

Feature phone apps market to almost double to US\$1 billion

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LONDON, UK: The mobile apps market for feature phones will almost double by 2016, hitting revenues of US\$1 billion, after being spurred on by the success of apps in the smartphone sector, according to Ovum.



In a new report*, the independent telecoms analyst claims that while the feature phone apps market has not taken off in the same way as its smartphone counterpart, it is beginning to take strides forward.

It states that improvements which have made both developing and publishing feature phone apps easier, the larger size of the market and reduced competition mean that the sector has the potential to be more lucrative for some developers.

Nick Dillon, Ovum analyst and author of the report, commented: "While feature phone users vastly outnumber smartphone users, the apps market hasn't taken off in the same way. This is largely because it has lacked the distribution channels to enable widespread adoption.

Potential to be more lucrative

"However, inspired by the success of apps in the smartphone market, the options have improved drastically, with many larger handset manufacturers, operators and third parties now offering improved distribution programmes for feature phones.

"While addressing this market is not as easy as the smartphone market, it has the potential to be more lucrative for some developers. The larger size of the market combined with higher barriers to entry means that there is less competition than in the smartphone market."

According to Ovum, the number of feature phones worldwide will reach 2.3 billion in 2016, when they will continue to

dominate the market, with a 63% share, compared to 37% for smartphones.

The report finds that despite its age, JavaME software is the best option for developing feature phone apps, but Nokia web widgets and Opera Mini widgets also enable simple applications using web technologies. In addition, options for web development will be further improved by the introduction of HTML5-capable browsers, which Ovum anticipates will become widespread on feature phones in the next 12-18 months.

**Opportunities for Mobile Development in the Mass Market*

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