

Japan's Fujitsu says it made first 'iPad'

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Apple's new tablet PC is not the first product to be called the "iPad" -- Fujitsu said its US subsidiary launched an "iPad" mobile device (pictured) in 2002.

Apple's new tablet PC is not the first product to be called the "iPad". Japan's Fujitsu says it launched one years ago, and the name has also been used for small engines and even bra inserts.

Amid the hype about Apple's latest offering, the device has been hailed as an "iPhone on steroids" and a "Kindle killer" that will upstage electronic book readers, but also mocked on chatrooms for evoking a feminine hygiene product.

Now it looks like Apple could have a [trademark](#) dispute on its hands.

[Fujitsu](#) Ltd. said its US subsidiary in 2002 launched the "[iPad](#)", a sleek handheld multimedia device with a 3.5-inch screen, used by retail store clerks to keep inventory data, scan barcodes and manage business

operations.

Fujitsu's device has an [Intel processor](#) and a Microsoft operating system and supports both Wi-fi and Bluetooth connections.

In 2003, Fujitsu's US arm made a trademark application for the "iPad" name with the US [Patent and Trademark Office](#), which is still pending and not yet registered, said Fujitsu spokesman Masao Sakamoto in Tokyo.

He said Fujitsu was yet to decide on how it may react to the launch of Apple's [tablet computer](#), saying: "As we are now sorting out the facts, we have not decided on what action we may take."

A possible feud between Apple and Fujitsu has sparked debate on Japanese chatrooms, with one observer proposing: "Let's apply for as many 'i' such-and-such names as possible! We'll make money in the future!!"

Apple has been embroiled in trademark disputes with other companies before, including Cisco Systems, which launched its "[iPhone](#)" before Apple. The two companies settled the dispute in 2007, agreeing to share the name.

Professor Teruyuki Inoue, an IT sector expert at Daito Bunka University, said the "iPad" issue is unlikely to turn into a full-blown legal battle.

"They will probably have talks to settle this, given that the customers for their products do not overlap, and for the sake of their business ties in the future," Inoue told AFP by telephone.

He said he was not surprised the two companies had doubled up on the name, saying: "Everybody can think of an easy name like 'iPad.' It's not

creative."

Indeed several other companies worldwide have had the same idea.

Germany's Siemens uses the trademark "iPad" for small engines and motors.

The Swiss-based microchip maker STMicroelectronics has reportedly also registered "IPAD", short for "Integrated Passive and Active Devices."

In Canada, the Ontario-based company Coconut Grove Pads Inc. has since 2007 made a line of bra inserts and shoulder pads called the "iPad", according to an online report by the Globe and Mail daily.

A Japanese company that makes a product of the same name -- pronounced "ai pad" when transcribed from the Japanese -- is Awaji-Tec, a manufacturer of adult nappies with a high-tech twist.

The company says its nappies feature an electronic device that can send a signal to a remote caregiver when it needs to be changed.

"We have been selling this elderly care product for the past five years, said Yasuaki Mori, who works at Awaji-Tec's special sensors division. "It would be regrettable if people thought we had copied the name."

Meanwhile in China, a company has used a different name -- the "P88" -- for an iPad look-alike, with a slightly larger screen, faster processor and larger memory but battery life of only 1.5 hours compared to the iPad's 10 hours.

It marks a new milestone by Chinese manufacturers -- cloning a product before it had even been announced -- mused Shanghaiist.com, a

Shanghai city blog, and Shanzhai.com, a tech blog dedicated to Chinese copies.

But the makers of the P88, Shenzhen Great Loong Brother Industrial Co., said Apple appeared to be the copycats.

"We don't understand. Why did they make the same thing as us?" Huang Xiaofang, an executive at the company, told AFP. "We launched it earlier."

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