Facebook Gaming Releases Its Android Stand-Alone App Worldwide

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20 mins ago
Facebook Gaming accelerated the global release of its stand-alone application, rolling it out worldwide on the Google Play Store for Android devices Monday.

The app has been in testing for the past 18 months in Southeast Asia and Latin America, with over 5 million installs in those areas, and Facebook said an iOS version will be released pending approval by Apple.

The social network began rolling out the Facebook Gaming tab last March.

The coronavirus pandemic and the social distancing restrictions that came with it spurred the app's early release, just as it was behind Facebook Gaming's similar sped-up release of its tournaments feature earlier this month.

Facebook said it opened up pre-registration last week to enable people to receive notifications when the app is available in their region, and over 100,000 users signed up.

However, the social network also appears to be taking aim at game-streaming leaders YouTube and Twitch with some of the app's features.

Facebook said over 700 million people currently play games, watch gaming videos or participate in gaming groups on its platform.

The social network added that the stand-alone app is intended as a focused, gaming-only experience for people who want

deeper access to Facebook Gaming content, with a feed that is personalized based on the types of streamers users watch, the games they play and gaming groups they belong to.

Facebook Gaming vice president Vivek Sharma told Seth Schiesel of The New York Times, “We don’t want to be the background window in a Chrome tab while someone is doing their homework or doing something else. With mobile, if you have the app open and you’re using the app, it’s in the foreground. You can’t do anything else on your mobile phone, and that is extremely powerful.”

The social network said the Facebook Gaming app is focused on three experiences.

The first is enabling people to watch gaming videos from their favorite streamers, and the apps lets them find those creators and discover new videos from esports and gaming publishers.

According to recent data from Streamlabs, streaming on Facebook Gaming is surging, but it still ranks third in total hours watched, behind YouTube and Twitch.

Sharma told Schiesel, “There are a lot of people who listen to music and say, ‘I can imagine myself being a musician.’ People are watching streams and they’re like, ‘I want to be a streamer,’ and with Go Live it’s literally just a few clicks and then live, you’re a streamer.”

The second experience is playing Instant Games anytime, anywhere, without having to download separate apps. The Instant Games platform is available via the flagship social network and its Portal video -calling devices.

And the third experience is encouraging people to connect via gaming groups, with the app highlight both those users already belong to and new ones to discover.

Facebook said the Facebook Gaming app’s Go Live features lets

all users livestream games they are playing directly to Facebook via their phones, with no need for extra devices such as webcams and capture cards.

The social network added that the app was developed in dark mode, with a look and feel that gamers are used to.

Sharman said, “Our global streamer community has demanded a standalone Facebook Gaming app for a while, so we’re excited to finally launch it on Google Play. We are building homes for the many types of gaming communities on and off Facebook. The Facebook Gaming app is a prime example of gaming’s resurgence at Facebook over the last few years, and we’re just getting started.”

And Fidji Simo, head of the Facebook app, told Schiesel, “Investing in gaming in general has become a priority for us because we see gaming as a form of entertainment that really connects people. It’s entertainment that’s not just a form of passive consumption, but entertainment that is interactive and brings people together.”

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