



The smart 'idiot box'

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There is an ancient Chinese proverb that says, "May you live in interesting times, may you find what you are looking for." Ancient though, the proverb surely is a fit for today's time, where things keep getting more and more interesting. What seemed to be out of reach or dreamy decades back are now the reality-vacationing on Mars or having a clone of your favourite pet dog.

Words and concepts are given new dimensions. Take the word 'smart'. Besides its conventional meaning, 'smart' is now what we call the technological convergence between computers and other technological devices. Our phones are now blessed with this phenomenal 'smartness'; hence the smartphones. Realising the hype created by the smartphones all over the world, manufacturers like Samsung, Phillips, Sony, LG and many others have tried their hands at a new tech to groom the idiot boxes in our living rooms into 'Smart TVs'.

Smart TV is the result of the integration of internet into television sets, set-top boxes and Blue-ray players, thereby making the traditional television sets smart, much like the term we use for mobile phones. Smartphones. Usually confused with Internet TV, a Smart TV offers a number of internet connected services that normal televisions cannot offer. Their operating systems based on Linux, UNIX, Android and other open source platforms, the core part of Smart TVs involves web enabled apps for streaming media, personalised communication and social networking.

To begin with, all of the Smart TVs have a home page or a hub that contains all the apps that the TV offers.



These apps, which are cheap or free, add functionality to the TV with video games, sports updates, specialised channels and much more. As video streaming websites like Netflix and YouTube become increasingly popular, full internet capability on a television can be more valuable than cable or a satellite dish. Hence, the best Smart TVs come with Wi-Fi ready. Manufacturers have come up with several different methods available for controlling Smart TVs. While LG Smart TVs have a magic motion remote control that gets one everything by just pointing, Samsung Smart TVs have two

remotes. One side is a similar layout to normal remote and the other side is a full QWERTY keyboard, with even a small LCD display.

Although most Smart TVs look strikingly similar, certain features and contents however, make them distinguishable. While most provide access to YouTube's and Netflix's streaming video services, some like Sharp's Quattron series, have Pandora for internet radio and Facebook.

Sony's latest Bravia TVs can now access Hulu and a number of other services. But Sony's Google TV sets cannot. Toshiba's Net TV system can

do Skype, along with other applications. But its Yahoo Connected sets have another set of apps that look and perform differently.

Samsung Smart TVs which are riding high in popularity at the moment, have a BBC News app exclusively, allowing viewers to enjoy video news clips from the internet on their own home TV screens.

Convenience, probably, is the killer attraction of all Smart TVs. Consumers can now view all the advanced services on the Smart TVs, via a single device. With a Smart TV in the living room, one no longer has to wait for re-runs of their favourite shows, but can watch them instantly. Of course, there are the DVRs; but when there are multiple things being recorded by the DVR, something is bound to get missed.

Since picture quality still remains one of the significant aspects of a sophisticated TV, HD and 3D features are incorporated in the newer versions of these glamorous TVs, taking the technology a notch higher.

Smart devices surely created a turning point in the history of time and technology. Because Smart TV is a new concept, the technology behind it is constantly evolving. Although to some the idea of the mish-mash of computer and TV is just as unnatural, some facts cannot be overlooked. Like using their big Smart TV screen instead of the computer or the small smartphone screen to see their favorite YouTube videos, chat on Facebook while watching TV without getting out the laptop, or look up information about their favourite actor while watching a Netflix movie. So, with a Smart TV in the living room, "you will surely find what you are looking for!"

SOURCE: INTERNET

Microsoft to open "app store" in February



AFP, San Francisco

Microsoft on Tuesday began wooing developers for a February opening of its first "app store" for computers powered by the US technology giant's Windows software.

The Windows Store will open in late February when Microsoft releases a test version of its next-generation Windows 8 operating system.

It will take on Apple and Google in the booming market of fun, hip or functional programs built for smartphones, tablets, or computers.

"I think we are going to do great," Windows Web Services vice president Antoine Leblond said as he gave developers and press a

preview of the store in a San Francisco art gallery.

"The reach of Windows is absolutely huge and can't be matched," he continued, noting that the Microsoft operating system powers more than a half billion computers around the world.

Independent developers understandably devote their limited resources to making programs for platforms that promise the most potential customers, and Windows would outshine Apple gadgets and Google Android devices in that regard.

"There are more Windows PCs (personal computers) than there are cars on the planet," Leblond said. "The number is staggering."

However, Windows has a meager presence when it comes to smartphones and tablets, where third-party applications such as games are typically bought.

Applications written for the Windows Store platform will work on any devices

powered by the Microsoft software, meaning programs could be downloaded to smartphones or tablet computers as they hit market.

Microsoft declined to discuss reports that tablets based on Windows 8 are in development.

Windows Store was pitched as a welcoming option to Apple App Store, which puts applications through a strict and sometimes enigmatic vetting process before approving them for virtual shelves.

Apple requires applications for iOS devices to conduct financial transactions such as subscriptions or sales in-house, with the iPhone, iPad, iPod, and Macintosh computer maker taking 30 percent of the revenue.

