

Motorola and Verizon team up for TV tablet

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Motorola is developing a digital tablet device that will allow users to watch television on it, as the US mobile phone group attempts to chip away at a market established by Apple's popular iPad.

The device, which will have a 10-inch screen and operate on Google's Android software, could launch as early as this autumn in the US.

It was expected to tie closely to Verizon's FiOS digital pay-television service, people briefed on the plans said. Motorola also manufactures the TV set-top boxes for the FiOS television service.

The tablet market is seen as the next battle ground in the mobile devices war that has pitted myriad device makers and Microsoft, Google and Research In Motion against Apple. The iPad has become a hit for Apple, lifting the company from number seven to number three in the worldwide market for notebooks and other portable computers, according to Deutsche Bank.

The Motorola tablet's integration with TV is a key competitive advantage against rival developers. But the company that invented the cell phone has made no secret of its exploration of a market resurrected by the iPad.

By working with Verizon Wireless, which owns a 25 per cent share of the US television market where it operates and a 29 per cent share of broadband customers, Motorola will not be seen as upsetting the lucrative business of pay TV.

Sanjay Jha, chief executive of the Illinois-based company's mobile devices business, said in May Motorola was exploring tablet options using Google's Android smartphone software.

"We're very focused on participating in this convergence between mobility and home, and I actually think you will see some products from us in a very short period of time," he said, without providing details.

Months ahead of the iPad's launch this year, Apple failed to convince TV programmers to either lower the price of TV show sales or sell a package of the top shows that was seen undercutting traditional TV pay models.

In spite of Apple's robust sales of tablets and phones, devices running Google's Android operating system secured a 27 per cent market share in the US in the first six months of the year, ahead of iPhone's 23 per cent share, according to audience tracking group Nielsen.

Like a flood of tablets set to hit the market, Motorola's device aims to address other perceived weaknesses of the iPad. It will support Adobe Flash, the software that underpins some 90 per cent of web videos. Apple has backed an alternative standard, HTML 5, on its iPhone and iPad devices.

Motorola's device is expected to be thinner and lighter than the iPad and to let users share its wireless data connection with nearby devices.

It will be built with two cameras, one for taking photos and the other facing the user for video conferencing.

Motorola, Google and Verizon declined to comment.

Fonte: Financial Times, London, Aug. 3rd 2010, Technology, online.