

West Edmonton Mall App Store Optimization Report

Prepared by: Jennifer Robin Lee

Website: jenniferrobinlee.com

© 2016 JENNIFER ROBIN LEE - ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

West Edmonton Mall App Store Optimization

Here, I deliver an end-to-end strategy and analysis for the West Edmonton Mall mobile app and provide recommendations for how this app can improve in findability. This app has poor rankings, and I've provided recommendations on how this app can improve its position within the search results based on analysis of the app, target audience, keywords, titles, descriptions, images, ratings, and reviews.

SECTION ONE

Part 1A **App:** West Edmonton Mall by Simplikate, a “Lifestyle” app. West Edmonton Mall is one of the largest malls in the world, with over 800+ retailers. Located in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. Found in the Google Play Store. It's the *“Official app for anyone while onsite or planning to visit West Edmonton Mall!”*

Part 1B **Existing and important goals for the app:** Essentially, this app serves as a helpful navigational and informational tool for those visiting the mall. In exchange for the following assistance, WEM marketers (should be able to) derive valuable information about those who visit the mall and use the app.

- 1) WEM directory with every retailer's map location, store front image, website and phone number. Sort retailers alphabetically or by category.
- 2) Interactive map of WEM allows you to pinpoint location of retailers, restaurants, eatery, attraction, restroom, elevator, escalator, ATM and more.
- 3) Find out what's hot, on sale, and happening with a detailed listing of WEM events and offers, including social media (to see what others are saying).
- 4) Save your parking location via text or voice reminder, photo, or GPS pin.
- 5) Check what movies are playing, with show times, ratings and movie descriptions. Watch trailers and buy tickets online.
- 6) Use OpenTable™ features to reserve a table with participating restaurants.
- 7) Create a custom shopping list, integrated with retailer locations and mall map.
- 8) Find out shopping hours, guest services, directions, attraction hours and rates, hotel information and more.

Part 1C

I performed this analysis through free accounts with “App Annie” and “Search Man”.

Part 1D

Using these free app tools, I performed an in-depth analysis for the app. Most of the results from the Search Man tool show keywords of the mall elements that visitors may be searching for, such as “escalator”, “retailer”, “eatery”, “restroom” (see Part 2C).

Starting with keyword research, there are a number of keywords which I believe provide the best opportunity for the app to rank higher. **Keywords could include:** “megamall”, “shopping”, “luxury mall”, “storefront”, “map app”, “mall navigation”, “mall information”, “visit WEM”, “Edmonton mall”. **Long-tail keyword opportunities include:** “West Edmonton Mall map”, “WEM shopping app”, “megamall navigation help”, “find stores at WEM”, “best app in Edmonton”, “WEM information help”, “guest services at WEM”, “storefront app”, “reminder camera”, “onsite shopping assistant”, and “mall map app”

Obvious head terms of brand and non-brand keywords: West Edmonton Mall is the main brand. Included within the mall are 800+ retailers with brand keywords that could be used, such as H&M, The Gap, HBC, Sport Chek, Chapters, Starbucks, etc.

What other competitor keywords rank: There are really no competitors to this app, if considering the local Canadian market, as no other megamall has an app with this kind of functionality and integration for a shopping centre of this magnitude in North America. However, I have included screen shots of additional apps similar to the WEM app (see Part 2C). Keywords ranking higher include: “designer bags”, “scratch win rewards”, “win prizes”, “promos deals coupons”, which indicate potential visitors to malls would find value in deals, rewards, and promotions, as well as luxury brand items.

I chose these keywords because many of them are appearing in the WEM app results, but separately. More could be done by the WEM marketing team to implement the keywords into the app description, which describe what the app really is, such as a “mall map app”, for instance.

