budget to Strongest and best performing campaigns	Adjust budget and clone concepts/ offers to drive better results	Optimize allocation to hit your KPIs	Optimize global growth spend to maximize performance

The value of each of these approaches should be fairly self-explanatory. The larger point is that these are just six examples of how uninstall data can help you better understand your business and drive stronger KPIs.



Concluding Thoughts

Some uninstalls are a fact of life in the app business. No app achieves a 0% uninstall rate. But there clearly are ways for you to use uninstall data to improve your performance against KPIs. Apsalar has made it possible for you to measure uninstall rates and place uninstalls in the larger context of comprehensive app measurement. Start by using uninstalls to address your largest opportunities and work up from these.

The good news is that this very simple metric can drive a host of improvements in the manner by which you drive best results for your business. Whatever the reason for a low quality install, I am sure you see why getting reliable information on uninstall rates is important to effective marketing.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jim Nichols is VP of Marketing for Apsalar. Jim has 20+ years experience in over 80 different categories, including developing successful positioning and go-to-market plans for more than 40 adtech and martech companies. He joined Apsalar after several years as VP of Marketing for Conversant, where he led various efforts in the successful rebrand of the company from ValueClick, Inc. The rebrand and associated industry attention for the company contributed to the \$2.3B sale of Conversant to Alliance Data in December, 2014. He is a prolific writer for digital trades on brand marketing, mobile, video, data, and custom-er profiling. Publications include iMedia Connection, Inside Radio, VentureBeat, ad:tech, ShellyPalmer.com, Jack Myers, and many consumer publications. He holds a B.A. in U.S. History from the Uni-versity of Pennsylvania and an MBA in Marketing from the University of Chicago.

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ABOUT APSALAR

Apsalar is the leading mobile app marketing measurement and optimization company that helps app marketers drive maximum return from all their marketing investments. With Apsalar attribution and audiences, app marketers can optimize their media allocation and empower their partners and platforms to deliver customized communications, for better results at every step in the customer journey.



With Apsalar, mobile-first companies get the data, information and insights they need to drive maximum ROI. Apsalar offers powerful and proven solutions that help companies capitalize on many of their biggest app growth opportunities.



For more information about the Apsalar Mobile ROI Platform,

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