Beautiful Microsoft tablet let down by software gaps: reviewers

(Reuters) - Tech bloggers and other reviewers praised Microsoft Corp's new Surface RT tablet for beautiful design but said a shortage of applications and a slow operating system meant the result was heartbreak for users.

Microsoft begins selling the Surface on Friday, joining the fight in a tablet market dominated by Apple Inc's iPads and devices using Google Inc's Android system.

Reviewers given the product early to play with it said its first version paled in comparison with the iPad [1].

Matt Burns of TechCrunch said the tablet was great and the Windows RT operating system showed promise, but he still was not keen.

"There are simply more mature options available right now," he wrote. (r.reuters.com/tes53t [2])

Similarly, Sam Biddle of Gizmodo, a technology website, said Surface had fantastic potential but he was sharply critical of the operating system, Windows RT, saying it was underpowered, lacked functionality.

"While potential is worth your attention, it's not worth your paycheck. Surface RT gets so many things right, and pulls so many good things together into one package. But it is undercooked," he wrote. (r.reuters.com/xes53t [3])

Microsoft's Windows 8 operating system, also available on tablets, had the full range of Windows apps but Windows RT does not, and lacks compatibility with older software, Vincent Nguyen at Slashgear said. (r.reuters.com/pus53t [4])

"Microsoft hasn't done the best job explaining the differences, and many consumers are likely to buy RT only to find out they don't have the full functionality of Windows 8," added CNET's Shara Tibken. (r.reuters.com/nus53t [5])

Microsoft has said it expects to have 100,000 apps in place for the tablet by January, whereas Apple has 275,000 iPad apps available now and its tablet also runs many more iPhone apps.

"Microsoft says there will be thousands of apps at launch, with a constant stream of more coming, but its apps offerings pale next to the number Apple has made available for the iPad," Edward Baig at USA Today wrote. (r.reuters.com/kus53t [6])

Wall Street Journal's Walt Mossberg praised the availability of Microsoft Office apps and optional keyboards.

"If you can live with its tiny number of third-party apps, and somewhat disappointing battery life, it may give you the productivity some miss in other tablets," he said. (r.reuters.com/jus53t [7])

But Wired reviewer Mathew Honan warned that the tablet would not turn heads.

"Nobody asked me about my Surface. I tried flashing it all over the place. But despite my best efforts, no one seemed curious," Honan wrote. (r.reuters.com/ses53t [8])

"The only person to comment on it was a TSA agent at the Seattle airport, who told me I didn't need to take my iPad out of my bag."

(Reporting by Supantha Mukherjee; Editing by Rodney Joyce)

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