

Angry Birds fly to Facebook

February 14 2012, by Angela Dewan



An image of "Angry Birds", the most-downloaded mobile app of 2011, is displayed on an iPod Touch. The game was catapulted to the world of Facebook on Tuesday in a bid by its Finnish maker Rovio to get one billion people playing the addictive game.

"Angry Birds", the most-downloaded mobile app of 2011, was catapulted to the world of Facebook on Tuesday in a bid by its Finnish maker Rovio to get one billion people playing the addictive game.

True to the game's quirky theme, a bird flung at a pig on a giant screen marked its official Facebook launch in Jakarta, the world's most Facebook-connected city.

The company's strategy is for the game -- which is already wildly popular as an app on many smartphones and tablet computers across multiple platforms -- to be available "on all screens and screen sizes",

Rovio Asia senior vice president Henri Holm told AFP.

Scores of fans attended the Valentine's Day launch in Jakarta, many of them clicking photographs on their smartphones.

In the game, players fling colourful and grumpy wingless birds from a slingshot into smarmy egg-stealing pigs.

It has been downloaded more than 700 million times since its launch in 2009 and the birds have become a global phenomenon, featuring on a huge array of merchandise and in popular culture.

The number of players is likely to surpass one billion with Rovio now offering a new version of the game with more levels and interactive features to around 845 million Facebook users.

Rovio does not disclose how many Angry Birds apps have been downloaded in Indonesia. But the country's love for the game is obvious in the ubiquitous paraphernalia in malls, from Angry Birds mobile phone covers to baby jumpsuits.

"Facebook has more than 800 million users, so we're confident we can get one billion people playing soon," said Holm, donning a red Angry Birds hoodie.

The new app allows players to compete with their Facebook friends for high scores, send gifts to friends and achieve more precise and powerful targeting by purchasing new "power-ups".

Rovio has in recent months focused on growing its line of merchandise, Holm said.

On display at the launch, before an all-girl band crooning tunes, were

Angry Birds pencil cases, lunch boxes, T-shirts and stuffed toys, as well as cookbooks and wristwatches.

"There are launch events in other cities, like Mumbai and Bangkok, but the official launch is in Jakarta as the Facebook capital of the world," Holm said.

More than 17 percent of Indonesia's 240 million people are on Facebook, and Jakarta alone has over 17 million Facebook accounts, according to Holm.

"That is more than four times the accounts in New York and almost twice the amount of the second city on the list," the Rovio official said.

Second to Jakarta is Istanbul with 9.6 million Facebook accounts, and third is Mexico City with 9.3 million, according to social networking trackers Socialbakers.com.

Indonesia as a whole has 43.1 million Facebook accounts, making it the site's third-biggest user base after the United States with 155.7 million and India, which just surpasses Indonesia with 43.5 million users.

Rovio is not alone in recognising the market potential of Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim nation and Southeast Asia's largest and fastest growing major economy.

Internet giant Yahoo! set up an office in Indonesia in 2009, and popular social networking and e-commerce site Multiply says it plans to move its headquarters from Florida to Jakarta.

Rovio was a little-known company before its Angry Birds took flight.

It had previously launched 50 games with successes including mobile

versions of "Burnout" and "Need For Speed".

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