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Samsung, Sony Ericsson Begin Barcelona Beauty Contest

By Matthew Campbell and Diana ben-Aaron - Feb 14, 2011

Samsung Electronics Co. and Sony Ericsson Mobile Communications kicked off a parade of product unveilings at Barcelona's Mobile World Congress with new smartphones and tablets on [Google Inc.](#)'s Android software.

The South Korean company rolled out an update of its Galaxy S smartphone and a larger version of its Galaxy Tab tablet computer, both devices aimed at challenging similar formats from [Apple Inc.](#) Sony Ericsson Chief Executive Officer Bert Nordberg said the Swedish-Japanese joint venture will begin shipping its first Android handset with PlayStation gaming capabilities.

Samsung, Sony Ericsson, and rivals like HTC Corp. are jostling for leadership in the surging market for smartphones, tablets and their associated applications. Apple's iPhone and devices running Android together accounted for about 53 percent of smartphone sales worldwide last year, according to Gartner Inc., crowding out competing offerings from companies including [Nokia Oyj](#) and BlackBerry-maker Research In Motion Ltd.

"It is very clear at this point that Android is dominating the market and everyone is trying to offer a slightly different experience and to differentiate themselves," said Francisco Jeronimo, an analyst at IDC in [London](#). "At the high end, a lot of devices offer similar features at this point."

Music Downloads

Samsung and Sony Ericsson's rollouts, which came the day before the official start of the Barcelona industry conference, also reflect device-makers' ambition to add new mobile services, matching the success of Apple's iTunes music and entertainment portal. Samsung said it will introduce a series of "integrated mobile applications" for downloading music, books, and games, while Sony Ericsson is attempting to capitalize on the popularity of parent [Sony Corp.](#)'s PlayStation gaming console.

While Cupertino, California-based Apple isn't attending the Barcelona event, the success of its iPhone and iPad devices is dictating rival manufacturers' agendas. The 10-inch tablet unveiled by Samsung today, the Galaxy Tab 10.1, will compete more directly with Apple's similarly sized iPad than the 7-inch existing Galaxy Tab.

[LG Electronics Inc.](#) and [ZTE Corp.](#) today revealed new designs for touch-screen smartphones and

tablets, with individual twists. The Korean company, which is looking to turn around a money-losing mobile division, will sell a phone that allows users to view and record 3-D images, along with a tablet based on its Optimus smartphone design.

‘Backup Choice’

ZTE, better known as a supplier of network hardware, is planning Android tablets and phones targeted at mid-level consumers, spreading a product category currently dominated by devices costing as much as \$600. While the company is focused for now on Google’s Android, Microsoft Corp.’s Windows Phone 7 operating system could be a “backup choice” for future devices, executive vice president He Shiyu said at a press conference.

To drum up buzz at its Galaxy event, held atop Barcelona’s Montjuic mountain, Samsung hired an orchestra from London’s [Royal Academy](#) of Music, and put executives on stage from technology companies including [Cisco Systems Inc.](#) and SAP AG’s Sybase unit to showcase its devices.

Tablets running Android software boosted their share of the global market almost 10-fold in the fourth quarter, researcher [Strategy Analytics](#) said on Jan. 31. Android’s attractiveness of mobile application developers is pushing even the creators of rival operating systems to ensure compatibility.

Research In Motion, whose co-founder Jim Balsillie is slated to speak in Barcelona on Feb. 16, is working on software to allow its pending Playbook tablet to run Android applications, giving buyers access to some 130,000 current apps, three people familiar with the situation said on Feb. 10. Apple’s iTunes App Store offers about 300,000 apps.

To contact the reporter on this story: Matthew Campbell in [Barcelona](#) via mcampbell39@bloomberg.net; Diana ben-Aaron in Barcelona at dbenaaron1@bloomberg.net

To contact the editor responsible for this story: Vidya Root at vroot@bloomberg.net