

Android Gobbles Smartphone Share From BlackBerry To Beat iPhone

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Google's mobile operating system gains 13 points against competitors

By the end of this year, the iPhone will have lost its title as the No. 1 smartphone in the US, eMarketer estimates, with Google's Android operating system surging ahead to first place.

Android will be installed on 37% of all smartphone handsets in the country by year-end, up 13 percentage points over 2010. Apple will likewise see its OS increase share, but only slightly: from 28% of the market last year to 29% this year.

iOS will continue to inch upward in market share through 2013, but by that year Android will hold more than two-fifths of the US smartphone market.

The growth in Android usage comes mostly at the expense of Research In Motion's BlackBerry, which eMarketer predicts will drop from 30% of the market in 2010 to just 15% in 2013. Shares for Microsoft's and other competitors' operating systems, including Nokia's Symbian, will also dwindle over the forecast period.

“The battle for US smartphone market share continues to look like a two-horse race between Android and iOS,” said eMarketer Principal Analyst Noah Elkin. “Within two years, Google and Apple will control nearly three-quarters of this key segment, making it very difficult for contenders like Microsoft and RIM to achieve scale.”

eMarketer bases its smartphone OS forecasts on a meta-analysis of survey data, traffic data, smartphone sales data, smartphone shipments, company reports and company news releases.

In terms of users, Android will more than double again this year after posting 496% growth in 2010. eMarketer estimates the number of Android users will rise from 33.4 million this year to 50.4 million in 2013.

The iOS user population will also grow substantially, from 26.1 million this year to 38.4 million in 2013.

Despite the large addressable audience of Android users, many marketers remain more interested in advertising on the iPhone. One fact that has helped Google's OS to grow in terms of usage—its availability on a range of devices from several manufacturers—may also be hurting it here, as device fragmentation makes marketing efforts more difficult.

But Android's hold on the smartphone market will only become harder to ignore.

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