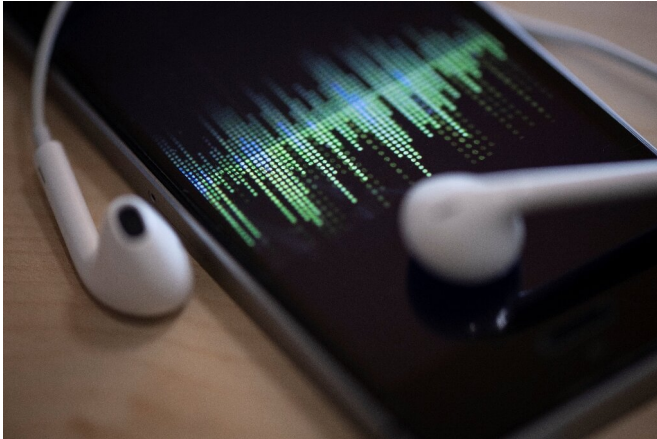


Apple adds podcast subscriptions as competition mounts

20 April 2021



Apple's new podcast subscription option could help the iPhone maker keep more content amid surging growth in the segment from Spotify

Apple is adding a subscription option to its pioneering podcasting service, evidently moving to fend off fast-growing rival Spotify.

Beginning in May, podcast fans around the world will be able to sign up for subscriptions for perks such as ad-free listening or exclusive content from creators, the tech giant said during a streamed media event Tuesday.

"Now, you can help your favorite podcasters build their business and fuel their creativity," Apple chief Tim Cook said during a presentation from the company's headquarters in Silicon Valley.

The subscription feature comes with an overhaul of the Apple Podcast platform that lays credit to kicking off the trend with its launch 15 years ago.

"We are making the biggest change to Apple podcasts since its debut," Cook said of the redesigned app.

It will be available in more than 170 countries, the company said.

Listing to podcasts will continue to be free, but a subscription option makes Apple's service more attractive to creators by providing a way to make money aside from ads or tips.

Podcasters will receive 70 percent of subscription revenue in the first year, with Apple keeping the rest as a commission, a company spokesperson told AFP.

Once a subscriber has been subscribed for a year, the share for creators will rise to 85 percent, they added.

Spotify earlier this year revealed plans for podcast subscriptions, increasing the pressure on Apple to keep personalities.

Industry tracker eMarketer last month said that Spotify has been growing quickly and that its podcasting service is on track to have more listeners in the United States than Apple Podcasts this year.

"By putting podcasts and music in one place, Spotify quickly became the convenient one-stop-shop for everything digital audio," eMarketer forecasting analyst at Insider Intelligence Peter Vahle said in a post.

"Apple was the de facto destination for podcasts for a long time, but in recent years, it has not kept up with Spotify's pace of investment and innovation in podcast content and technology."

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APA citation: Apple adds podcast subscriptions as competition mounts (2021, April 20) retrieved 19 January 2022 from <https://techxplore.com/news/2021-04-apple-podcast-subscriptions-competition-mounts.html>

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