

New Nokia phone no standout, but worth a look

February 3 2012, By Troy Wolverton



Nokia's Lumia 710 Windows Phone

The first of Nokia's new generation of smartphones isn't flashy and certainly isn't an iPhone killer. But it's a nice device, and at \$40 with a two-year contract, a bargain.

Nokia and Microsoft, erstwhile big players in the U.S. [mobile market](#),

have joined forces to get back in the game.

A little more than a year ago, Microsoft launched a new mobile operating system called Windows Phone 7 to replace its aging Windows Mobile software. Then last February, the world's largest [phone manufacturer](#) announced that it would abandon Symbian, its longtime smartphone operating system, and adopt Windows Phone 7 in its place.

Windows Phone 7 devices have drawn little interest from consumers to date, but Microsoft hopes Nokia can help change that. The first Nokia Windows Phone 7 devices started hitting store shelves around the globe last fall and hit American shores earlier this month when T-Mobile began selling the Lumia 710.

I got an early glimpse at the Lumia 710 in October and wasn't impressed. But after getting to play with it over the past several weeks, I've warmed up to it. It's an easy-to-use, quick and light smartphone.

The first thing you'll notice about the Lumia 710 is that, in an age of jumbo-sized screens and elegant designs, it's a modest device. It's about the same size and shape as Apple's 2-year-old iPhone 3GS, with a similarly curved back and a plastic case.

I'm a big fan of phones of this size. They're easy to fit in a pocket or hold in your hand. While the Lumia 710's plastic case feels a bit cheap, it makes the device lighter.

At first glance, the Lumia's 710 technical specs don't match up well with the latest and greatest phones from Apple or Google's Android partners. It only has a single-core processor, only 512 megabytes of memory, just 8 gigabytes of storage and no memory card slot that would allow users to supplement its storage. By comparison, the latest Android smartphones have dual and even quad-core processors and the iPhone 4S has as much

as 64-gigabytes of storage.

But this nominal difference means much less in practice. The Lumia 710 is fast and responsive. In my informal tests, it seemed to launch and switch between apps more quickly than many of the dual-core Android devices I've used. It also has stamina - I typically could use it a full day without it needing an extra charge.

The storage capacity limits the amount of music, movies, documents and apps you can keep on the device. But this limitation is mitigated by the additional 25 gigabytes of storage Microsoft offers Windows Phone 7 users on its servers in the cloud. Users can automatically store Office documents on the so-called SkyDrive and have their pictures and videos automatically uploaded to it.

One of the stronger points of the Lumia 710 is the Windows Phone 7 software. Compared with Android, Windows Phone 7 is generally a much more visually appealing and intuitive operating system. While I hesitate to recommend Android devices to those new to smartphones because of the operating system's complexity, I don't have the same reservations about Windows Phone 7. One exceptional feature of the software is its built-in Bing search application, which allows users to scan bar codes, identify music, find local events and search the Web and local business at the same time.

Unfortunately, other than Windows Phone 7, there's nothing terribly exciting about the Lumia 710. It doesn't have a front-facing camera or a speech-recognition system as sophisticated as the iPhone's Siri. It does have a rear-facing camera, but it's slow, does a poor job in low light and has a 5-megapixel resolution that is pedestrian and grainy by today's standards.

While I generally liked the Lumia's 710 physical design, I didn't like its

buttons. I often had to press its power button several times to wake it up. Conversely, its camera button seemed overly sensitive; I frequently found myself in the camera app without wanting to be there.

But the biggest shortcoming of the Lumia 710 is, ironically enough, the same thing that is best about it - Windows Phone 7. While the software is easier and more fun to use than Android, it's lacking in apps and some capabilities.

Microsoft says there are now 50,000 apps available for Windows Phone 7, and you can find many of the most popular mobile programs for it. But you'll find 10 times as many apps for the iPhone and eight times as many for Android devices. Among the applications you can't get for Windows Phone 7 are Pandora, Instagram, the game "Infinity Blade" and, amazingly enough, Skype, which is also owned by Microsoft.

Beyond the app gap, Windows Phone 7 also comes up short on Web browsing. A growing number of websites now use HTML5, the latest version of the code used to design Web pages and applications.

Unfortunately, [Windows Phone](#) 7's Internet Explorer browser does a poor job of supporting HTML5 compared to the browsers in the [iPhone](#) and Android devices.

As a result, some buttons and pages won't work right, some videos won't play and some mobile-oriented sites won't load at all. The problems don't affect all sites but are frustrating when you encounter them.

Despite such issues, the Lumia 710 is well worth considering. It's not a standout device, but it's not a bad one-and its price is just right.

NOKIA LUMIA 710 SMARTPHONE:

-Likes: Fast and responsive; [operating system](#) is intuitive and easy to use; ideal size and weight; inexpensive

-Dislikes: Relatively few apps available; browser doesn't support some Web apps, videos or pages; no standout features; mediocre camera does a poor job in low light

-Web: nokia.com, t-mobile.com

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