



Market Report South Korea

An area of opportunity for app developers

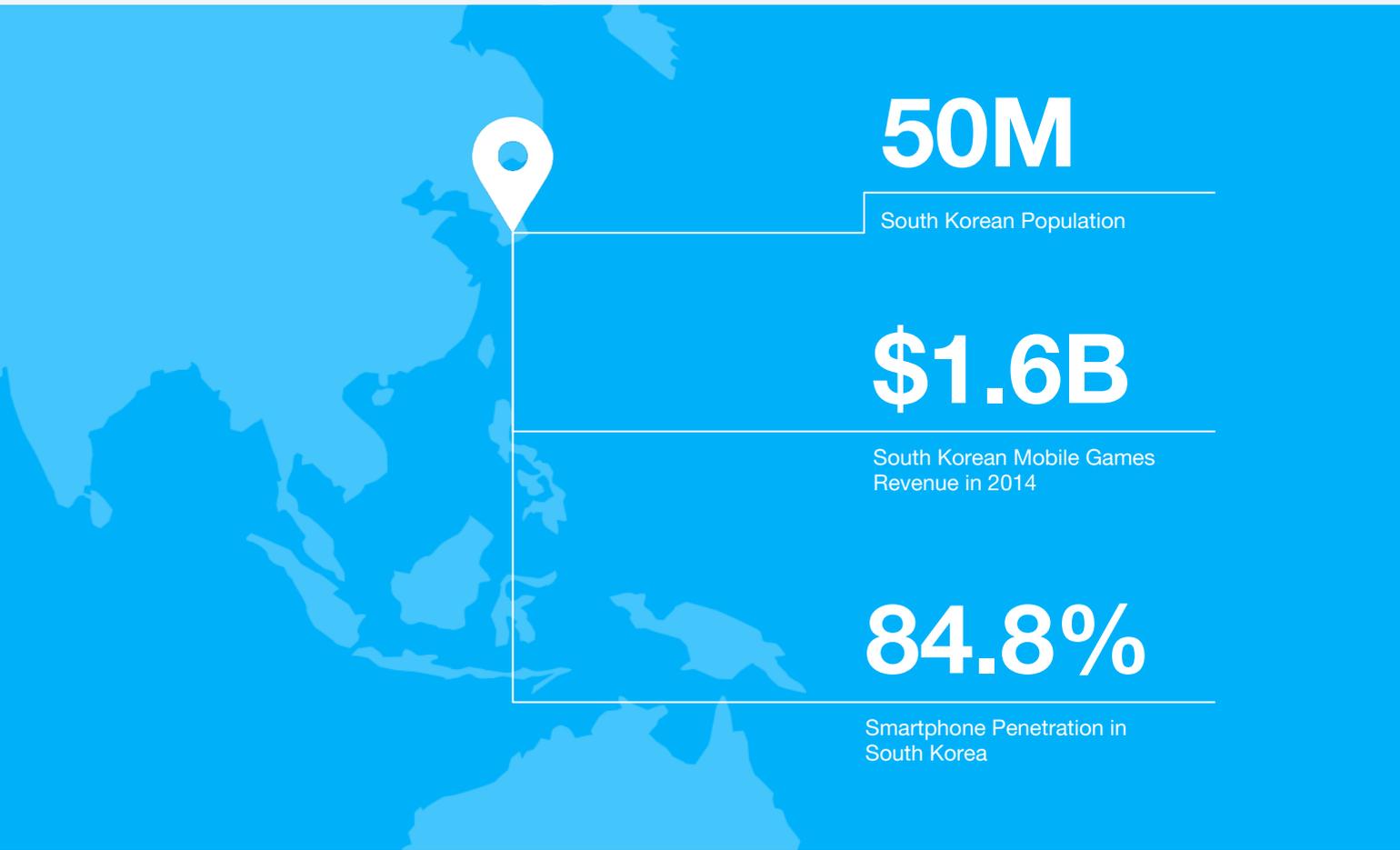
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Intro to South Korea

South Korea is home to one of the most lucrative mobile app markets in the world. Although its population is not nearly as large as the US and China (only 50M), high penetration of smartphones and advanced telecom infrastructure positions South Korea as one of the world's leading countries in app revenue.

