

Huawei Crisis: 'Think Global, Act Local' Takes On New Meaning

America's trade war with China means US firm Google has indefinitely suspended its business relationship with Chinese smartphone brand Huawei. This means Huawei will no longer be able to offer new customers access to Google's Android operating system while current Huawei customers will not be able to download future Android system updates.

As the local mobile content and applications industry representative body, South Africa's Wireless Application Service Providers' Association (WASPA) is keen to help educate consumers here on the impact of Google's move and propose future solutions for Africa.

According to Michiel Huisamen, WASPA Board Member: "Consumers cannot return their Huawei phones to local network operators or retailers because these firms are protected by the legal concept of 'force major' which simply means sellers cannot be held liable for external events out of their immediate control."

However, there is some glimmer of hope on the horizon for local mobile users wanting to continue enjoying WASPA's member-developed content and applications on their Huawei smartphones.

Firstly, Huawei has been granted some reprieve in the form of a three-month Android license. Secondly, Huawei has been refining its own operating system for the past several years. Thirdly, Google has confirmed that all Huawei devices currently in use will still have access to Google Play which means continued app updates.

Finally, Huawei could update all existing phones to the open source version of Android which is not impacted by the trade war between the US and China. Unfortunately, apps like GMail, YouTube and Google Maps would then only be available via web browser.

Huawei users in South Africa should rest assured - for now - that the company will continue to provide after-sales service on its handsets. Security and app updates will also continue to be pushed out to Huawei smartphones to at least 19 August 2019.

On long-term solutions to the current Huawei quandary, and similar future ones like it, WASPA believes local mobile users should continue to enjoy global mobile technology options, while also supporting the development of African-made mobile technology.

Should further information be required; Vodacom, MTN and Cell C Customer Care are all available on 135 dialed from cellphones connected to their respective mobile networks. Telkom Mobile Customer Care can be reached on 180 dialed from a Telkom mobile handset.