The Mobile App Industry

The market for smartphones and mobile apps is a closely related market, moreover, with Trinidad and Tobago and other English-speaking Caribbean islands being tiny domestic markets for mobile app developers, internationalization is a key strategy for mobile app ventures looking to scale up.The most recent statistics from the Telecommunications Authority of Trinidad and Tobago show mobile phone penetration of well over 100%, with the September 2014 figure for the number of mobile voice subscriptions being 1,925,000.

Research firm Gartner estimates the total number of mobile app downloads globally (both free and paid) will soar to 269 billion in 2017, up from 102 billion in 2013.Developer Economics estimates that there are 2.9 million mobile app developers in the world, creating more than 2 million apps.

The Local Mobile App Industry

With over 100% mobile phone penetration in Trinidad and Tobago, a large and growing proportion of which represents smartphones, more and more people are downloading and using apps. Thousands of smartphone users will have ideas for apps, with a subset willing to take steps towards having these apps created.

The developer community in Trinidad and Tobago comprises mainly mobile app developers who are at varying levels of experience, expertise and activity. Some are self-taught developers, while others have received formal training here in the region, at a North American or European institution, or online. Judging from participation in events like hackathons, local and international competitions, start-up weekends, and networking events around the country, it can be inferred that the number of people with advanced mobile application development skills is in the low hundreds.

In terms of demographics, while mobile app development might have a natural, almost instinctive appeal to tech savvy millennial, the demographics of mobile app developers in Trinidad and Tobago, and wider Caribbean, vary widely in terms of age, gender and income.Several educational institutions in Trinidad and Tobago offer mobile app development training at certificate, diploma, Bachelor or Master's Degree level. In all cases where the training is offered at tertiary level, these courses are offered as individual modules or even part of an ICT module rather than as a specialism or main area of focus. In some instances one-off short courses

are also offered by technology partners like Microsoft, who have a vested interest in promoting their brand.

However, knowing the precise number of mobile app developers is less important than understanding the trends in terms of people showing an interest in becoming mobile app developers, or coming up with ideas for apps. The trends show an increasing number of people seeking formal and informal training in app development, as well as participating in proof of concept competitions and start-up competitions with mobile app ideas, prototypes, or fully built solutions which can all be provided at CARIRI's mCentre.

Centre for Enterprise Development

The Centre for Enterprise Development (CED) is a flagship development of CARIRI which is aimed at facilitating Research, Development and Innovation. The Tekmania arm of CED accommodates Information and Communication Technology (ICT) project initiatives being undertaken by CARIRI that are geared towards enhancing the operational efficiencies of SMEs.

One section of TekMania is the mCentre which is the only mobile applications laboratory and accelerator in the region which incubates high potential mobile app developers. The lab provides world class business and technical training to high potential individuals on mobile application development and entrepreneurship on all platforms. mCentre is a shared space where technology and entrepreneurs can interact, work, gain access to tools and expertise, deploy their solutions and start and grow their businesses.

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