

Smartphone: a remote control for your life

LAS VEGAS, USA: It can talk to your car, your refrigerator, water your plants and help you stay fit and healthy: the smartphone is become the consumer's remote control for life.



That was the message delivered by dozens of firms at the International Consumer Electronics Show, where terms like *appification* were tossed around freely.

The hundreds of thousands of "apps" developed for mobile platforms such as Apple's iOS, Google's Android and Microsoft's Windows Phone and showcased at the Las Vegas technology show are quickly taking over a lot of functions that people or different devices used to do. Nowhere was this more evident in the *connected home* zone of the world's biggest technology show.

Samsung, the South Korean giant, showed a connected refrigerator which can stream music from a smartphone, while US appliance maker Dacor unveiled what it called the "first Android oven," with a panel to check emails and the Web.

US appliance maker Whirlpool showed its lineup of smart appliances which can send a user a text message when the laundry is done. Whirlpool's refrigerator can also stream music through an app, enabling a host to set a playlist for each course of a dinner party, for example.

"You don't need to be friend on Facebook with your fridge, but it makes its use easier," quipped Warwick Stirling, Whirlpool's senior director of energy and sustainability. South Korea's LG offered an integrated solution: one smartphone app which can remotely turn on a robotic vacuum or washing machine, or monitor something cooking in the oven.

An LG refrigerator, equipped with a touchscreen panel, can deliver a shopping list to your smartphone wirelessly, provided that the database is created in the appliance. "You can control your life with a smartphone," said LG's Lisa Hutchenson.

French-based firm Parrot and Korea's Moneual each showed off an app to allow smartphone users to keep their home plants watered, using a sensor which transmits information on temperature, light and humidity and alerts people when the plants are thirsty.

The home thermostat, locks and lighting can be controlled with an app developed by Ingersoll Rand. "The phone can be

your remote control for your house," said Matt McGovren, marketing manager for the maker of home equipment.

"Everything will be connected, even things not generally associated with smartphones, like locks." In the car, drivers can mimic their key fob functions to control their car, track, locate and monitor their vehicles with an app from Delphi Automotive, shown at CES.

And Ford and General Motors announced at CES that they will be launching efforts to help app developers create programs which can be used in vehicles, some of which already play streaming movies or music from mobile devices.

"Up to now, radio was the only entertainment in the car," said Thomas Sonnenrein, of the German equipment maker Bosch. "Today we have a system shared with the Internet, the smartphone and the car, which creates a lot of value."

The health segment is exploding with apps to monitor heart rate, blood sugar, distance travelled by runners and many other things seen in the CES fitness tech zone. The integration of the television and smartphone was a major focus at CES, with numerous smart TVs able to integrate with mobile phones and tablets. Moreover, smartphones can replace the remote control a TV.

Shawn DuBravac, chief economist at the Consumer Electronics Association, told delegates at the opening session that 65% of time spent on smartphones now is on "non-communication activities" such as using apps for health, entertainment or other activities.

"We have moved away from telephony and communications being the primary part of these devices," he said. "So it is not just a communications devices, it is a hardware hub around which people build services. The smartphone is becoming the viewfinder for your digital life," he added.

Source: *AFP* via I-Net Bridge

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