

# IT & TELECOM

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## Apple in miniature

JOHN C ABELL

This week Apple faces two significant tablet challengers. The first is Microsoft, which is releasing its long-awaited Surface tablet on Friday. The second is... itself.

On October 23, amidst the anticipation for the Surface and strong sales for the Kindle Fire, Apple announced a slew of new devices, the \$329 iPad Mini the most intriguing among them.

The mobile era has been defined by Apple: iPod, iPhone, iPad, you know the drill. Apple ascended largely unchallenged, facing only a few stunned and weak rivals. By the time it got to tablets in 2010, Apple benefited from an unspeakably large pent-up demand for a device nobody had been clamoring for. Since then it's sold more than 100 million iPads.

The market has matured in only two years. As Apple got wealthier, the competition got wiser. Unable to counter Apple in the larger tablet space, it started to produce smaller tablets that didn't compromise on functionality (though, admittedly, they did on apps), some undercutting Apple's price by 60 percent.

With that success proven Amazon claims 22 percent for the Fire HD alone Apple's competitors started to move in on Apple's territory larger tablets. Amazon released the first Fire version 13 months ago, and now comes Microsoft's Surface. Pre-orders are said to be brisk, but it will take a while to gauge traction. The device is light and portable and solves the one nagging criticism many still have about the iPad: Surface includes a physical keyboard that is cleverly incorporated into the cover. So while the device is a tablet it also doubles as a very small notebook. Not a bad trick.

What will make or break the Surface is whether it will fit comfortably into the world of mobile computing. It's trying to be a tablet-netbook hybrid, a different vision of mobile computers than Apple.

Apple's other adversary is itself. In releasing a

smaller version of the iconic iPad to compete with Google, Amazon and others, it neglected to even approach their \$200 price point. That price has lured some new customers away. By ignoring it, Apple is taking a big risk.

Apple's betting that, as Henry Blodgett so colorfully put it, customer "lock-in" will persuade existing iPad owners to pony up \$130 extra to get a smaller iPad instead of a smaller SomethingElse when it comes time to buy a new tablet. Perhaps, especially since Apple's installed



PHOTO: REUTERS

base has long shown it's fine paying a premium.

But what of the people who already have their seven-inchers, like me? I bought a Nexus 7 when it was time to buy something a few months ago, even though I'm a power Apple user. I'm not sure what I would do today, but I don't regret my timing or choice. I wrote most of this piece with the Nexus, standing on a moving train. I'm certainly not planning on buying another seven-

inch tablet. At least not until this one breaks (or breaks my heart).

The surge of smaller tablets was more of a dilemma than an opportunity for Apple: it had to have them, but it couldn't risk settling for a smaller profit margin from people trading their iPad... "Maxes?" for iPad Minis. If, as I've long suspected, seven-inch tablets become the dominant model, and Apple stopped making as much as a 32 percent margin on tablets (as it does for the large iPads), it would be catastrophic for Apple's bottom line.

Even so, it's not clear that the iPad Mini is small enough or cheap enough to be the breakthrough success that the full-sized version has been. The Mini seems more like a stab at protecting the high-end of the small tablet market rather than a full-throated battle to sew up the whole thing, top to bottom. Indeed, Apple also introduced another full-sized iPad on the same day as the highly-anticipated Mini. Coming only seven months after the last upgrade, it's clear that Apple's resources are not entirely devoted to the battle for the seven-inch niche.

Perhaps this is Steve Jobs' legacy. Jobs was famously against a smaller iPad before he was for it. The official yarn was that he thought a seven-inch tablet's keyboard would be too small.

But then Amazon disrupted the disrupter with a credible seven-inch model that the company sells at cost.

And now here comes Microsoft. The Surface will be running Microsoft's spanking new mobile software, which has received fairly high marks.

The worst case scenario for Apple is this: Microsoft's \$500 Surface becomes the device that bridges the tablet and the ultra-light notebook (especially in the business community), making the iPad increasingly useless. Meanwhile, the seven-inch market continues to gravitate toward the cheaper options, leaving the iPad Mini as a boutique rather than a mainstream device.

The author writes for Reuters blog.



PHOTO: AFP

## Microsoft courts mobile lifestyles with Windows 8

AFP, San Francisco

Microsoft today will release a new version of its flagship Windows operating system tailored for a world shifting from personal computers to smartphones and tablets.

The software giant gambled by changing long familiar user interface features to make Windows 8 compatible with trends toward keeping programs and data in the internet "cloud" and relying on mobile gadgets at work and at home.

"Microsoft has this vision where they want to go; and it is Windows in the cloud," said analyst Michael Cherry of Directions on Microsoft, an independent firm that tracks the Redmond, Washington-based company.

"The chasm is very big and Windows 8 is a good first step," he continued. "But, all of these transitions come with a little pain."

The arrival of Windows 8 will coincide with the availability of Microsoft Slate tablet computers to challenge Apple's market-ruling iPads and rivals built on Google's Android software.

Windows 8 and an accompanying version of Microsoft's free Internet Explorer web browsing program, were designed to optimize touch-screen capabilities.

