

Looking ahead at the smartphone market

By  Michelle Wynne

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If 2020 has shown us anything, it's that change and disruption are a constant. The effects of the global coronavirus pandemic led to unprecedented shifts in the way we live, work, learn and transact - with a widespread move online and digital platforms.



Michelle Wynne, Head of Marketing - Sub Sahara Africa at HMD Global

These changes have undoubtedly impacted the smartphone space and will continue as an already high mobile penetration grows. Research indicates the number of mobile connections in South Africa was equivalent to 176% of the population, equating to 103.5 million mobile connections. With over 36 million able to access the internet, and 94% of internet users aged between 16 and 64 own a smartphones.

The statistics reflect the growing role that smartphones play in an ever-shifting world where technology acts as an enabler, making it critical to look at the trends that will be front and centre going into 2021:

- **Trust, privacy and security are foremost in the public consciousness like never before**

Safety and security are going to play a pivotal role in a post-Covid reality where offerings are going to be digital-first. Security needs to be the cornerstone of any device – particularly as the rate of cybercrime continues to grow.

South Africa has proven to be especially vulnerable to attack, with the third-highest number of victims globally last year, costing an overall R2.2 billion. Hackers also strike every 39 seconds – an average of 2,244 times a day – showing the critical need for security to underpin every function and capability.

In line with this, HMD Global, is amongst the top Android brands, delivering monthly security updates for three years and operating system updates for two years. Committed to full transparency, HMD Global plans to commence upgrading its Android 11-ready portfolio to the latest Android OS in Q4 2020 with the newly-available Nokia 8.3 5G-ready and the Nokia 5.3 devices.

This is a commitment across our portfolio regardless of price points and launch dates, that we are going to continue to invest in heavily as security becomes ever more critical,” says Wynne.

- **Accelerating 5G smartphone accessibility and popularity**

5G has, of course, been an up-and-coming trend since 2018, but it is now well and truly on the radar.

A recent study showed that worldwide shipments of smartphones grew in the second quarter of 2020, and that 5G smartphones now account for more than 10% of shipments around the world; and the estimated global revenue is approximately 20% of all smartphone sales.

This shows 5G's continued growth and increasing popularity, and HMD Global's expanded portfolio range incorporates this latest technology. As an example, the newly launched Nokia 8.3 5G-ready smartphone is designed to support multiple and evolving 5G network deployments, with support for both standalone and non-standalone 5G combinations. Packed with the Qualcomm Snapdragon 765G modular Platform with the Snapdragon X52 5G Modern-RF is perfectly optimised for 5G. This also means the Nokia 8.3 5G will always be ready for what's next, supporting the largest number of 5G New Radio bands yet. The handset is also the new 00 agent smartphone of choice featured in the upcoming James Bond movie *No Time to Die*.

These 5G-ready phones are testament to our commitment to blend a number of firsts with affordability, usability and reliability in mind.

- **Value for money leads the way**

We know that price and value is the most important deciding factors when it comes to a phone purchase in South Africa. Closely followed by battery life and screen size; South Africans will continue to look for value-for money smartphones that offer a quality experience.

Change and uncertainty have undoubtedly become a defining feature of 2020, and this looks set to continue into 2021. The good news is that this will drive greater levels of innovation, which will certainly be seen in the smartphone space.

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