

Craze for Angry Birds and Co made for an appy Christmas

Top of the tree



iPad (paid)

- 1 Notability
- 2 Cloud Sync
- 3 FIFA 12, above right
- 4 Grand Theft Auto 3, above
- 5 Football Manager Handheld

Nic Fildes

On the first day of Christmas, my true love gave to me Half-a-million Angry Birds and an iPad with Notability Or so the song would go, if it took account of consumer

appetite. New mobile phone technology appears undiminished by economic woes this festive season, as figures reveal Britons collectively downloaded a record 4 million apps on Christmas Day after unwrapping 500,000

smartphones and tablets.

The figures, compiled by Flurry, the mobile phone analytics company, does not include the success of Amazon's Kindle, which also triggered a wave of book downloads once the

wrapping paper had been removed. Amazon said that it had sold 4 million Kindles across the world in December, with the ereader topping the online retailer's bestseller list in Britain.

The most-downloaded apps in December, according to Distimo, the mobile phone consultancy, were the free 12 Days of Christmas app from iTunes that offered free music, videos and books for each day leading up to the holiday, as well as other well-known free downloads such as the BBC iPlayer, Angry Birds, Facebook and Skype.

Those paying for apps opted to buy Notability, a note-taking app for the iPad, a mobile version of the violent *Grand Theft Auto* game, football simulation game *FIFA 12* and, among Android users, the British-developed SwiftKey app that replaces the standard keyboard with a larger version.

Martin Garner, an analyst with CCS Insight, a mobile phone research company, said games probably accounted for more than half of all downloads.

"When consumers get a

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smartphone, they grow into it and start to download more and more," he said. Mr Garner said that the trick for the industry would be to work out what less tech-savvy consumers want to download.

Yankee, another mobile phone research company, estimates that British smartphone users downloaded 1.15 billion apps in 2011, which it expects to rise to 1.9 billion in 2012. That generated £574 million for the app stores operated by Apple, Google and Windows and the developers, and that is expected to rise to £907 million. The market is even larger if apps downloaded to iPads and e-books are factored in.

Carl Howe, an analyst at Yankee Group, argued that the apps, rather than the shiny new devices, were what explained the surge. "The latest Apple iPhone or Samsung Galaxy S are great out of the box, but when Scrabble fiends realise that they can add on Words with Friends or news addicts can download a copy of Flipboard, the gift becomes so much more valuable," he said.

The surge in sales over Christmas should push the number of smartphone and tablets that have been activated in this country past the 18 million mark.

App lovers in Europe, specifically Germany and Britain, are more willing to pay to download content. Yankee

research shows that European iPhone users download 10 apps a month on average and pay for four of them, whereas those in America pay for only one in the five apps they download every month.

The rise of the app has also persuaded more people to use mobile devices to shop over the

past two years. IBM data said that mobile sales accounted for 16 per cent of all online buying this Boxing Day in Britain, 275 per cent higher than in 2010. The iPhone accounted for nearly 8 per cent of retail browsing, compared with 4 per cent for Android, while 7.5 per cent of traffic was carried via the iPad.

First ask a friend...

Analysis Nic Fildes

The number of "apps" - short for applications - that you can download to a smartphone or tablet is likely to breach the two million mark in 2012, although a large proportion will never be seen by anyone other than the developer's friends and family.

Navigating the number of apps may seem daunting to anyone who has unwrapped a tablet or a smartphone for the first time this Christmas.

Perhaps the best place to start is the social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter, where you can turn to

friends and family to recommend apps that may be of interest.

Search for the official Facebook app in the App Store or Android Market icon that is present on the device's home screen and tap to download.

You will be prompted to agree to the terms and conditions of whichever store you are using - a process recently lampooned by South Park and Eddie Izzard - but once you have done so, the app will download and install itself on your device.

Users do need to have an

account with Apple or Google to pay for many apps, with the charge taken directly from a linked bank account. Again the marketplace will prompt you to enter a password for iTunes if you are using an iPhone or an iPad.

Google allows developers to sell direct to consumers outside the Android Market, and analysts expect that more companies, such as publishers, will attempt to sell apps directly to consumers via the companies' own websites in 2012.