

IT & TELECOM

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Samsung's road to the top

SHAHNOOR RABBANI

Samsung have skyrocketed in recent years to the top of the mobile phone food chain.

Not too long ago the South Koreans decided to take the cellphone market seriously as the touchscreen smartphone became a tech staple and they finally hit gold with the Samsung Galaxy S.

Looking closely, it was not by chance that Samsung managed to enjoy success in the smartphone market. They have been, in fact, one of the biggest spenders in research and development (R&D) and over the years, aided with the help of their wide electronic device and appliance portfolio, they were able to produce some market changing hardware for their phones.

Two of the biggest improvements came in their chipsets and displays. The Exynos processors and the SuperAMOLED displays are (considered) the best in the business. The other chipsets or displays are not far behind (if behind at all), but in the crowded, uber-competitive cellphone industry, the slightest of changes make a big difference.

The Exynos processor, when it was first introduced with the Galaxy SII was the benchmark king, and along with fluid overall user experience, made it the top dog during its time. While the SuperAMOLED display, first seen on the Samsung Galaxy S gave it unrivalled sunlight legibility and contrast and that propelled the phone to becoming the Android flag bearer.

However, spending in R&D is one thing and spending wisely is another. During 2010, Samsung was the second largest phone manufacturer, behind Nokia and coincidentally, it was also the second biggest spender in R&D, behind the Finns. The difference was, while the Finns were trying to make



PHOTO: INTERNET

their Symbian platform (originally not meant to be used for touchscreen phones) as good as Android and iOS, the South Koreans had Android at their disposal, and thus were able to focus more on hardware.

This is where it all happened. The in house hardware gave Samsung a competitive edge over its competition and its flagship Galaxy S devices got rave reviews. People took notice and started buying Samsung smartphones, moving away from Nokia and co. Once word of mouth got out, more people started to buy and a brand image was created.

But that was not all Samsung had up its sleeve. It went into diversifying and giving users the option to pick from a cornucopia of devices. It let users choose between all sizes, form factors and price points. Samsung even started up its own smartphone OS, Bada with emerging markets in mind.

Some may say that Samsung went overboard with the number of

smartphone models they were releasing every year, averaging in about 40 devices a year for the last two years, and confusing the users. But through this, they created new niches and trends into the market. None more so than with the Samsung Galaxy Note line of devices, with 5+ inch screens merging into a category between cellphones and tablets (phablets), and adding a stylus that works on capacitive touchscreens.

To put the cherry on the top, Samsung made sure their devices maintained a competitive price, either being priced in the same range as, or lower than, other company flagships.

Perhaps, not everyone agreed with their design philosophy, but no one could argue with their 'function over sophistication' method. They went with making their flagships light and portable while keeping the battery user replaceable and always keeping expandable storage among the options.

Android without expandable storage

almost seems to defeat the purpose.

Add to that, Samsung is a company that is flexible and looks to adapt in accordance with the market. Nokia created its own niche with its PureView technology containing smartphones recently and Sony also found its footing with water and dustproof flagships. Samsung took note, and created the Samsung Galaxy Zoom (a camera centric smartphone with the ability to optically zoom its camera) and the Samsung Galaxy S4 Active (a dust and waterproof variant of the S4).

People may call that copying, and Samsung won't deny it. But they have been and are more than willing to innovate and strive to create compelling products. They now have a smartphone brand which is profitable and they have improved with their marketing techniques. Whatever the case may be, Samsung have worked their way to the top of the ladder and there is no one big or good enough to topple them over.

First Firefox smartphone launches in Spain

AFP, Madrid

The world's first consumer sales of a smartphone powered by the Firefox operating system have launched in Spain.

The new phone, ZTE Open, went on sale Tuesday at USD 90 (Tk 7,034) and runs on a Firefox system developed by the Mozilla Foundation, which campaigns for open development of the online world.

Mozilla, a non-profit community of developers and users, enters as a minnow into a market dominated by the mighty duopoly of Apple and Google whose iOS and Android programmes are in 90 percent of smartphones.

Mozilla joined with Spain's Telefonica and Chinese handset maker ZTE to launch the new handset, which uses the internet as the platform for all its functions and applications.

"We believe that smartphones need to be more open and that the web is the platform for making this possible," Telefonica Espana chief executive Luis Miguel Gilperez said in a statement.

Telefonica said it planned to sell Firefox OS devices in other markets

including Colombia and Venezuela in the "coming weeks".

Mozilla chief operating officer Jay Sullivan predicted the new phone would stimulate a "new wave of innovation for the web".

The ZTE Open has a 3.5-inch screen, 265 MB RAM, a 3.2 MP camera and comes with a 4GB microSD memory card. It has messaging, email, calendar, FM radio, camera, Nokia mapping and the Firefox browser.

Mozilla, which aims to take third place behind Android and iOS, announced its plans for Firefox OS at a mobile telephone fair in Barcelona in February last year.

Google's Android ran 69 percent of all handsets sold last year and Apple's iOS 22 percent, said a study by independent analysts Canalis.

Analysts say the two leaders will still dominate the market in 2013 although there could be room for a third player.

There are several operating systems vying for that number-three spot, however, including Microsoft's Windows Phone, Blackberry, Firefox and Samsung's open-source project Tizen.



