

Nokia phone's potent camera is bid to regain share

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NEW YORK (AP) — One-time cellphone powerhouse Nokia Corp. is hoping to lure people back from iPhones and Android phones with a powerful smartphone camera that tops many point-and-shoot imaging devices.

The new Nokia Lumia 1020 phone is packed with innovations designed to provide sharp images, even in low light. With the phone's 41-megapixel sensor and image-stabilizing technology, both rare in smartphones, you're less likely to get blurry shots at night or indoors. You can also zoom in to an image and pick up details that even the naked eye will miss.

Although more expensive cameras with superior lenses can take better images, those cameras aren't always with you. Nokia said the Lumia 1020 gives people the ability to take good pictures with a device they always carry.

Nokia said its new flagship phone will change how people take pictures, and marketing executive Chris Weber boasted that it will make point-and-shoot cameras obsolete.

But whether a good camera is enough to lure customers remains to be seen.

AT&T will offer the Lumia 1020 in the U.S. for \$300 with a two-year service agreement. That's \$100 or \$200 higher than what phones typically sell for. Nokia is counting on customers willing to pay more for a phone that does more.

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The phone runs Microsoft's Windows Phone system, which is far behind the iPhone and Android devices in usage. Although Nokia, AT&T Inc. and Microsoft Corp. are planning a large marketing push in the U.S., no amount of marketing can overcome the fact that the Windows system still doesn't have as many apps from outside parties as the iPhone and Android devices.

Tony Cripps, principal device analyst at the research firm Ovum, said Nokia "may still have work to do to convince prospective buyers to sacrifice favorite apps for superior imaging." He said that leading rival devices such as Apple's iPhone 5 and Samsung's Galaxy S4 "effectively sell themselves, (but) the case for selecting the Lumia 1020 is less clear cut."

The Lumia 1020 will be available in the U.S. on July 26, with advance orders to begin July 16. Nokia said the phone will expand to China and Europe by September. Other markets are planned later.

Nokia reigned as the leading phone maker for 14 years, until early last year when Samsung Electronics Co. took the top spot. Among smartphones, the lucrative business for phone makers, Nokia doesn't even rank in research firm IDC's top 5. In recent years, the Finnish company has been losing share to high-end devices such as the iPhone and various Android phones as well as cheaper devices from Asian manufacturers such as ZTE.

Nokia has partnered with Microsoft and its Windows system in hopes of recapturing market share, but none of the new Windows phones have been hits. Weber said he believes the new camera will get people looking at Nokia and Windows phones again.

The camera's 41-megapixel resolution is far higher than the iPhone 5's 8 megapixels and the Galaxy S4's 13 megapixels. Even point-and-shoot cameras and more expensive ones with interchangeable lenses often don't go as high as the Lumia 1020. More pixels mean more sensors for capturing the light that forms an image.

But the number of megapixels is just part of the story. Camera sensors have a certain amount of sensitivity known as ISO. The higher the number, the better the shot in low light. The Lumia 1020 can be set as high as ISO 3200, which is higher than the typical camera phone. The camera also comes with image-stabilization technology to compensate for shaky hands. Most phones don't have that, meaning shutters can't be open as long without images starting to blur. A longer open shutter means more light can come in, allowing for decent shots in low light.

The Lumia 1020 won't replace digital cameras with interchangeable lenses, known as DSLRs, even if its megapixel resolution is higher. For one thing, the Lumia 1020 lacks a real zoom lens; the zoom it offers is essentially blowing up the image. By contrast, DSLRs with a telephoto lens can let you take close-up shots from afar. The Lumia 1020 also lacks a setting for aperture, or how wide the lens is opened to let in light. Changing the aperture can affect how much of your image is in focus.

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To make photos on the Lumia 1020 easier to share, the camera actually records two versions of each image. The first is in full resolution, which you can use to zoom in or crop, or download to a computer to make large prints. A smaller version, equivalent to 5 megapixels, is also produced. That's the one you can use to post on Facebook or Instagram without eating too much of your cellular data plan. The U.S. version syncs with Microsoft's SkyDrive and AT&T's Locker storage services. Otherwise, the 32 gigabytes of storage on the device will fill up in no time.

The Lumia 1020 isn't Nokia's first 41-megapixel phone. Its 808 PureView phone last year had the feature, too. But that phone lacks the image-stabilization technology introduced later in the year with the Lumia 920. The new phone combines the two in a shell that is made to resemble a camera. It comes in yellow, white or black.

Nokia is also selling a Camera Grip attachment for \$79, offering extended battery life and a case that makes you feel as if you're holding a regular point-and-shoot camera. With the Grip, you'll also be able to attach the phone to a tripod.

The phone's display measures 4.5 inches diagonally, which is larger than the iPhone's, but smaller than those on leading Android phones. At 332 pixels per inch, the display resolution is comparable to the iPhone 5, but lags those of several Android phones.

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