Mobile 'apps' a $17.5 bln market by 2012: study

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A screen shot shows the Google Earth application. Downloads of mobile applications to handsets will leap from slightly more than seven billion in 2009 to nearly 50 billion in 2012, according to the independent study commissioned by GetJar, the world's second largest app store.

A study released on Wednesday indicated that the market for mobile device software programs should rocket to 17.5 billion dollars (US) within three years.

Downloads of [mobile applications](#) to handsets will leap from slightly more than seven billion in 2009 to nearly 50 billion in 2012, according to the independent study commissioned by GetJar, the world's second largest [app store](#).

"It is easy to see how mobile apps will eclipse the traditional desktop Internet," GetJar chief executive Ilja Laurs told AFP.

"It makes perfect sense that mobile devices will kill the desktop."

Apple runs the world's top App Store online at iTunes and the culture-changing firm was pronounced a "mobile devices company" by its iconic chief executive Steve Jobs in January.

Mobile applications have been around since the late 1990s but began to "blossom in earnest" after Apple launched its App Store for iPhone and iPod Touch devices in mid-2008, according to the report summary.

The annual market for mobile applications is six billion dollars and Internet firms large and small are racing to offer services that tap into geo-location, camera, touch-screen and other features of mobile phones.

Seventeen percent of GetJar users already spend more time on Internet-linked mobile phones than they do on desktop computers, according to Laurs.

IPhone owners are the most advanced users of mobile applications, spending more time and money on software for their smartphones than they do on music, he added.

The Apple App Store is reported to have more than 150,000 iPhone applications on its virtual shelves and recently passed the three-billion-download milestone.

Internet titan Google has weighed into the smartphone arena with an Android mobile software used on an array of devices including its own touch-screen Nexus One handsets.

Google runs a rapidly growing Android Marketplace that already boasts more than 30,000 mini-programs made for smartphones running on that mobile operating system.

About 310,000 software developers have accounts to submit programs to GetJar, which boasts a collection of more than 65,000 mini-applications crafted for thousands of different types of handsets.

"From highly interactive games that only used to run on consoles to simple news or weather look-up apps, there is practically an app for every scenario from bar exams to simulated libation consumption," the report noted.

The average price of two dollars paid for mobile applications in 2009 is expected to drop to 1.50 dollars in two years, the study by Chetan Sharma Consulting indicated.

"This report signifies a battle for survival of the fittest among app stores worldwide," Laurs said.

GetJar has become a hot spot for free mini-applications for just about any kind of smartphone.

More that 842 million downloads of applications had been logged at m.getjar.com as of Tuesday, according to the firm's website.

GetJar has been in the mobile applications shop business slightly more than two years.

GetJar is venture-backed and has offices in Britain, Lithuania, and Northern California.

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