

Japan's NTT DoCoMo to launch Xperia smart phone

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Models show off the new smart phone "Xperia" by Sony Ericsson Mobile Communications in Tokyo. Japan's top mobile phone operator NTT DoCoMo Inc. Thursday said it will launch Sony Ericsson's Xperia smart phone in April, in a direct challenge to heavyweight Apple's iPhone handsets.

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With the touchscreen Xperia, a model that the Japanese-Swedish enterprise will introduce globally in the first quarter, [NTT DoCoMo](http://www.nttdocomo.com) hopes to catch up with its smart phone rivals in Japan's already saturated market.

"The company will further strengthen its promotion of [smart phones](#) as we launch Xperia in April," NTT DoCoMo president Ryuji Yamada said. "This is a model that we can call the nouvelle entertainment machine. With this handset, you can handle such data as music, pictures and movies as you like."

Xperia, based on Google-backed Android operating systems, has a four-inch wide touchscreen display and comes with applications for seamless data control, including a [face recognition](#) function which enables users to search for a contact by simply tapping on the person's face in a group photo.

The Japanese mobile company will also set up a DoCoMo Market webstore, similar to the Apple's iTunes store, from which users can purchase Android-based applications selected for Japanese consumers.

NTT DoCoMo pioneered third-generation cellphones but has seen rivals chip away at its lead through aggressive promotions, notably of the iPhone carried by Japan's number three cellphone operator, Softbank.

NTT DoCoMo has launched the country's first Android-based smart phone, the HT-03A made by Taiwanese electronics maker HTC, from which users will also be able to access DoCoMo Market to download applications.

Most Japanese already own a [mobile phone](#) and operators are facing growing challenges to boost revenue, particularly in tough economic times.

Japanese mobile phones have developed independently to meet the hi-tech demands of the country's discerning users, for years boasting applications such as digital credit, train passes and terrestrial TV connections.

Xperia is a late starter in the global smart phone market, currently dominated by Apple's [iPhone](#) and the Blackberry by Research in Motion.

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