

A Shift In The Market Towards Mobile Web Apps

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2011-09-13

Mobile apps are hardly something new these days. Mobile app stores are ubiquitous, and download and “number of apps” stats do not matter anymore. “Mobile First” is now, more than just a guideline, simply the way business work.

In Switzerland, the big craze of mobile apps began with the introduction of the iPhone in June 2008, and then the waves of new Android devices that have been introduced in the past 2 years. Everybody has a smartphone these days, and now everyone is jumping to buy a tablet (usually an iPad) as fast as they can.

But the mobile market is **highly fragmented**. I’m not talking about the Android hardware market, which is inherently fragmented by nature; we are talking about the app market in general. Companies want to have their services and products in as many smartphone platforms as possible these days, and the iPhone is no longer enough.

To put things in context, the latest statistics¹ of smartphone platforms roughly show that:

- 40% of the market is held by Android devices, with a large proportion of Samsung devices, and apparently with some signs of starvation;
- 30% by iOS, with a small growing trend; not taking into account the iPod touch and the iPad, which are iOS devices, but not really smartphones; and
- 20% by BlackBerry devices, although this proportion is actually on a negative slope these days.

If we consider the “mobile market” as the sum of smartphones and tablets, and if we include the iPod touch into the mix, then iOS holds more than 40% of the whole mobile market. Impressive, but still, not even half of the market.

Given this split, companies want to **maximize the return of their investments**. In other words, they want more bang for their buck. They are still going to spend money for mobile applications, for sure; but they are not so sure these days about the “iPhone only” or even “iPhone first” approach that was common until now; **they want an app that works in as many platforms as possible**. Certainly the grim economic situation also plays a role in these decisions!

¹<http://www.asymco.com/category/industry/>

This is a reality; this is something that we have been experiencing for the past months, and the trend is going in this direction. **2012 is going to be the year of the mobile cross-platform app**, but because the market said so, not because some technology fashionista decided it, so we need to prepare to bring this vision into reality.

In our case, at akosma software we have chosen a few technologies to bet our company on:

- The whole HTML5 standard², including the amazing suite of tools that the new generation of browsers are making available for us!
- Sencha Touch³, the mobile evolution of the Ext JavaScript framework of yesteryear, of which Adrian has been a great fan for years!⁴
- jQuery Mobile⁵, the promising new framework based on the non less amazing jQuery⁶ project!
- PhoneGap⁷, the open source mobile web app packaging framework now becoming a de-facto standard!

Are we dropping the iOS platform for web technologies? **Not at all**; we are still going to provide iOS application development services⁸, simply because (at least right now) not everything can be done with web apps; but we are proud to add Sencha, jQuery Mobile and PhoneGap as part of our formal offering, because we firmly believe in the huge potential of these platforms.

Moreover, some clients still want to provide custom-tailored experiences to iOS devices, and we fully support those initiatives with our skills and imagination!

In the short term, watch out for this:

- Adrian is going to talk⁹ about web apps from an iOS developer perspective at a SkillsMatter¹⁰ event in London, on November 22nd.
- We will be attending SenchaCon 2011¹¹ in Austin TX (USA), from October 23rd to the 26th, to learn more about Sencha and the next generation of web technologies.
- We will be presenting in the next Mobile Developer Summit¹² in Bangalore, India, in November 2nd.

In the next few months, expect more around web technologies from akosma software!

²<http://mobilehtml5.org/>

³<http://www.sencha.com/>

⁴<http://kosmaczewski.net/2007/07/11/ext/>

⁵<http://jquerymobile.com/>

⁶<http://jquery.com/>

⁷<http://www.phonegap.com/>

⁸<http://akosma.com/services/>

⁹<http://skillsmatter.com/podcast/os-mobile-server/native-cross-platform/js-2661>

¹⁰<http://skillsmatter.com/>

¹¹<http://www.sencha.com/senchacon2011>

¹²<http://www.developermarch.com/mods/>