Fujifilm launches Instax series

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GME Limited, the distributor of Fujifilm in Bangladesh has introduced four models from Fujifilm Instax series in the local market.

The series includes Mini7S, Instax Mini8, Mini25 and Mini50S.

Instax series enriches the lifestyle and makes sharing photos easy and fun. It also offers credit card size photo prints right after taking it.

Lightweight and compact, the stylish instax Mini 7S goes anywhere. It has Fujinon lens

(f=60mm, 1:12.7, 2 components 2 elements) with 2.13 x 3.39" (54 x 86mm) film size and image area of 1.81 x 2.44" (46 x 62mm). Its other features include exposure compensation controls, built-in flash, auto power off time if left idle for more than 5 minutes.

The Mini 7S is available in pink and blue colours at Tk 6000.

Mini25 is stylish in design, light weight, compact, and easy to use.

This particular instax camera has a small mirror attached at the tip of its collapsible lens. This mirror is very useful in terms of self-portrait pictures. Close-up lens are also included in the box to make close-up or self-portrait photos look best. If the close-up lens is not in use it can be attached to the wrist strap.

Instax Mini 25s lens are auto-extension when turned on. There are also two shutter buttons in the camera which makes it easier for portrait and landscape shooting. The Instax Mini 25s lighten/darken control and flash/landscape control make adjusting the settings for indoor and outdoor very simple and easy. It also has an LCD display for xposure counter (number of unexposed films), Landscape Mode, Lighten-Darken Control, and Fill-in Flash Mode.

The camera has price tag of Tk 8, 500.

Mini50S is compact with stylish piano-black body. Shutter speed adjusts to allow good results even in low light.

Its ingenious self-timer allows taking two shots with a single touch of the shutter button. The close-up lens allows you shoot as right up to 30 cm, for a 2:1 magnification ratio.

The camera is priced at Tk 9,999.

The Instax Mini8 is available in white and black, and pastel colours as pink blue and yellow in the market. The camera has a price tag of Tk 6,500.



Yahoo acquires email management app Xobni

REUTERS, San Francisco

Yahoo Inc acquired email and address book management app Xobni, the internet company's third acquisition in as many days as it seeks to revamp its online products and boost its Web traffic.

Yahoo said it will integrate Xobni's technology into its communications products, including the mobile and PC versions of its email and instant messaging services.

Yahoo did not disclose the financial terms of the deal, which the technology blog AllThingsD pegged



at \$30 million to \$40 million. Yahoo said that 31 Xobni employees will be joining Yahoo, including Chief Executive Officer Jeff Bonforte, who previously worked at Yahoo.

The deal is the latest in a string of acquisitions by Yahoo since Marissa Mayer became chief executive a year ago, vowing to boost traffic to Yahoo's online services and to revive the company's stagnant revenue growth.

Yahoo, which has roughly 11,000 employees, has acquired more than a dozen small, Web startups during the past year, focusing particularly on adding technology and services

designed for smartphones and tablets.

On Tuesday Yahoo acquired Qwiki, a mobile app that creates mini-movies using a consumer's collection of photos and videos. And on Monday, Yahoo acquired Bignoggins Productions, a mobile app to help players of fantasy sports teams.

Last month, Yahoo closed its \$1.1 billion acquisition of blogging service Tumblr, the largest deal by Mayer.

Yahoo's shares finished Wednesday's regular trading session up 2.4 percent at \$25.59.



Honda Motor's humanoid robot Asimo interacts with visitors at the National Museum of Emerging Science and Innovation in Tokyo on July 3. Honda developed an autonomous behavior control technology, which enables Asimo to make decisions required to behave in concert with the movements of the surrounding people without being controlled by an operator.

PHOTO: AFP

Computer mouse inventor dies at 88

AFP, Los Angeles

Douglas Engelbart, who revolutionised computing by inventing the mouse, died in California on Tuesday at the age of 88, the institute bearing his name said Wednesday.

Born in Oregon, Engelbart studied electrical engineering and computer sciences in the 1950s before joining the Stanford Research Institute.

There, he and his team worked on a number of concepts that have entered the computer mainstream, such as email, video conferencing, hypertext links and ARPAnet, the precursor of the internet.

But he is best remembered for the mouse, which in its original incarnation was a wood box with two metal wheels and was granted a patent in 1970.

He had publicly used it two years earlier during a video conference in San Francisco before some 1,000 people -- an event that became known as "the mother of all demos."

Engelbart had a total of 21 patents to his name. In 2000 he was presented with the National Medal of Technology, the tech industry's highest honour.



Douglas Engelbart

Asus holds dealers' meet in Chittagong

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Global Brand Private Limited, the authorised distributor of Asus in Bangladesh recently organised a dealer conference 'Asus Partner Meet Chittagong 2013'.

One hundred and fifty representatives from various dealer houses of Asus in Chittagong region participated at the event.

The program covered Asus system products and component products presentation, business related speech, thanks giving episodes and raffle draw.

Abdul Fattah, chairman of Global Brand Private Limited, Al Fuad, Asus Bangladesh country product manager, Kazi Mehdi Hassan, Asus channel sales manager, Ziaur Rahman, Asus national sales manager and Mizanur Rahman, sales manager of Global Brand along with other officials of Asus and Global Brand were present at the program.