Pressure sensitive grip for smart phones coming soon

By Karthik Kumar
LAYOUT EDITOR

Imagine walking with your smartphone on a cold winter day in Chicago and finding your way in this huge metropolis. One has to remove his gloves constantly and operate the touch screen in the extreme cold. Also imagine standing in a CTA train or bus which is fully crowded and using one hand to steady yourself and the other to operate the smart phone.

This new Grip UI makes that one-handed interaction easier by adding pressure sensors to the left and right edges of a phone. NTT DoCoMo has launched smart phones having this new user interface and showcasing it at CEATEC (Combined Exhibition of Advanced Technologies).These phones have a standard touch screen, but the users can also launch different apps by gripping the phone at different locations, i.e. these sensors react when they are squeezed. These smart phones are programmed to identify a number of predefined "squeeze gestures" that respond to amount of pressure applied at varying locations on the sides of the smartphone.

Now with a growing demand for longer, wider phones, or so-called Phablets, make the single-handed interaction very difficult. While using modern phones it becomes difficult for the user to move his fingers while maintaining a grip on the handset. Therefore, to make the single handed interaction simpler, DoCoMo is looking into adding new ways to control smartphones with this new interface.

There are a few technical issues to be worked out, like building a new sensor which can differentiate between the fingers used when they are placed across the device and be able to detect false positives and unintentional squeezes.

It would certainly be necessary for the R&D team to include the option of individual device calibration as it will increase the usability factor and also develop an algorithm which could detect grip pulses which will be more effective when compared to using long versus short grips for various commands.

But this new interface could open new avenues for user control. Detecting the differing pressure with the help of sensors that are placed the whole length of the phone could lead to an expansion in programming a number of different commands.

Also for people with certain handicaps this new interface allows them to take full advantage of mobile device and presents a new option for game and program control.

Microsoft Surface Tablet previews large memory, lightweight build

By Rohit Vandanapu
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Look who's in the tablet market, increasing the rivalry. The top elite company, Microsoft, has announced its tablet "Microsoft Surface" to be launched to the market on October 26, 2012. It is an upcoming series of tablets to be available in two distinct versions: one with Windows RT and another with Windows 8 Pro.

Windows RT is effectively the light version of Windows 8, as it does not have the desktop version of Windows 8, which runs only the apps offered by the Windows app store and Microsoft Office. Windows RT is an upcoming version of the Windows 8 operating system, and is being used for devices such as tablets. It runs only on the software available through Windows Store or the one in Windows RT. The RT acronym does not officially have an explanation.

A few months after the launch of the Microsoft Surface Windows RT tablet, the Windows 8 Pro tablet will be available in the market which will completely run on the Windows 8 operating system.

The following are the tech specifications for the tablets.
Processor:

This is the vital part of the system. Windows RT runs a Nvidia Tegra 3 CPU while the Surface Pro runs on Intel third generation Core iCPU.
Screen:

The RT version of the tablet will have 1,366*768 screen, while the Surface Pro version will have at least 1,980*1,080 pixels. The screen size for both the tablets is 10.6-inch.

The screen's 16:9 aspect ratio is identical to that of HDTV, which implies all entertainment can be viewed in full screen with no stretching or letterboxing. It does have two digitizers: one for touch and the other one for digital ink. As long as the stylus is being used, the touch sensor will be off so that there are no discrepancies.
Covers:

There are two types of cover and keyboard attachments: Touch cover and Type cover. Both the covers are attached magnetically to the edge of the tablet and can act as either a cover for the screen or a keyboard. It allows one to type comfortably.
Camera:

Both the versions of the Surface have front and rear HD cameras.
Weight:

Surface RT weighs 23.85 ounces while Surface Pro weighs 31.85 ounces.

Thickness & Battery:

Surface RT is 9.3mm thick and Surface Pro is 13.8mm thick.
Storage Capacity:

Surface RT version offers storage capacity of 32GB and 64GB while the Surface Pro offers 64GB and 128GB.
Price:

The Windows RT 32GB starts from $499 which is slightly a higher price than an average new tablet.

Image courtesy of microsoft.com

Please Recycle

Rechargeable Batteries

Regular batteries can now be disposed of in the trash!

Single-use batteries are no longer considered household hazardous waste and are safe to landfill - they were once made with mercury but that was discontinued as of 1997. The City of Chicago has discontinued their battery recycling program. Rechargeable batteries on the other hand still contain materials that are hazardous if landfilled and should be collected and recycled separately.

Due to this change, we're updating the battery recycling bins on campus. You can now throw away your normal alkaline batteries in the trash. There is currently a bin set up in Galvin Library near the stairs where you can throw away all rechargeable batteries. Those include batteries from: Cell phones, electric shavers, electric toothbrushes..basically anything you would plug in to reuse.

Look for this updated signage around the bins!

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