Case Study

How VSCO Mastered App Store Testing & Achieved a 30% Increase in CVR

Images and Photos: VSCO
The Company
Founded in 2011, Oakland-based VSCO has been one of the leading photography apps in the App Store and Google Play. VSCO is a creative channel building creative tools, spaces, and connections driven by self-expression.

Driven by a creator-first philosophy, VSCO supports the creative journey of over 2 million members from start to finish — not only providing photographers with tools but also with the education, community, and connections required to unlock their potential.
The Challenge
How to Boost Growth in Unique Cultural Environments

As VSCO continues to grow globally, it has become clear that potential users in each country have distinct preferences and use cases. Therefore, the app storefront that is most likely to connect with users in each country has to be different.

Understanding each market’s unique audience and the factors that drive them to use the app became essential.

Eight different countries were identified based on VSCO’s strategic priorities — USA, Canada, Brazil, Russia, Norway, Sweden, Japan, and South Korea.

Images and Photos: VSCO
The StoreMaven Methodology

- Conduct Research
- Develop Hypothesis
- Test Hypothesis
- Analyze Results
Step — 01

Research Questions

Local Culture
What is the cultural uniqueness in each market?
Are there any specific local creative trends that should be taken into account?

Local Competitive Landscape
Who are the local competitors? What’s their app store strategy?

In-App Engagement
Are certain features more popular in certain cultures?
Do all VSCO features exist in all countries?
Can we find different behavioral patterns and leverage them in our messaging?
Alice Thieu, VSCO’s Growth Marketing Specialist, noticed that the overall level of photography was more sophisticated in Sweden than in other markets.

Thieu discovered that the in-app engagement metrics reflected this as more professional-level tools were more frequently used when editing images.

VSCO worked with creators to showcase photography that matched the sophistication of the local market and messaging that focused on the more advanced features of the app.

**Step — 02**

**Building Hypotheses — Sweden**

Swedish users in Sweden showed a very strong preference for the Features variation.

This variation intentionally emphasized advanced photo editing features in a clean, professional-looking layout.
Step — 02

Building Hypotheses — Sweden
Sharing photos to social media platforms was the prevailing trend in Russia.

This was supported by in-app metrics, indicating high use of the “Share to” feature. The hypothesis proposed was that a first impression using portraits (which are very popular on social media) combined with messaging showcasing the UI for social sharing would be the most effective in bringing in users.

Due to the popularity of sharing photos to social media platforms, this hypothesis displays the Share options UI in the first impression.
Step — 02

Building Hypotheses — Russia

Images and Photos: VSCO
Step — 03

Creative and Audience Planning

“We were impressed by StoreMaven’s data-driven creative insights as well as their ability to work within our brand guidelines to deliver creative hypotheses and assets that reflected local trends while also remaining true to the brand.”

Brendan van der Vossen, VSCO’s Director of Growth Marketing

VSCO wanted to measure the impact of the creative change on both paid subscription users as well as free-tier users. This meant that for each test, two campaigns ran concurrently in order to target a Facebook Lookalike Audience (LAL) for each of the two groups.
The Results

Images and Photos: VSCO
Localized images immediately evoked familiarity. Research into the local market trends and competitive landscape showed that Japanese users favored portrait photography, pastel colors and straightforward messaging.

Opening images were adapted for the current season making it relevant and timely for the right audience at the right time.

Design approaches closely resembled Japanese app stores in color and imagery style as opposed to an artistic approach.
Step — 02

30.8% — Conversion Rate Uplift — Japan

Images and Photos: VSCO
The less-traditional, editorial design style had the best performance for decisive users but had the worst performance for explorative ones.

The light colors and image-focused first impression worked very well to convert decisive users whilst intriguing other users to keep exploring.

The low conversion rate for explorative users was possibly due to lack of feature-based messaging in the screenshot galley.

It’s important to note that one variation was the clear winner while another variation (reflecting a different hypothesis) wasn’t able to create a significant increase in CVR. No matter how solid your research, testing is the only way to truly identify what will work in the real store.
23.2% — Conversion Rate Uplift — Sweden
Users tend to spend more time exploring the app store before installing so the focus was on creating more detailed messaging to compel users to take action on the often overlooked screenshots 4-6.

“We learned that a more cohesive and longer narrative is necessary in Korea compared to other markets like the US where the first impression is more important.”

Alice Thieu, VSCO’s Growth Marketing Specialist

Overusing color in the first impression isn’t the right way to go. The more subdued color schemes performed better.
16.1% — Conversion Rate Uplift — Korea

Images and Photos: VSCO
The Conclusion
These results and the assumptions behind VSCO’s success (or failure) can now be used to conceive of additional hypotheses for future tests to **drive further improvements to conversion rates**.

The VSCO team **solidified their market understanding about what the most popular and appealing features are in each country** which can be included in future product and feature developments.

VSCO can **optimize their marketing strategy, overall messaging strategy, and feature promotions by using app store testing to battle-test value propositions** and messaging where it counts.

For an app-focused product, no matter how strong an idea is, the only way to learn what works is by seeing how real users respond to it directly in the environment where they make decisions.
Testing is now an integral part of VSCO’s strategy.

No store update goes live without being tested and VSCO uses testing to learn more about user engagement, country engagement, and different segmentations all while constantly refining their core message.
“We’re constantly leaning on StoreMaven’s industry expertise to keep track of the latest trends to incorporate into our robust app store testing roadmap. Since every user will eventually end up on our app store, it’s important for us to constantly refresh our creatives and messaging to our ever-evolving users.”

Brendan van der Vossen
VSCO’s Director of Growth Marketing