The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Microsoft Tablet PC Has Slow Market Entry

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April 08, 2013



Microsoft has sold 280 Surface RT tablet PCs through local retailers M.Video and Euroset since the device became available last week, according to news reports Tuesday.

At M.Video stores in the past week, about 180 Surfaces were sold, versus a total of 3,500 tablets sold for the same period, said M.Video spokesman Anton Panteleyev, Vedomosti reported.

Industry sources said that at least 1,000 units of Surface were imported for initial sales through official channels.

In comparison, sales of the Apple iPad2 began in May 2011, and the top 7 retail chains each received 4,000 units. Sources at retail chains said at the time that the first delivery of iPads was sold out within three hours of the start of sales.

Surface is Microsoft's attempt to enter the lucrative tablet computer market dominated by Apple iPad and devices running the Google Android operating system.

The tablet sells for 20,990 to 27,990 rubles ($675 to $900) depending on its configuration. Buyers can choose between 32GB or 64GB version and select a Touch Cover — a magnetic screen cover with a built in keyboard as an add-on, Vedomosti reported.

While one of the main selling points is the tablet's compatibility with Windows Office software programs such as Word or Excel, the version launched in Russia last week comes with Windows RT, a scaled-down version of the Windows 8 operating system that can only run built-in apps and apps downloaded from the Windows Store.

The Surface Pro is a more powerful version running Windows 8, but there is no information about when it will debut here. The model is expected to attract business users who will be able to install bespoke software and other Microsoft programs they may already have.

"I am waiting for a tablet that runs Windows 8," says Oksana Mironova, an associate professor at Tambov State University. "I am a busy person and I have no time or desire to learn new software. With Windows 8, I'll be able to transfer files from my desktop computer and edit them on my way to work. Compatibility of the tablet with my existing software is very important to me."

Microsoft is using Surface RT to test the market in Russia, Panteleyev said. With time and clever marketing, Microsoft is capable of winning 10 percent of the tablet computer market, he added.

Euroset estimates a total of 1.5 million tablets were sold in Russia in the last quarter of 2012, 79 percent running the Android operating system and 21 percent running Apple iOS.

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Original url:
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