

# Rise of the Planet of the Apps

- Rebecca Twaalfhoven

Everybody has noticed it; nobody seems able to stop it; and, despite valiant attempts to resist, almost everyone has succumbed to the inevitable. I am referring, of course, to the explosive growth of the smart phone, in particular the iPhone. In 2007, Apple released the first version of the revolutionary iPhone, which marked a new era of personal technology and portable devices that since has become a part of everyday life. Over the course of the past six years, Apple has quickly progressed through several generations of the product, each featuring faster Internet connections, more data availability and memory storage, and ever more applications (“apps”) with a growing range of functions. The latest version – released on September 20 of this year – includes: a fingerprint identity sensor; computer-level graphics and visual effects for viewing images; a camera featuring flash adjustment, continuous burst mode, a larger light sensor, slow-motion video, automatic image stabilization, and panorama photography; built-in apps, as well as over 900,000 apps available for download; and iCloud, which gives the user the ability to access and share content from several different Apple devices. None of this terminology even existed when I was born, yet now I hear it every day. In a way, “smart phone” is its own dialect of English, developed and spoken by an exclusive yet ever-growing group of people worldwide. This group continues to grow rapidly, but always remains exclusive to smart phone users.

I never fail to notice the looks of incredulity I receive when I reveal that I do not own an iPhone. When people use my phone, it takes a moment to figure out that there is no passcode, and no touch screen. I am part of a dwindling population of teenagers who has not jumped on the wagon of technology. I am one of the last in my family to not own a device with applications or Internet access. When a teacher collects student cell phones before a quiz, mine is one of possibly two phones collected that is not an iPhone or smart phone of some sort. I cannot access social networking or check my grades during the day; I cannot play “Candy Crush” and compare scores with friends. To many teenagers, a lifestyle without all of these options seems practically inconceivable. Even adults now do not understand why I have not joined the crowd. My answer is simple: I don’t need it. Personally, I find all of it – all of the information and options and applications – excessive. Don’t get me wrong; there are times when it would be nice to get news updates during the day, or be able to keep up with social network activity as it happens. And I agree that it is important, in this day and age, to stay current and on top of change as it happens, at least to some extent. But at a certain point, I must ask myself: what is wrong with my life that an iPhone will fix? What benefits will outweigh all of the potential downsides? Yes, I could learn to play “Candy Crush” and eventually make it to level 413, but only at the expense of valuable time during studies at school where I could be doing homework. I could easily spend hours creating and using multiple social networking accounts before bed, but only if I give up reading. There are moments with friends or peers where everyone whips out their iPhone, and I am left sitting waiting for somebody to remember that there is a world existing around them.

I do have a cynical view on the recent upsurge of smart phones. I have witnessed firsthand some of the changes that “happen” to coincide with an update, and it is scary to reflect on the changes

in society from a time before it was possible to have a personal device with more computer power than powered rockets to the moon. Most of it is simply my personal values – I prefer face-to-face interaction to online methods; I would rather read a book than play video games. But I know there may come a time when it is simply impractical to resist any longer. Certainly college nowadays requires more than a phone with texting and calling. It may be the case that it really is time to move forward, and I have simply missed the boat. There is nothing wrong with having an iPhone. Technology is rapidly advancing, and the time is fast approaching where people must make their own decisions on what to do; and maybe the insight of an outsider can lend some new perspective to the choices we face as individual when looking to update our lives.

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