

Computer giant Acer launches mobile phones in Asia

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A man browses through the Acer M900 smartphone during its launch in Singapore. Taiwan-based computer giant Acer launched a series of advanced mobile phones for the Asia-Pacific region, ramping up its expansion into the wireless communication market.

Taiwan-based computer giant Acer on Wednesday launched a series of advanced mobile phones for the Asia-Pacific region, ramping up its expansion into the wireless communication market.

Company executives said Acer was banking on its experience as a leading computer brand to gain a share of the lucrative market for "smartphones" -- feature-packed devices with multi-media functions including [web surfing](#).

The unveiling of the products here will be followed by similar launches

in Southeast [Asia](#), Hong Kong, Taiwan, India, Australia and China, they said.

It came two months after the company announced a move into the [mobile phone market](#) in February at an industry event in Barcelona.

Best known for its laptops, Acer said its smartphones come equipped with powerful processing and memory capabilities.

"We are facing a very large opportunity here," said Roger Yuen, Asia Pacific vice president for Acer's smart hand-held device business group.

About 200 million smartphones are sold each year and Acer believes the market should grow at 15 percent annually in the next five years.

"Our ambition is to be among the top five smartphone vendors in the world in the next three years," Yuen said.

Finland's Nokia leads the market for smartphones, followed by Canada's Research in Motion, which makes the popular Blackberry, and California-based Apple which boasts the [iPhone](#), industry research firm Gartner has said.

Other laptop makers are joining the fray, with Toshiba already manufacturing handsets, and there are rumours that US-based Dell is preparing to launch its own range.

One of the models Acer unveiled on Wednesday is the DX900, which has a dual SIM card function and comes with a 3.0 megapixel camera.

Another model, the DX650, is uniquely designed to be used on both sides, featuring a touch screen panel on one side and a keypad on the reverse.

Prices will range between 599 and 799 Singapore dollars (397-530 US). In all, five models will be unveiled in the first half of this year.

In the second half, Acer will roll out three more models geared for the mass market, meaning they will be cheaper but still contain multi-media functions, the company said.

"One of our goals in [Acer](#) is really to introduce smartphones that are more and more affordable," Yuen told AFP after the launch.

With the price gap narrowing, more people are expected to switch to from regular cellphones to smartphones, he added.

China and India are likely to drive demand in Asia, Yuen said.

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