Samsung launches high-end tablets in iPad challenge

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A visitor walks past a logo of Samsung Electronics at the company's headquarters in Seoul on April 29, 2014

Samsung began selling a new line of high-end tablet computers Friday that aim directly at the market-leading Apple iPad.

The South Korean electronics giant said it was taking US Galaxy Tab S line which it called "Samsung's most premium line of tablets ever."

The devices offer similar specifications to the iPad Mini and iPad Air and will be sold starting at the same prices, $399 and $499.

The new S series steps up competition from Samsung, which up to now has been selling lower-cost devices.

"Building on the heritage of the Galaxy S smartphone line, the Galaxy Tab S line delivers on our commitment to bring meaningful innovation that our customers care most about," said Gregory Lee, president and chief executive of Samsung Telecommunications America.

"We know consumers want the best screen when purchasing a tablet, and as an undisputed leader in display technology, we've brought our industry-leading' Super AMOLED (active matrix organic light emitting diode) screen to the Tab S for an unrivaled viewing experience."

The Tab S will come in an 8.4 inch version, competing against the iPad Mini, and a 10.5 inch version that is similar to the iPad Air.

The company unveiled the new devices Thursday at a New York media event.

Samsung is the second largest produce of tablets, with some 22 percent of the global market in the first quarter of 2014, compared with 32.5 percent for Apple and its iPad, according to research firm IDC.

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