Windows Store platform will have mechanisms for in-app purchases, but developers will be free to choose methods of handling financial transactions, according to Leblond.

Hackers jailbreak RIM's PlayBook

REUTERS, Toronto

Three hackers say they have exploited a vulnerability in Research In Motion's PlayBook tablet to gain root access to the device, a claim that could damage the BlackBerry maker's hard-won reputation for security.

Root access means a user has permission to alter any file or program on a device and can control hardware functions.

In a response to queries, RIM said it is investigating the claim, and if a "jailbreak" is confirmed will release a patch to plug the hole.

The three hackers - who identify themselves as xpvqs, neuralic and Chris Wade - plan to release their data within a week as a tool called DingleBerry.

Apple's iOS and Google's Android operating systems are frequently attacked by users who want to run programs that have not been authorized by the manufacturers, but breaches of RIM's software are more rare.

Flaw exposes Facebook CEO's photos of puppy, food

AP, New York

Newly unearthed private photos of Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg may be a letdown if you were expecting raucous party scenes like the ones in "The Social Network" movie.

The photos are tame, some even adorable. They show that the straight-backed, ultra-focused leader of the world's largest online social network eats, cooks and likes to spend time with his girlfriend and puppy. Oh, and he hangs out with President Barack Obama, if time permits.

A Facebook security flaw, revealed this week, allowed users to gain access to the billionaire



businessman's private pictures.

Facebook blamed a software error in a feature that lets users report inappropriate content. The company said the error was quickly fixed, but some people were able to view a limited number of other people's photos, even if they were marked as private and meant for a small circle of friends.

The company did not say how many users were affected, or for how long. And though Zuckerberg's photos were G-rated, such a privacy flaw could hurt those who post more compromising photos of underage drinking, parties or a day at the beach when they called out sick from work.

e-ASIA 2011

Speakers opt for local mobile content ecosystem

RUBAIYAT ISLAM RAFAT

Local and foreign speakers at a workshop urged to establish a highly local content based mobile ecosystem in our country. They also observed that such ecosystem will not only promote our local and global brands but also guarantee the sustainability of the mobile application developers.

They made the call at a technical session styled "Application Development for Mobile Platform" organised by Nokia on the second day of the recently held 3-day e-Asia summit at Bangabandhu International Conference Center.

Chief guest Dr Jamilur Reza Chowdhury said within few years location-based mobile applications should open a new dimension in our daily life. People will depend on different real-time location based apps. He said nowadays with a small effort and little programming skills anyone can develop and deploy mobile apps through different free toolkit or online tutorials.

Jirapat Janjersak, head of EDX, Thailand and Emerging Asia of Nokia, during his presentation explained the mobile ecosystem and its 5 components. The first component of this ecosystem is the brands, who are interested to publish their contents on mobile. The second is the developers and publishers, who develop such

applications on mobile platform for the brands.

Then comes the third component, mobile brands such as Nokia, Samsung who provide APIs or toolkits to develop such apps for their handsets.

The fourth component includes the mobile operators that deliver the apps to the target audience and earn revenue from application download.

End users are the fifth component of the ecosystem. Abu Daud Khan, country manager of Nokia, Bangladesh described their steps for connecting the next billion users by enabling them to access more information through mobile apps. Currently they are consulting with all mobile operators of the country to establish an ecosystem where the mobile operators will maintain the accountability with the reimbursement of the mobile apps developers from the earning of the app downloaded.

Nokia's new featured phone Asha (The Hope) series has also been introduced in the session. Asha will be available in the market next year. SM Ashraf Abir, CEO of MCC Ltd, local mobile app developing company, shared their vision, future scope for mobile application development and initiatives to be taken by Nokia and MCC to encourage the mobile app developers all around the next year.



Jirapat Janjersak speaks at the session.

Android Market downloads top 10 billion: Google

AFP, San Francisco

Google said Tuesday that over 10 billion applications have been downloaded from its App Store. More than half of the smartphones sold worldwide in the third quarter of the year were powered by Android software, according to technology research firm Gartner.

"This past weekend, thanks to Android users

around the world, Android Market exceeded 10 billion app downloads -- with a growth rate of one billion app downloads per month," Eric Chu, director of the Android Developer Ecosystem, said in a blog post.

"We can't wait to see where this accelerating growth takes us in 2012," Chu said.

To celebrate achieving the 10-billion download mark, Google said Android developers would offer a selection of apps a day for the next 10 days for just 10 cents each.

Google's announcement comes exactly five months after Apple

announced that more than 15 billion applications for the iPhone, iPad and iPod Touch have been downloaded from its App Store.

More than half of the smartphones sold worldwide in the third quarter of the year were powered by Android software, according to technology research firm Gartner.

A total of 60.5 million Android-powered smartphones were sold in the third quarter, giving the operating system a 52.5-percent market share, up from 25.3 percent in the same quarter a year ago, Gartner said.

Nokia sold 19.5 million smartphones using its Symbian operating system in the third quarter but its share of the smartphone market fell to 16.9 percent from 36.3 percent a year ago.

Apple sold 17.3 million iPhones powered by iOS software during the quarter. Apple's market share slipped to 15.0 percent from 16.6 percent a year ago.



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