

# iPad rides hype to change the face of the game

Companies, developers looking to develop applications for device; thousands expected to snap it up

Reports by  
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[SINGAPORE] There's a new kid on the block, and being online will never be the same again. Apple's iPad will finally be available in Singapore from tomorrow and has been hyped as a game changer.

The iPad heralds the first wave of what analysts call media tablets. IT research agency IDC reckons that by the end of this year as many as 300,000 tablets – of which an overwhelming number will be iPads – would be sold in Singapore.

Waves of change are underway. Local bank OCBC will announce iPad specific applications today. Other banks, such as Stanchart and DBS, already have iPhone applications that can be tweaked for the iPad.

According to the latest interactive digital media flash study by Deloitte, Singapore's mobile media sector grew by over 20 per cent last year, largely driven by local companies, said Michael Yap, executive director at the Interactive Digital Media R&D Programme Office. "We can definitely expect our Singaporean companies to be rolling out new applications and services to leverage on the iPad as a new category of device."

Craig Skinner, a senior consultant with research

agency Ovum, expects initial local demand for the device will be high. Singaporeans had flocked to buy the iPhone.

And unlike the iPhone – which was available at first from only one Singapore Telecom outlet, the iPad will be sold by the 30-odd Apple re-sellers across the Island.

In response to a phone inquiry from BT, a salesperson at an Apple store in a Best Denki outlet said there have been a lot of inquiries from customers about when the store will start selling the device. Many buyers could come from Malaysia and Indonesia, where the iPad is not yet available.

Apple announced earlier this week that the iPad will be available in various configurations in both WiFi and 3G versions, at prices from \$728 to \$1,228.

One sector that is taking a close look at the entire iPad-media tablet phenomenon is the media and publishing industry.

According to Ovum's Mr Skinner, the iPad will serve as a catalyst both for media and publishing industry to develop new controlled content distribution channels and for the development of the whole touch-screen tablet eco-system. "However, the financial impact on the media and publishing and advertising industries will



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be low in the short to medium term," he said.

IDC's Claus Mortensen observes the online media and advertising industries will seek to use the iPad launch as a pretext to push their services.

"So we'll undoubtedly see a lot of buzz in the wake of the iPad, but 'real' impact will only happen once we have seen the effects of the iPad and similar devices in the usage patterns of consumers – and this will

take a bit of time," said Mr Mortensen, who is IDC's principal for the digital marketplace and new media.

OgilvyOne's Barney Loehnis reckons the iPad will change the way that some publishers view the digital option.

"Publishers should embrace the iPad as an opportunity to test new experiences, deploy richer, deeper content and test new revenue and advertising models," says Mr Loehnis, who

is OgilvyOne Asia-Pacific's digital leader.

Ovum's Mr Skinner says that in Australia – where the iPad was launched at the end of May – the media and publishing industry is still experimenting with providing specific content applications.

The media and publishing industry is facing a decline of both circulation and advertising revenue, he pointed out. But he says that even based on optimis-

tic forecasts, the iPad and similar devices will take years to reach levels that are financially significant for publishers, and the media marketplace is likely to become very crowded.

"Publishers should not focus solely on the iPad, but should develop a multi-platform strategy encompassing print, Web, mobile Web, smartphone apps, social networks, tablets, e-readers and TVs," he said.

OgilvyOne's Mr Loehnis feels the iPad is a welcome entrant to the publishing scene because it gives consumers the option to buy the same content digitally or physically, depending on the experience they are looking for.

"There will come a time in the near future when the printed edition will come at a premium, not a discount," he said. "Once the mass moves to digital, it will be easier to appreciate the true essence of what is intrinsically great about the physical editions of printed media."

  
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