In this paper, we outline key facts, statistics, and descriptions, all while providing app developers with explicit, concrete takeaways. Our goal is to provide international app developers with the means to successfully tackle the South Korean market.



Section 1:

South Korean Consumer Profile



Average monthly data usage

Users in South Korea consume over 60% more data than those in the US

9pm-1am

Average monthly data usage

South Koreans consume the most data between 9pm and 1am



Trends are very important

Tastemakers like celebrities have a huge influence over consumer preferences

13.4 hours

Time spent weekly in-app

Smartphone users spend about 13.4 hours per week on mobile apps, surpassing the amount of time spent watching TV



Product research

Tech-savvy users research products online before shopping, especially on social media



Quick Takeaways

- Data heavy apps, such as live video, are not a problem because of advanced telecom infrastructure.
- Make sure your app has a social media following. Stay on top of ratings and reviews.

Section 2:

South Korean Mobile Landscape

84.8%

Mobile usage penetration

In 2015, in South Korea reached 84.8% and is expected to grow to 90.7% by 2019



Most common operating system

Android owns more than 66% of the market share. iOS is the second, with about 33%

Samsung

Most popular device vendor

The most popular device vendor is South Korean-based Samsung. Apple is the second most common device vendor in the country



Big screens dominate

The iPhone 6+ and the Samsung Galaxy Note 5 are common among Korean smartphone users



Quick Takeaways

- Screen size is important. Manipulate the app experience for bigger screens and make sure your ad units fit their size.
- Focus on ASO best practices for Google Play.

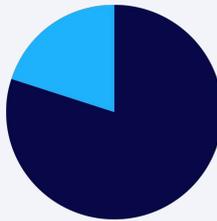
Section 3:

The App Economy pt. 1

Domestic domination

\$3.8B

South Korea app market worth



80%

Google and Apple app stores

20%

Local app stores

60%

More than 60% of leading app developers are South Korean

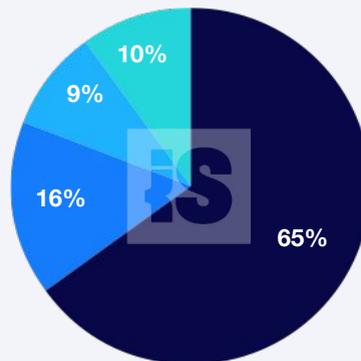


The three largest mobile carriers, SK Telecom, KT, and LG U+, created a unified alternative app store called One Store



Carrier billing is available for Android users, enabling users without credit cards to easily purchase IAPs

Developer HQ of leading app publishers

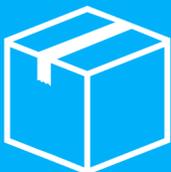


- South Korea
- China
- United States
- Other



KakaoTalk

The biggest messaging app in Korea. The app also offers stikeez, games, payments, m-commerce, and taxi services



Quick Takeaways

- Domestic app publishers dominate, making foreign penetration difficult. To compete, localize your app. [Skip to page 10](#) to read more.
- Publish your app on One Store. The simple registration process is similar to Google Play and App Store.

