

Sony to launch PlayStation Vita in December

September 14 2011



A PlayStation Vita is seen being presented at a media briefing in Los Angeles, in June. The PS Vita features a five-inch (12.7 cm) multi-touch OLED (organic light emitting diode) screen with a pad on the back for "touch, grab, trace, push and pull" finger motions. The handset also has front and rear facing cameras.

Sony will release its next-generation PlayStation Vita games console in Japan on December 17, it said on Wednesday, as it looks to mount a fresh challenge to rivals including struggling Nintendo.

Sony had previously said the highly anticipated portable console will hit Japanese stores by the end of the year but will miss the key Christmas holiday shopping season in North America and Europe.

The new device is the latest step in Sony's drive to push its content through its game consoles, smartphones and tablet computers amid competition from Apple's iTunes and App store and hardware rivals such as Nintendo.

Its launch comes as both Sony's PlayStation and Nintendo's gaming models are under increasing pressure from products such as Apple's iPhone and iPad, onto which cheap or even free games can be quickly downloaded and played.

In Japan, the PlayStation Vita will sell for 24,980 yen (\$325) for the Wi-Fi version and 29,980 for the 3G model, which will be available in partnership with Japan's biggest mobile operator NTTDoCoMo.

In the United States, A PS Vita that connects to the Internet only using Wi-Fi will be priced at \$249, while a version featuring 3G connectivity will be priced at \$299 once available.

Analysts say Sony has spread the Vita's global release dates in an effort to ensure a sufficient number of games are available in each country to spur hardware sales, after Nintendo's 3DS suffered from a limited catalogue.

"The attractiveness of this console, which will allow the public to further expand their concept of videogaming, will depend mostly on the imagination of content creators," said Hiroshi Kawano, CEO of Sony Computer Entertainment, at a press conference in Tokyo Wednesday.



Sony Computer Entertainment Japan president Hiroshi Kawano presents the new portable videogame console "PlayStation Vita" at a news conference in Tokyo on September 14. Sony will release its next-generation Vita in Japan on December 17, it said, as it looks to mount a fresh challenge to rivals including struggling Nintendo.

Nintendo cut the price of its 3DS game console, which displays three dimensional graphics without the need for special glasses, by up to 40 percent after only six months due to weak sales.

The struggling gaming giant booked a net loss of 25.5 billion yen (\$327.9 million) for the April-June quarter and slashed its net profit forecast for the year to March 2012 by 82 percent.

On Tuesday it announced some upgrades to the device, a new pink version targeted at women and 30 new game titles to help drive hardware sales.

Sony on Wednesday said it had 100 new titles in the pipeline and will have 26 games available for the Vita on its Japan launch. The device and some games will be previewed at the upcoming Tokyo Game Show that begins Thursday.

The successor to the popular PSP (PlayStation Portable) that has sold 71.4 million units globally since its launch in late 2004, the Vita features an array of new functions.

The PS Vita features a five-inch (12.7 cm) multi-touch OLED (organic light emitting diode) screen with a pad on the back for "touch, grab, trace, push and pull" finger motions. The handset also has front and rear facing cameras.

Users will be able to use the device to watch videos, listen to music, connect to internet sites and social media networks such as Facebook and Twitter.

Its launch comes as Sony looks to increasingly monetise a vast catalogue of film, music and gaming content and give its hardware a competitive edge, say analysts.

In a major blow to that strategy, Sony was in April forced to temporarily suspend its online PlayStation Network and Qriocity music service after a huge data breach that saw personal data from more than 100 million accounts compromised.

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Citation: Sony to launch PlayStation Vita in December (2011, September 14) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2011-09-sony-playstation-vita-japan-december.html>

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