Outsourcing Creative Work: a Study of Mobile Application Development
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The mobile phone industry has witnessed immense technological achievements during the last decade. Mobiles have become devices rather than phones that enable users carry out multiple actions that used to belong to the desktop computer area, i.e. browse the Internet via fast connection, read e-mail, tweet, use Facebook, etc. The writers of this paper realised that few studies have been carried out on mobile application development and therefore conducted a research to find out more about the area and discover how developers adapt to the turbulent environment of the IT sector. The research concentrated on developers working on the two leading mobile application giants’ platforms – Google and Apple. Both companies provide means for third-party application development which is the main reason why mobile application development has grown rapidly. Until recent times, mobile developers had to acquire a professional contract with the mobile phone manufacturer in order to take part in mobile application development. Since there is hardly any academic literature on the subject, the study focused on everyday work practices and experiences of 49 developers from USA, UK and Sweden.

The focus group was very diverse, between ages 15 to 49, with experience of one to more than forty published applications. Most of the developers had fixed their mind on developing on a single platform to focus their expertise, but some develop both. The number of downloaded applications vary from 10 000 to 1 million, regarding their most successful application, contrarily the least successful applications have received no downloads at all. The key to success is to regularly come up with innovative solutions and original ideas, otherwise the competing developers will push you out of the market. Although most developers own the application, they do not have the means for distribution. Apple and Google have set up environments for distributing applications – App store and Android market - and therefore they have full control over the applications. They can reject any application they deem inappropriate, but hardly give any feedback. The latter mainly applies to Apple and developers expressed their frustration. In return Apple and Google retain 30% from each sale.

The emergence of SDKs from Apple and Google have given new business opportunities. The authors concluded that there are several reasons why software developers have turned to mobile devices. For example, an iPhone developer brought out that it is fun to develop for such a great device. Opposed to non-profit developers, many said that they wanted to earn extra living, gain experience and increase their presence in the IT sector. iPhone developers revealed that they chose Apple because they were the first to enable wider mobile application development. The reason for turning to Android was mainly due to open source software that
enables sharing and reuse of code. Android developers also expressed that iPhone applications might never reach the App store and developing an application requires a Mac.

In conclusion, Apple and Google have launched a whole new era in software development – mobile application development. Anyone can purchase iPhone SDK or download the free Android development kit and start producing applications without risks. Apple and Google have also come up with the means to distribute the application without developers having to worry about the credit card, web hosting and infrastructure costs.