These keywords would help the business meet their goals, starting with downloads. After the keywords have some tweaking done, and use commonly-used English terms, more people could find out that such an app exists for this mega mall. The mall is an international travel destination, and a variety of people from different countries would use terms to locate parts or retailers within the mall. Some may already have used an app for a different shopping and entertainment venue, so they may use terms that are more advanced, such as “onsite shopping assistant”. This is a long tail keyword that WEM could make more common through the use of the app.

These keywords would help draw in organic traffic to the site, as the search terms show that users who are drawn to the app are using these keywords in a singular fashion, but tying them together in long tail search terms can help bring up the WEM app, making it more relevant and useful in search.

I believe that WEM can effectively compete for these keywords because no other app is really using them.

There are over 10,000 installs of the app, which are declining. It could be because the users find the app “broken” or wrought with technical issues. Perhaps the app tries to perform or accomplish too much, which creates problems on various devices. People already are looking for a WEM app, and they are obviously downloading it because it would be of great use. However, there is no signage within the mall, prompting visitors to download and use the app.

In Google search, it is difficult to compete amongst other informational websites that are mobile friendly and don't require an app to navigate through Edmonton, to WEM, to the various venues within the mall, etc. Each retailer also has a site of their own, which would show “West Edmonton Mall” as a location in search. It is difficult to forecast or say how well WEM can compete with these keywords, as the app itself is rare and really, a “mega app”.

SECTION TWO

Part 2A

Using some of the tools, we can see what causes the WEM app to rank how it does. The images used and the branding is excellent for the WEM app. The description is somewhat lengthy, and could use more concise descriptions on the features of the app. The ratings and reviews are mostly poor, even though only 4 reviews were submitted since January 2016. Many users complain about the functionality of the app. The reviews alone are causing the app to decline in rank. (i.e. *“So ridiculously slow it’s unusable.”*). Other apps rank about the same, with similar technical issues and negative reviews. It could be the nature of the app, which requires complex integration with a variety of databases, and numerous high resolution images within the app. Or, it could be that no one (including WEM Administration) knows the app exists. Why aren’t there signs in the mall, or at the mall directory, prompting visitors to download the app?

Patterns I noticed among the competitor’s apps: They all have lower rankings as well. Also, the other competitors have keywords used in search such as “contest”, “food coupons”, “dining deals”, “mall deals”, which could indicate that more people would download an app if there were incentives and discounts available to the user. WEM does not have any keywords showing up that indicate any incentive, other than to navigate around the mall with one’s phone.

Part 2B

Three other competitive apps I chose were not based on a specific keyword or group of keywords, because again, these types of “mega mall” or “mall map” apps are rare. However, I did find three potential competitors to evaluate and compare the WEM app against:

1. **“Yorkdale”** shopping mall app by “Mobile Fringe”
2. **“Simon Rewards”** shopping outlets and malls app by Compco Digital (the have a mall map app too, but did not show up in the Searchman search).
3. **“SM Supermalls”** shopping mall app by SM Prime Holdings, Inc.

I then took screenshots of each of the app's data charts, included below.

Visibility Score (using the Search Man app)



Download Volume and Velocity (using the App Annie app)

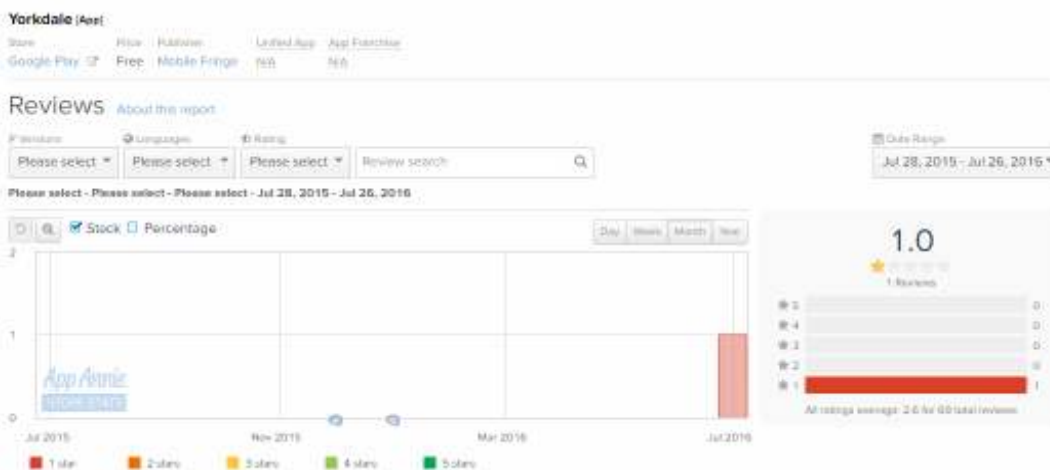
This information is not possible to obtain without a paid subscription to App Annie, therefore I will forego this section.

