Samsung starts sales of $90 Tizen smartphone in India

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Samsung Electronics Co. started selling a $90 smartphone in India on Wednesday that runs on the company's Tizen software, its first major break from Google's Android operating system in the mobile phone market.

The Samsung Z1 went on sale for 5,700 rupees ($92), one of the cheapest phones that Samsung has launched.

With the Tizen operating system, Samsung is trying to lessen its dependence on Android software, which powers a majority of the South Korean company's smartphones including its flagship Galaxy series.

The smartphone is the latest to join the growing list of Samsung's Tizen family. Last year, Samsung launched a camera and smartwatches.

Samsung earlier this month said its Internet-connected televisions will use Tizen from this year, allowing the TVs to easily synchronize with Tizen mobile devices.

The Z1 smartphone was unveiled in June but its launch, promised in Russia and India and others, was postponed. The delays were seen as a setback to Samsung's efforts to have control over the content and services that are used on its devices.

Although Samsung is the world's largest maker of televisions and handsets, its software has not matched its hardware prowess. The

company has a history of withdrawing apps or services that received a big marketing push, including ending the short-lived mobile operating system Bada.

The first Tizen-based phone is easy to use "even for the first-time smartphone users," Samsung said in a statement. The company said a speedy boot time, quick access to apps and fast page loading during web surfing show the Tizen software's benefits.

The Z1 has a 4-inch display and 3.1 million megapixel camera. It is powered by a 1.2 gigahertz dual-core processor. The battery size is about half of Samsung's top-end smartphones.

Analysts believe Samsung will mainly use the Tizen OS in low-end smartphones for developing nations.

Strategy Analytics said in December that Tizen will remain a niche player, although it also predicted it would be one of the fastest-growing operating systems along with Firefox and Microsoft's Windows during the next six years.

Sales of the Z1 will affect whether Samsung gathers more developers to write apps for Tizen users, which is crucial for the future of the operating system. Samsung has promised developers 100 percent of revenues from the Tizen app store for one year as part of its effort to have more apps and content.

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