

Windows, OS X, Ubuntu: maturity or stagnation?

By *srlinuxx*

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Which is the best operating system ? Windows 7, OS X 10.6 or Ubuntu 9.10? The question is almost pointless. Beneath their skins, the operating systems are remarkably similar.

Given the same hardware platforms, the same jobs to do and many of the same applications, it is no wonder they have converged. There is no job any of them can do that the others cannot, beyond the limitations set by marketing, rather than technical, considerations.

Such stability and commonality are a boon for users, who can switch between platforms and be productive with a minimum of fuss. But it is a poor environment for genuine innovation: when marketing is the primary differentiator, we should expect it to be the area that gets most attention. True technological advances are harder to justify.

Which wouldn't be so bad, were there no real problems left to fix on the desktop. Yet there are, and they need to be fixed. They are best described as the four 'tees' ? usability, reliability, mobility and security.

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