Ratings and Reviews (using the App Annie app)

Using the last year (or if the app is newer as in the case of SM Supermalls, the entire time period), I evaluated the ratings and reviews using App Annie for all four apps.



Rating	Review	Date	Language	Version
★ ★ ★ ★ ★	Review of game by Cory Minkel This app is not well functioning. The GPS does not work well. The search function is terrible and. Don't download. Waste of time!	Jul 23, 2015	English	All Versions
★ ★ ★ ★ ★	More by David's List Ltd	Jul 17, 2015	English	All Versions
★ ★ ★ ★ ★	More by Joel Latham So frustrating when it crashes!	Jul 20, 2015	English	All Versions
★ ★ ★ ★ ★	I agree just hangs hangs. by Catherine Kuchajko Crash App	Jul 11, 2015	English	All Versions
★ ★ ★ ★ ★	Yeah I thought the other reviews were a joke by Jeremy Chiu The app crashes constantly and the date search screen is locked so I can't even search for my store. I can't get it to work. Also it's freezing screen and it looks like a 1000 year old machine. Save money for a project!	Jul 15, 2015	English	All Versions
★ ★ ★ ★ ★	More like but fails down by Catherine Mink	Jul 11, 2015	English	All Versions
★ ★ ★ ★ ★	Still the worst. by Hans Braxelmeier This app is making you gain look feel. It's terrible. slow and didn't work even 1 thing I was looking for. a bathroom near French location of McDonald's. Fail	Aug 13, 2015	English	All Versions
★ ★ ★ ★ ★	Crashes constantly by Tiffany Carver Fail	Jul 15, 2015	English	All Versions



Rating	Review	Date	Language	Version
★ ★ ★ ★ ★	More by Jim Lee Feeling better now!	Jul 26, 2015	English	All Versions

SIMON - Malls, Mills & Outlets (App)

Store Price Publisher Updated App App Features
 Google Play Free Simon Property Group NA NA

Reviews About this report

Filters Languages Rating
 Please select Please select Please select Review search

Date Range
 Jul 27, 2015 - Jul 25, 2016

Please select - Please select - Please select - Jul 27, 2015 - Jul 25, 2016



SM Supermalls (App)

Store Price Publisher Updated App App Features
 Google Play Free SM Prime Holdings Inc NA NA

Reviews About this report

Filters Languages Rating
 Please select Please select Please select Review search

