Apple's App Store success a hard act to follow: analyst

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A view of the new iPhone 4 on display at the Apple Worldwide Developers Conference in San Francisco on June 7. Apple's hugely successful applications store has spawned similar setups around the world but it will be tough to compete with the US technology giant, an industry expert said Tuesday.

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Even the world's top mobile maker Nokia has found it tough matching up to the Apple App Store since launching its Ovi Store last year

offering games, videos and other applications for its mobiles.

"Everyone had apps but nobody did it in a big way," said Amrish Kacker at telecoms consultancy Analysys Mason.

"Apple has revolutionised it. It's very difficult to replicate it," he told AFP on the sidelines of CommunicAsia, one of the region's largest telecommunications trade fairs that is taking place in Singapore.

According to research firm Gartner, Apple accounted for at least 99.4 percent of the 2.516 billion downloads of mini-programmes, or apps, for multimedia phones last year.

Apple has previously said more than three billion paid and free applications for the iPhone or iPod Touch had been downloaded from the California company's App Store since it was launched in July 2008.

Mobile phone applications are one of the growth areas for the telecom sector, thanks in large part to the success of the iPhone.

Gartner estimated revenue from mobile phone applications would rise to 6.8 billion dollars this year from 4.24 billion dollars in 2009, and reaching 29.5 billion dollars by 2013.

Almost every mobile operator in the region now has an app store but they are finding it difficult to generate enough visitor traffic because of the lack of sustained developer interest.

"Therefore, there is very little reason for people to keep coming back to these app stores so there is an issue around the ecosystem," Kacker said.

Apple's success is due in large part to the company's ability to sustain developer interest by giving them an easy operating platform, he said.

Equally important is the fact that developers are able to earn revenues from their inventions.

"The main thing is there are about 10,000 or 20,000 new apps coming in every month and as a result, what happens is there is a lot of variety, there is a lot of choice and there's a lot of liveliness in that app store which is why people keep coming back."

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