

Windows 8 expected to make rapid inroads

Microsoft and Nokia, are making their play in the smartphone market with Windows Phone 8, the mobile operating system that is set to occupy third place in the market for the foreseeable future.



By 2016, projections by research firm Gartner indicate, the number of Windows Phone users will be only slightly below the number of users of devices running Apple's iOS. The two will be in with a look at second place, but way behind Google's Android, which currently accounts for slightly less than 70% of the mobile operating system market.

Microsoft's advantage now is the integration of its operating system across a range of devices - work computers, tablets, smartphones and gaming consoles. It also sells the world's most popular business productivity software, Microsoft Office. It can give consumers and businesses a single, consolidated view of all their business documents on the Windows platform, which now stretches to just about any device through the company's SkyDrive cloud service.

Phones that run Windows Phone 8 are the only smartphones with Microsoft Office built in - so users can open, edit and automatically synchronise Word, Excel and Power Point documents across all devices.

There are other ways of achieving this sort of convenience but Microsoft already has hundreds of millions of people using Windows and Office on their desktop computers. Staying within a known ecosystem and extending it to mobile makes Windows Phone 8 a compelling proposition.

For corporate users, information technology departments can manage and apply a company's policies to all Windows devices, including Windows 8 phones. The product can also be used to destroy data on the phone remotely should it be stolen.

Near-Field Communication (NFC) technology is built in, which means users can tap devices to automatically share business information such as contacts or web links. A Wallet app, which is not yet available, will give Windows Phone 8 devices the ability to make payments via NFC, which is particularly useful during business travel.

The Microsoft App Store has 120,000 apps, including new Facebook, Twitter and Skype. The company says 46 of the 50 most popular apps from other platforms are available on Windows Phone 8 and Standard Bank is the first South African

bank to offer a banking app for this platform.

Initially there will be a small range of smartphones running Windows Phone 8, which puts it firmly between Android and Apple's tightly controlled iPhone line.

In South Africa, new Windows Phone 8 smartphones from Nokia, Samsung and HTC will be available this month.

According to Gartner expectations, by 2016 Android will have 1.08bn users, iOS 266.3m and Windows Phone 207.1m. By contrast, the research indicates BlackBerry will have slumped to just over 23m users by that time, compared with more than 51m users at the end of last year.

Source: *Business Times* via I-Net Bridge.

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