Date Range
 Nov 4, 2015 - Jul 30, 2016

Please select - Please select - Please select - Nov 4, 2015 - Jul 30, 2016



Rating	Reviews	Date	Language	Version
★★★★★	None by Andrew Nestor All is working and lots of freebies...	Jul 30, 2016	English	All Versions
★★★★☆	Working by Jan Lunas The app is working smoothly. I suggest to add more details for each store.	Jul 30, 2016	English	All Versions
★★★★★	Don't PuLubi by Don PaLubi ★★★★★	Jul 26, 2016	English	All Versions
★★★★★	Worth having in your phone by Kriscel Santoyo Mall comparison and promos galore! Never uninstall!	Jul 26, 2016	English	All Versions
★★★★☆	Love by Kureevans And now I have full access and know whats on trend	Jul 26, 2016	English	All Versions
★★★★☆	None by Angelita StaMaria Not so easy to open.	Jul 25, 2016	English	All Versions
★★★★★	None by jemelyn inguanzo Informative	Jul 25, 2016	English	All Versions
★★★★★	So helpful by Arlene Macaraog I love the app!!	Jul 25, 2016	English	All Versions
★★★★☆	None by Oliver Tin Download updates but there are no updates to download. Can you guys fix it. Thank you	Jul 25, 2016	English	All Versions
★★★★☆	Can't open by Rich Guarino Some problem everyone else is having. I even did a uninstall and then re installed it and it still required a download for update. Why would you need an immediate update on a new app you just installed?	Jul 25, 2016	English	All Versions

Feed

Rating	Reviews	Date	Language	Version
★★★★★	None by Andrew Nestor All is working and lots of freebies...	Jul 30, 2016	English	All Versions
★★★★☆	Working by Jan Lunas The app is working smoothly. I suggest to add more details for each store.	Jul 30, 2016	English	All Versions
★★★★★	Don't PuLubi by Don PaLubi ★★★★★	Jul 26, 2016	English	All Versions
★★★★★	Worth having in your phone by Kriscel Santoyo Mall comparison and promos galore! Never uninstall!	Jul 26, 2016	English	All Versions
★★★★☆	Love by Kureevans And now I have full access and know whats on trend	Jul 26, 2016	English	All Versions
★★★★☆	None by Angelita StaMaria Not so easy to open.	Jul 25, 2016	English	All Versions
★★★★★	None by jemelyn inguanzo Informative	Jul 25, 2016	English	All Versions
★★★★★	So helpful by Arlene Macaraog I love the app!!	Jul 25, 2016	English	All Versions
★★★★☆	None by Oliver Tin Download updates but there are no updates to download. Can you guys fix it. Thank you	Jul 25, 2016	English	All Versions
★★★★☆	Can't open by Rich Guarino Some problem everyone else is having. I even did a uninstall and then re installed it and it still required a download for update. Why would you need an immediate update on a new app you just installed?	Jul 25, 2016	English	All Versions

Feed

Part 2C

Here, the keywords used to find the app in the app store. (Note: **Yorkdale did not have keywords that were useful**).

West Edmonton Mall
Lifestyle, Free, Single User
Add to My Apps | Access data API

Keywords See Trends

Keyword	Volume	Hits	KEI	Rank
escalators			0.03	73
escalator escalator			0.00	64
megamall			0.00	23
edmonton			4.38	16
ghm			0.00	152
mail			72.90	151
simult			1.31	153

SM Supermalls
Lifestyle, Free, SM Home Holdings, Inc.
Add to My Apps | Access data API

Keyword	Volume	Hits	KEI	Rank
food coupons free			0.00	245
malls			0.19	218
food casting			0.00	170
dining deals			0.00	155
promos deals coupons			0.00	101
mall deals			0.00	78
entertainment mobile coupon app			0.00	33
on			4.87	1

Get all keyword data via API or Spreadsheet

Simon Rewards
Lifestyle, Free, Simon's Digital
Add to My Apps | Access data API

Keyword	Volume	Hits	KEI	Rank
designer bags			0.12	71
westchester			2.90	58
win prizes			0.00	49
scratch win rewards			0.00	34
simon			0.00	29
princeton tx			0.00	16
simon mall			0.00	10
simons mall			0.02	10
sales credit card			14.24	10
simon malls			1.93	9
woodfield			2.15	5
woodfield mall			458	2
premium outlets			40.25	1
premium outlet			0.00	1

The WEM app is a “Lifestyle” app (as is SM Supermalls and Simon). Yorkdale is categorized as a “Shopping” app. All apps have great images, but descriptions are lengthy, requiring more concise wording with suggested keywords. Also, WEM uses asterisks as bullet points to break up the idea points, and Simon uses “all caps” as headers. One thing WEM is missing is offering dining deals and coupons to draw users to the mall to complete a specific function.