"This is an absolutely critical product," Microsoft co-founder and chairman Bill Gates said in a video interview posted on the company's website.

"It takes Windows into the world of touch, low-powered devices, really giving people the best of what we think of as a tablet-type experience and the PC experience," he continued. "It is a big step."

Windows 8 will support a wide range of devices, including touch- and stylus-based smartphones and tablet PCs as well as desktop and laptop machines.

Versions of the operating system have been tailored for chips used to power various mobile devices.

The fate of Slate and other Windows 8 tablets will likely hinge on the availability and pricing of applications, since fun or functional "apps" are what people tend to love about gadgets, according to Cherry.

Microsoft would "get software developers behind this," Gates added.

Windows 8 allows users to store and share personal data among various devices under the "SkyDrive" cloud computing service.

Rivals Apple and Google offer such services, which let people store digital data on servers in the internet "cloud" and access files from devices of their choosing.

Windows 8 will be available in 109 languages across 231 markets worldwide.

"It is simply the biggest deal for this company in at least 17 years," Microsoft chief Steve Ballmer said at Windows 8 preview event, referring to the time since the launch of the game-changing Windows 95 operating system.

It remained to be seen how quickly Windows 8 would be adopted by businesses, which remain cautious after problems with the Vista version of the operating system generations earlier and that follow their own timelines for updating technology.

## CSL brings Logitech's earphones

IT & TELECOM DESK

Computer Source Limited (CSL) has brought Logitech's UE (ultimate ears) 200 and 200VI headphone in the local market.

The 200VI features is an 'on cord controller' which gives the users the facility to use the forward and backward button without the media player. The UE VI 200 has the price tag of Tk 3,300 while the UE 200 is available at Tk 1,900.



TECHPHOTO

Japan's eyewear maker Masunaga displays a pair of sunglasses with born-conduction speakers, a microphone and bluetooth unit for hands free phones at the International Optical Fair in Tokyo on October 22, 2012.

PHOTO: AFP

## Samsung does not infringe Apple patent: Dutch court

REUTERS, Amsterdam

A Dutch court has ruled Samsung Electronics does not infringe an Apple Inc patent by using certain multi-touch techniques on some of the Samsung Galaxy smartphones and tablet computers.

Samsung and Apple, the world's top two smartphone makers, are locked in patent disputes in at least 10 countries as they vie to dominate the lucrative mobile market.

Apple scored a sweeping legal victory over its South Korean rival in August when a US jury found Samsung had copied critical features of the hugely popular iPhone and iPad and awarded Apple \$1.05 billion in damages.

But a judge has not yet ruled on Apple's request to permanently ban some Samsung products from the US market.

Apple argued in September in the Hague court that Samsung infringed its patent on multi-touch function, which lets users use two fingers at one time on a touch screen.

"With these products Samsung does not infringe the claims that Apple has made," the court said in its ruling on Wednesday.

Apple has taken Samsung and others to court over the "pinch to zoom" function popular on smartphones and tablets.

Apple lost a preliminary injunction on this patent in the Dutch courts last year and also lost its battle in the courts in Britain against HTC Corp, and in Germany against Samsung and Motorola Mobility, which is owned by Google.

The Dutch court acknowledged that its multi-touch patent ruling was similar to those in Britain and Germany.

Samsung said it welcomed the Dutch court's decision, while Apple declined to comment on the ruling.

The Hague has become an important court room battle ground between companies making mobile phones and tablet computers, as court actions there are considered to be cheap, speedy and efficient.

## Android to beat Windows in 2016: Gartner

REUTERS

Google's Android operating system will be used on more computing devices than Microsoft's Windows within four years, data from research firm Gartner showed, underlining the massive shift in the technology sector.

At the end of 2016, there will be 2.3 billion computers, tablets and smartphones using Android software, compared with 2.28 billion Windows devices, Gartner data showed.

That compares to an expected 1.5 billion Windows devices by the end of this year, against 608 million using Android.

Android, which reached the market only in 2008, has risen fast to be the dominant smartphone platform, controlling two-thirds of that market. It has taken the No. 2 spot in the fast-growing tablet computer market.

The proliferation of the free software gives Google its edge on the search market - its key profit generator.

Worldwide shipments of personal computers fell by over 8 percent in the third quarter, the steepest decline since 2001, as more consumers flock to increasingly powerful tablets and smartphones for more basic computing.



## Expression of Interest for the Project "Franco German Embassy, Dhaka, Bangladesh"

The French Embassy in Bangladesh is inviting expression of interest (EOI) from reputed and experienced contractors for the construction of a joint Franco German Embassy new building in Baridhara, Dhaka, Bangladesh. The built up area will be around 6500 sqm including one basement, GF+5 floors. The scope of work includes Structure, Civil work, internal MEP and External Development. Contractors who are interested may download the forms on the French Embassy website <http://www.ambafrance-bd.org/-Accueil-Anglais-> or collect the forms at the French Embassy, Road 108, House 18, Gulshan, Dhaka, (880)2 881 38 11-14