

South Korean firms prepare to fight Apple onslaught

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A customer tries out an iPad in New Zealand at an Apple store in Auckland, July 2010. South Korean firms said they would soon release tablet PCs to contend with the imminent arrival of Apple's iPad after the roaring success of the American firm's smartphones.

South Korean firms said Thursday they would soon release tablet PCs to contend with the imminent arrival of Apple's iPad after the roaring success of the American firm's smartphones.

Top mobile phone operator [SK Telecom](#) said it would launch the Galaxy Tab, a seven-inch touchscreen tablet from [Samsung Electronics](#) that is

smaller than the 9.7-inch iPad.

"We are aiming for a September release. We are also considering diverse tablet PCs at the moment," SK spokesman Kim Dae-Woong told AFP, adding that pricing and the exact release date had still to be decided.

Global computer and handset makers have scurried to respond to the success of Apple's tablet PCs, released in April. The US company sold more than three million iPads within less than three months of the product's release.

Apple's local distributor, KT Corp, said it had been in talks with the US company to offer the iPad in South Korea. Spokesman Lee In-Won said the release could be around early September.

The Galaxy Tab will be unveiled on September 2 at a trade show in Germany. Its local rival, [LG Electronics](#), has promised to release an Android-based tablet PC before December.

Tablet PCs feature bigger screens than smartphones and have no keyboards, instead employing touchscreens or stylus pens as input devices.

Apple distributor KT plans to introduce a low-end tablet PC before bringing the [iPad](#) into the tech-savvy country.

KT said it had sold one million iPhones, including about 880,000 of the iPhone 3 and 3GS, since their debut nine months earlier.

It has also received 212,000 pre-orders for the [iPhone](#) 4, reflecting its "through-the-roof popularity", spokesman Jin Byung-Kwon said.

South Korea's mobile phone market is one of the world's most vibrant,

with 45 million users in a population of 49 million. But smartphones have a relatively small share, implying huge growth potential. Since its launch in June, Samsung has sold more than 900,000 Galaxy S smartphones.

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