Part 2D

I then downloaded the apps that were available in my region, and navigated around each one, noting my observations.

The “West Edmonton Mall” app:

1. Was fast to install and use immediately with a quick “Accept” button for the terms of service.
2. In the “Mall Map”, this only shows the first floor, and none of the retailers are numbered. This map is useless.
3. Under “Directory”, this is great, but the button “+ Showing: All Stores” should read “Search by Category” instead, as some users may not understand they need to click that, or alternatively, just have the “Please select a store category” screen show first.
4. Under “Sales and Promotions”, I didn’t see anything that was compelling enough to visit the mall, plus it’s the same on the directory kiosks within the mall. There should be custom deals for the app itself, not 2-month long promotions.
5. Under “Attractions”, it all looks great, until within the attraction itself, where the buttons are not mobile friendly (I clicked on “Prices” under Marine Life Caverns), nor the text and process to get the info I needed without more than necessary clicks. This one “click” for prices took me to a website page that I had to expand, then find another beige (bad colour) button to click for “Today’s Rates”.
6. This sort of functionality and usability makes a huge difference in user experience, therefore those issues need to be resolved and improved upon asap.
7. The app could have larger font sizes and use smaller (thinner) imagery, and larger buttons according to industry standards.
8. The “Directions” tabs take a while to load the Google Map too. And there is an error when pressing the “Call” area within Google Map within the app.
9. In “Events”, there were only two stores that were listed. Being the largest mall in North America, one would expect more current events and offerings than just two.
10. In “Social Media”, where one can connect to WEM’s social media accounts, I noticed that the images used in the Facebook area are not responsive to the device, perhaps too large.

The “Yorkdale” app:

1. This app took very little time to download and install. It also offered a tutorial / Skip Tutorial button from the main screen, without a “terms of service” acceptance. This makes the app feel more helpful than the others from first impression. However, the tutorial does not really explain much, and then after that, the user must click on the hidden menu (a white menu symbol blended into light photographs, so hard to see at first).
2. Under “Store List”, one can find each retailer listed simply with one click on the “Map” icon, or add it as a “Fav”. This makes it easier to search stores by “All”, “Favourites”, and “Categories”.
3. Under “Map”, one can easily find amenities which populate upon the map (i.e. ATM, Phone, Washrooms) but stay on the map unless you close it and restart the map. Far better functionality than the WEM app map.
4. Under “Promotions”, there are many listed, but each promo uses the “Y” logo rather than an image identifying the retailer, with the retailer name in very small text above the promotion.
5. Under “Dine on 3” (really cool section in the app), it asks you “What do you Crave?” and prompts you with many ideas, “Where to Eat?” and gives a listing of every eatery option, and you can even “Reserve a Table” which ties into your phone to dial direct.
6. The “Information” section is packed full of helpful information related to the mall, leasing, the property, the app, and within you can select preferences and also provide feedback.

The “Simon – Malls, Mills & Outlets” app:

1. This app took longer to download and install at 41.40MB, nearly a minute, compared to WEM, which took only seconds. Once the app opened, it was to Simon “Outlets”. For anything to work (see observations following), the user has to first select a particular mall. So the main page, initially, is not helpful if it doesn’t prompt the user to select a mall first. It is not an intuitive main screen, but rather 3 slider photos with “Find a Store. Get the Deals.” / “Snag Deals & Offers.” / “Navigate with a Center Map.”
2. A hidden Menu slid out, when selected, and listed a variety of items, and non-functional / blank pages (must have a prompt first to select a mall or user will find the app confusing).
3. Under the “Store Directory”, no options populated the drop boxes. Non-functional unless a mall selected.
4. Same under “Deals” and “Navigate a Map”.
5. The images are minimal, and the models are less than appealing for such a large demographic.
6. Overall, the functionality of the maps are great, listing the store name (rather than just a number). WEM could improve their app in this regard.
7. Some areas of the app (i.e. “Corporate” and “Careers”) are not mobile friendly with small dropboxes and microscopic text sizes.
8. It has an area called “App Feedback” where one can rate the app on “Content”, “Design”, “Ease of Use” and “Overall”, then provide comments along with an email address (optional). WEM should consider this as a section within their app as well.

