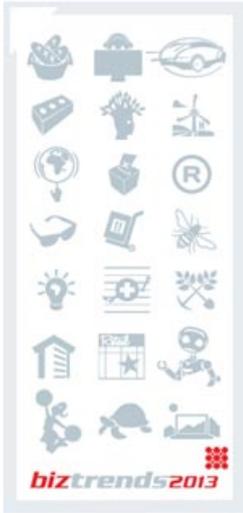


Mobile - more of the same? Probably not

By  Petros Kondos

23 Jan 2013

A fistful of mobile companies have come and gone during 2012. The next generation of startups is ready to hit the mobile industry with a host of new services of which most will, at best, either slither into mediocrity or just plain fail due to a lack of funding and media agency support. Breaking new ground is not easy; breaking new media ground that *translates into profit* is even more difficult.



A review on some of the [2012 points](#) I raised, interspersed between some new thoughts:

Chasing followers a zero-sum game

Everyone has eventually realised that chasing followers on Twitter is a zero-sum game. The secret is out: you can buy Twitter followers in bulk, with the result that "followers" means even less now than it did last year. Say what it is you want to say and, if it seems real, relevant and of interest, it will be read. For the rest, it's just arbitrary words into the twittersphere. That is, of course, if your tweet happens to still be on the screen when someone cares to look.

- In 2013 we will see many more major Twitter mess-ups that will cost people their careers and reputation. The politico and some major corporate heads have delegated this duty to their staff, often very junior staff. Therein lies the problem. If you have to tweet, do it yourself or just leave it alone.

Apps have bred and spawned into an uncontrollable, infinite, ugly mass. A few, very few, have actually made any real money. Mobile web is taking the lead and is potentially more profitable.

- The exception to this are apps that have been built into Facebook and are mobile-optimised. Everyone likes a winner (even if it flopped at its stock-exchange listing). The growth of social media retail apps will climb rapidly. If retailers cannot make money advertising on Facebook, then maybe the emerging product showcase applications, built into Facebook, may help. After all, it's easier to justify spending on "Facebook" than on an unknown application vendor. That is, until Facebook shuts the door or changes the rules again.

Apple Inc still refuses to provide stats on actual app usage. It freely gives downloads and purchase data but the silence on usage is deafening.

Mobile TV a no-show

Mobile television is still a no-show and will probably stay that way for the foreseeable future. TV is about big screen (basic psychology) but I guess the networks will keep on trying. They are kind of fighting themselves in this effort, pushing mobile TV as hard as they can, while ramping up mobile data cost, making it just too expensive to watch TV on a phone.

- Data storage and backups will continue to grow for mobile- and handheld-device storage. All good, until it gets hacked or just simply lost; then the pain will kick in. Yes, we need it, and yes, it's the future but the risks are there. The cloud may just start biting back.
- Serious analytical predictive models in mobile media consumption are mostly beyond the skill set of media marketers. What we will see is the entry of some heavyweight statistical and predictive skillset types stepping into the media marketing space.

- Location-based services will putter along, seemingly a good idea, but we all know that we don't really want anyone to know where we are, have been, or are going. It's all about privacy.
- Agencies have wasted another year not getting the "mobile" point. Most agencies should just be banned from ever using a [QR code](#). Case in point: a full-length poster for product X with a tiny QR code in the bottom left hand corner, just perfect for most mobile users to drop to their knees and hunch over so that they can scan it.

All about the software

The last great hardware leap for mobile devices was the addition of cameras a few years ago. Since then it has been all about the software.

As we move into the twenty-teens, devices will specialise into clusters that provide a range of services, possibly linked to healthcare, finance, education, etc. For example, device blood-sugar-level and blood-pressure testing could become mainstream options. Choice will increase as customer preference narrows and becomes more selective.

As we enter 2013, there are bound to be some more surprises and that's what makes mobile so much fun.

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