Section 3:

The App Economy pt. 2

App trends



Tools and shopping are the most popular categories in South Korea after games, consisting of more than 15% of the Top 100 apps



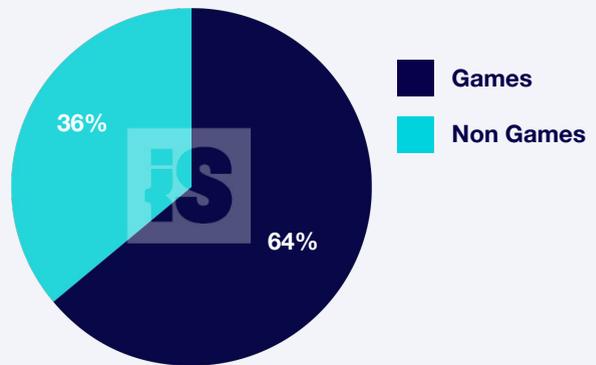
The communication and games categories boast the highest time spent per active user, while communication and social accounted for 60% of all Android smartphone app sessions in Q1 2015

500% lift

Featured apps in the App Store perform extremely well, experiencing a 500% lift



Games / Non Games



In-app display

Mobile advertisers in South Korea prefer in-app display ads



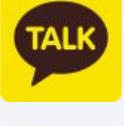
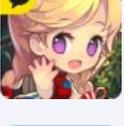
Quick Takeaways

- Find a way to get featured on the App Store.
- Take advantage of in-app display ads to drive revenue.
- If you have a communication, game, or social app, South Korea offers significant opportunities.

Section 3:

The App Economy pt. 3

Top charts in South Korea

Android	iOS
 <p>카카오톡 치즈 - 셀카, 카카오프렌즈 필... Kakao Corporation</p>	 <p>스타뱅킹미니 Kookmin Bank Co., Ltd.</p>
 <p>골든나이트 4:33</p>	 <p>카카오톡 치즈 - 셀카, 카카오프렌즈 필... Kakao Corp.</p>
 <p>아틀란티카 히어로즈 NEXON Company</p>	 <p>개판이네 - 강아지 키우기 Grrr Game Studio CO., LTD.</p>
 <p>노아라시아 스토리 TipcatKorea</p>	 <p>iMovie Apple</p>
 <p>탭어드벤처 for Kakao Game Ade</p>	 <p>iTunes U Apple</p>
 <p>요괴워치 뿌니뿌니 LEVEL-5 Inc.</p>	 <p>Pages Apple</p>
 <p>사쿠라대전 : 전설의 시작 (주)스노우파이프</p>	 <p>Numbers Apple</p>
 <p>KakaoTalk: Free Calls & Text Kakao Corporation</p>	 <p>Keynote Apple</p>
 <p>놀러와 마이홈 for Kakao Kakao Corp .</p>	 <p>GarageBand Apple</p>
 <p>V3 Mobile Plus 2.0 AhnLab Inc.</p>	 <p>Noodles! Michael Busheikin</p>

Section 4:

Category Spotlight: Games

The average Korean gamer

40

has **40** apps installed

11

has used **11** apps in the last **30** days

3

has paid for **3** of them.



Men prefer MMORPG and RPG adventure games



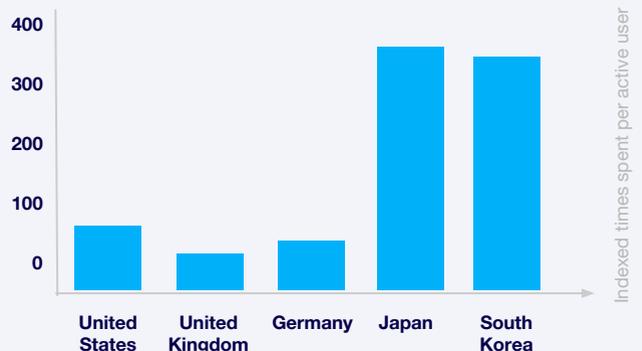
Women enjoy RPG, puzzle, web board games, and casual games



Games with social features are the most lucrative. Gamers often share scores, gift other players, and invite friends to play via KakaoTalk

3x

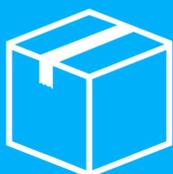
Time spent in games per active user in Korea is 3X more than in the US



Q1 2015 data calculated as a straight average of January, February and March 2015 time spent in games per active user. Data from AppAnnie.

