

The smart choice

CALL CENTRE The average smartphone user is changing; the devices aren't just for managers now. Lured by social networking and touch-screens, teenagers, homemakers and young execs are snapping them up too

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MUMBAI: It's not just for the suits anymore. Enterprise phones are undergoing a metamorphosis and rapidly becoming must-have smartphones for consumers other than just corporate executives.

The strongest indication has come from Research in Motion's brand, BlackBerry. Service provider Vodafone has introduced pre-paid services for BlackBerry and the handset manufacturer too is softening its stand from being a strictly enterprise (read business) phone to a smartphone for all.

BlackBerry's latest advertisement on television — with the *We're the BlackBerry boys* song — has widely caught viewership attention. It captures the expansion of the target audience from corporate executives to a much wider, young, casually modern consumer, as the original four suits singing the BlackBerry song are joined by this crowd.

"BlackBerry was in the corporate domain but with newer models, this is going to change. The traction is coming from younger executives and teenagers," said a BlackBerry spokesperson. The target group is expanding and to cater to this new group, the handset maker has made available its popular handsets in white, lavender, and red colours.

BlackBerry is now used by a lot of youngsters for its messenger, social networking, and other applications. Commenting on its shift from a corporate phone to a wider-based smartphone, Anuradha Aggarwal, VP marketing communications and consumer insights, Vodafone, said, "The basic premise is to increase BlackBerry's penetration among younger audiences. At the operator end, we have been getting signals and realised the potential of this service going mainstream."

Vodafone now offers unlimited internet on the BlackBerry for Rs 15 per day.

"From the Vodafone perspective, the comment is clear. The aim is to invite a newer target group through the introduction of a lower-cost pre-paid service on the BlackBerry. For BlackBerry, it's not easy to give up its basic proposition and the communication gives a gentle recognition to the fact that the person in the suit too is human," said Kapil Arora, VP and national brand lead on Vodafone, Ogilvy & Mather Advertising.

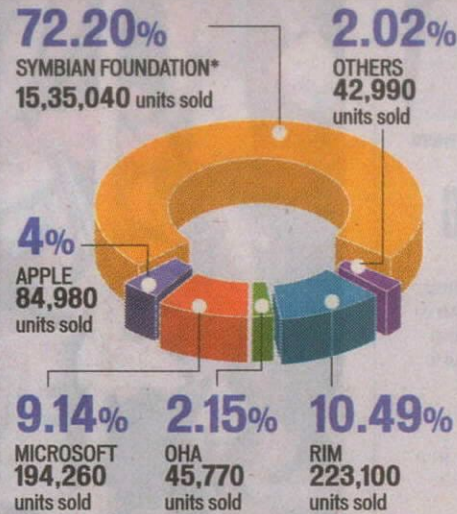
On why smartphones are becoming the flavour of mobile communication, Kedar Sohoni, president, Informate Mobile Intelligence, said, "Consumers other than just corporate executives are moving towards smartphones because of the increasing usability such handsets now offer. Smartphones are rapidly moving towards what a computer is capable of doing. In the near future, handsets will be even more powerful. At present, the smartphones are getting segmented into corporate, casual and entertainment phones."

Two other manufacturers, other than BlackBerry and Apple, offer smartphones in the country. These include Nokia, the market leader in smartphones in India, and Samsung, Nokia's smartphone strategy is driven by its

SMARTPHONE MARKET SHARES IN 2009 (BY OPERATING SYSTEMS)



BlackBerry is now used by an increasing number of youngsters for its messenger and for social networking. PRASAD GORI / HT PHOTO



* Nokia uses Symbian OS

Source: Canalis

dependence on the Symbian operating platform. Samsung, on the other hand, depends on multiple platforms including Android and Bada (its own platform). Their future strategies are similar: both claim to democratise smartphones.

"We are committed to democratising smartphones. Our global strategy is to drive smartphone capabilities into newer ranges of devices, at increasingly affordable price points. Now, business executives are consumers and they want a beautiful phone with different features. We have already launched a whole range of handsets across the mid and high-end segments and announced more. The next step is to introduce an even larger range at different price points," said Jasmeet Gandhi, head of devices — services and marketing, Nokia India.

"There is a need in the market towards the lower end of the spectrum and soon smartphones will be available as the entry-level phone. Smartphones operating on the Android platform from Google are expected to be available in the Rs 5,000-6,000 range, revolutionising the market," added Sohoni.

Samsung is gearing up to launch smartphones in the less than Rs 10,000 price range. "Consumer is the big push today, even in

Consumers other than corporate executives are moving towards smartphones because of the handsets' increasing usability.

KEDAR SOHONI, president, Informate Mobile Intelligence

the enterprise market. Our aim is to democratise smartphones for the masses. Our approach is to have smartphones on many platforms. Samsung already has an offering on the Android platform and it's priced a little above Rs 10,000. We are committed to bringing various price points and aim to have a range under Rs 10,000 soon," said Ranjit Yadav, director, mobile & IT, Samsung Electronics.

Samsung's advertising has largely been about youth, their desire to stay con-

nected and how Samsung smartphones address this need.

Smartphone sales are expected to grow sharply in the next three-four years. Brands are not likely to miss out on this opportunity as the youth population in India plug in to the smartphone appeal. IDC's research reveals that advanced application-enabled devices are addressing the need, especially amongst youth and young executives, to be in continuous touch with friends and peer groups on touch screen and social networking applications-enabled phones. Devices that are WiFi and push mail-enabled, or with an on-board GPS application, find buyers amongst senior business executives who want to stay in touch while travelling.



BlackBerry's new campaign captures the changing nature of its audience.

SPEED DIAL

21,26,140 UNITS

Size of the smartphone market in calendar 2009 (Canalis research)

47,21,410 UNITS

Expected size of smartphone market in calendar 2010 (Canalis research)

3,49,35,030 UNITS

Expected size of the smartphone market in calendar 2014 (Canalis research)

75% Expected compounded annual growth rate of smartphone volumes from calendar 2009 to 2014

72% Share of Symbian-powered phones in 2009 (Canalis research). Nokia uses Symbian technology

63.6 CRORE Number of wireless subscribers in June 2010 (Telecom Regulatory Authority of India)

65.2 CRORE Number of wireless subscribers in July 2010 (Telecom Regulatory Authority of India)

