《名人效应成手机应用新出路》

Geeks and celebrities make unlikely bedfellows but mobile app developers are increasingly looking to pair up with the likes of reality TV star Kim Kardashian as they look for new ways to stand out in an overcrowded marketplace.

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Since Apple's App Store launched in 2008, many of the most popular apps for the iPhone or Google's Android smartphones have been new franchises such as Angry Birds, Candy Crush Saga or Clash of Clans.

?2008???????????iphone??

But the recent success of games and utilities to which celebrities have lent their name, combined with the growing challenge of getting noticed in the App Store, is prompting more developers to seek new tie-ups with stars.

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Glu Mobile said last month that its celebrity tie-in game Kim Kardashian: Hollywood had made $1.6m in its first five days on sale. Would-be starlets can buy virtual haircuts, makeovers or kittens as they make their way up the celebrity rankings, with Ms Kardashian acting as their guide to life in the limelight. The game is currently fifth in the iPhone's US chart of top-grossing apps.

GluMobile????????????·??????????????5?????160??
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This week, actor Tom Hanks released a typewriter-style word-processing app for the iPad that immediately shot to the top of the App Store charts in the US.

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Hanx Writer recreates on a touchscreen the sounds of a manual typewriter.

????Hanx Writer??????????????????

Forrest Gump, the hapless character that brought Mr Hanks an Oscar, has found a new lease of life 20 years on, in a running game developed by Genera Mobile which is currently in the top 50 most popular US apps.

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Mobile industry analysts and advisers say these are just the first in a coming flood of celebrity-endorsed and Hollywood-branded apps, as stars look to extend their franchises into the digital world. In a market overwhelmed with millions of apps, many small developers are looking to famous names to help their titles gain a following.

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"If you have a licensed brand or intellectual property, that can really help" with getting downloads, says Mark Wilcox, analyst at Vision Mobile, at a time when many new apps go largely ignored.

Vision Mobile?????·?????(Mark Wilcox)??

“In the future, every movie, movie star and brand will have their own messaging apps just like they have their own websites now,” says Nico Sell, chief executive of secure messaging app Wickr. She is working with “numerous celebrities” and advisors from talent agencies IMG and ICM to develop branded apps.

??????Wickr?????·????“??”??????????????IMG?ICM????????????????

Last week, Candy Crush Saga’s developer King cited the popularity of Ms Kardashian’s game as a reason for lower spending on its top-selling app.

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In a note entitled, “Kim Kardashian, the King Slayer”, Deutsche Bank analyst Lloyd Walmsley downgraded his rating on King from “buy” to “hold” last week, citing “intense” competition as with the apps “going after the same demographics”.

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However, King’s chief executive Riccardo Zacconi told the Financial Times that the company was unlikely to respond to this growing competition with a celebrity app of its own, as he was unwilling to pay the required royalties.

?????King????????·??

Smaller developers, trying to build an audience, have no such reservations. Until recently, Hollywood agents or content studios were reluctant to hand over control of their properties to technologists. But alongside perfumes and clothing lines, these brands are now more willing to license their properties to app makers, too.

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Tero Kuittinen, managing director at Magid Associates, a consultancy, says that while a few years ago a celebrity manager or rights holder might have demanded a $1m fee before the game even went on sale, today some are open to “five-figure” upfront fees or straight revenue splits that reduce the financial risks for developers.

????Magid Associates??????·????????????????????????????????100??

“You can see a lot of licence holders are changing their attitude to mobile games,” Mr Kuittinen says. “The hope in the [mobile] industry is that if you see a game affiliated with a star or a movie, the fact that it is familiar to you may pique your curiosity.”

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However, celebrity endorsements do not always lead to overnight success. Last year, Justin Bieber invested in Shots, a photo app dedicated to selfies. Use of his image in its App Store listing has not prevented Shots from dropping quickly out of the top download charts.

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