Pre - registration

90% of the Top 20 games offer pre-registration, alerting users who sign up in advance to download the game on the launch date



Quick Takeaways

- Include social features in your game.
- Appeal to both sexes by developing an RPG game.
- Offer pre-registration to boost rankings, secure loyal users, and ensure high install volume at launch.

Section 5:

Localization Matters

Translate your text

According to recent English Proficiency Index reports, South Koreans are only moderately proficient in English, so they prefer their apps to be in Korean. If you decide to translate your app into Korean, know that Google Translate often results in awkward phrasing. Use a smart translator or a freelancer instead.

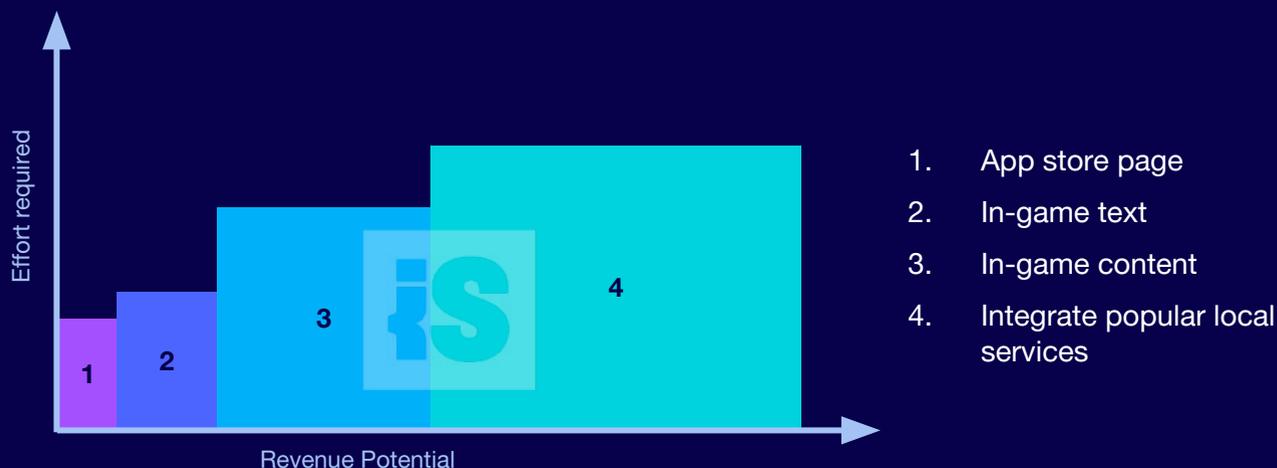
Culturalize your content

Localization doesn't stop at text. Soundtrack, cultural references, and images can also be adapted to give the app a more familiar local feel. Unlike in the US, where factual content works best, consumers in South Korea enjoy eye-catching images of popular characters.

Adapt your ad strategy

Advertising must be culture-specific. Candy Crush, for example, customized its ads to match the cultural needs of South Koreans by including unique emojis and spreading the word on KakaoTalk. Taking advantage of local distribution channels is critically important.

Localization Stages



Want to learn more about how to turn your app into a successful business?

Join 20K other happy developers and [contact us here](#) to learn more about how we can help you maximize your app marketing and monetization.

For more helpful information like this, check out our [Resources Page](#). Or if you're looking for actionable data on the app economy, take a look at our data resources:

Fastest Growing Apps

eCPM Index

About ironSource

ironSource is committed to helping create a sustainable digital content economy. We provide tailored solutions for clients as diverse as app developers, device manufacturers, mobile carriers, and advertisers.

Our comprehensive solutions help industry leading companies achieve greater business success, enabling them to find, understand, engage with, and monetize their target audiences more effectively.

Founded in 2010, ironSource is a truly global company, with offices in Tel Aviv, London, New York, San Francisco, Beijing, and Bangalore. Read more at www.ironsrc.com.