

From: Joseph [REDACTED]
Sent: 20 July 2022 16:32
To: BrowsersAndCloud
Subject: A web developer's perspective on Apple banning competing browser engines

Hi,

I'm a web developer who creates web applications which serve users all over the world, including in the UK. I have been self-employed for my whole career and have been building web applications for almost a decade now.

After many years of developing on the web and watching competition and market share shifts between browsers, it is my firm belief that Apple's ban on competing browser engines on iOS purposely harms the open web platform in order to give iOS native apps (which are only available via Apple's app store) a large advantage even when web apps would otherwise be a significantly better choice for users and developers.

Due to the large number of people who own iOS devices, Apple is able to hold back the progress of all web browsers, and therefore of the web as a whole. This is because even if other browsers like Firefox, Chrome and Edge want to introduce new features, those features will not be available to any iOS users, and that makes those features not practically usable by web application developers. Developers must always build their web apps based on the available features in the "lowest common denominator" browser engine with a significant market share - and in this case that is the WebKit engine that Apple forces on all iOS browsers, including non-Safari browsers like Firefox, Chrome, and Edge. It's unlikely that the WebKit engine would have such a significant market share if it were not forced upon all iOS browsers.

A crucial thing to understand here is that by banning competing engines on iOS, Apple has insulated itself from *all* browser competition - even on desktop, since they've made themselves the final "gatekeeper" of all browser features. Features that aren't available on iOS can't be used on any "real world" website. Their large user base, and their choice to prevent their users from using other browser engines means that they have a strangle-hold on the web. It is my belief that Apple is purposely holding back the web (as an open platform for applications) in order to protect its native app store revenue.

I believe that Apple should be forced to allow competing browser engines on iOS, and that the mandate should be carefully designed to prevent Apple from using other tactics to stifle the web. For example, if Apple is forced to allow competing browser engines, they may try to remove "Progressive Web App" (PWA) features from iOS which allow web apps to, for example, have a shortcut icon on the iOS home screen, just like native apps. I do not doubt Apple's willingness to actively impede the web in other ways if they are forced to make this concession.

Thanks,
Joseph