The SM Supermalls app:

This app was not available for download in my region. SM Supermalls, owned by SM Prime Holdings, Inc., is a chain of shopping malls in the Philippines, with 43 malls across the Philippines as well as branches in China, so perhaps they have made the app unavailable in North America.

Part 2E

Overall the WEM app is extremely useful and provides far more than anything their competition does (with the exception of a “rewards” program or coupons/ deals, or a mall map that actually works as a map). The WEM app should take notice of the usefulness of coupons or deals that visitors would be more attracted by. For instance, during low-peak times, WEM could offer free admissions to their attractions via contests exclusively offered through the app. Above, in part 2D, I’ve pointed out specific issues with the app itself, which need to be fixed in order to obtain better reviews, and to rank higher in app store searchability. For example, one review stated:

“App would have been great... If it didn't freeze and constantly have to be restarted. Ended up using the paper map or just searching on the Internet for store availability and location. Was disappointed, as this could be very useful for travellers from out of town.”

Part 2F

To conclude, here is a **timeline of suggested improvements**. Specific factors I recommend that WEM improve in the app (according to priority) include:

Immediately - Investigate usage statistics by registering with the paid version of App Annie and Search Man to discover how many downloads occur daily, finding peak usage times, and average usage times. This may help determine whether or not the app is considered functional and working well, based on user behaviour. Rewrite the description of the app to be more concise, using keywords mentioned above, and include a call-to-action at the end of the description.

Week 2 - Consider ways to monetize the app, but still make it a free download. For instance, retailers and restauranters could pay to have the app host their special coupons/ savings deals. Or, brainstorm possible contests that would draw in users of the app, and entries to gather valuable demographic data that could be sold to retailers/ partners.

Week 3 - Build a review and rating prompt into the app so that when users close out the app, they are asked to provide their feedback in the app store. Most people give negative feedback because they want their poor experience acknowledged, whilst people who have good experiences may not feel inclined to share their positive feedback unless asked. This would help the app be rated higher in the app store, thus in app searchability.

Week 5 – Start crushing (compressing) all images within the app to be optimized for faster broadband delivery.

Week 6 – Now that the app will have more reviews and feedback coming in, find out what the technical issues are, if any. Essentially, having a comprehensive testing process done on every nook and cranny of the app could help determine the scale of the improvements that require attention and prioritize new releases. Then fix all bugs in priority sequence within the app using Scrum or Agile methodology.

Week 10 - Launch a new version of the app with pushed updates (for previous versions installed). This will remind those who have the app on their device to revisit the app, and provide more feedback. Strategically place signage around the mall, and within the directory kiosks, prompting visitors to try the convenience of the WEM app. Create a YouTube video and promote a contest / giveaway to encourage as many people as possible to download the app. This will help increase rankings and searchability. And tell your staff about the app (including cleaning and maintenance staff), as they can help visitors better by referring them to the app. When I attended the WEM Administration offices, the front desk staff denied that WEM even had an app.

Every three months, review the state of the app as far as rankings go, adjust keywords based on Google Trends and popular brands within the mall, ensure there are ongoing contests, deals and ways that app users can be reminded to visit the mall. **On an ongoing basis**, use the data gleaned from users who have downloaded the app, to create categories of visitors and shopper demographics, using this information to target market to such groups, and improve the offerings at this mega mall.