Samsung to expand range of smart appliances

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Samsung spokesmodel displays the connectivity feature on a smart refrigerator during the International CES at the Las Vegas Convention Center, in Nevada, on January 7, 2014

Samsung is to launch a range of smart refrigerators, air conditioners and washing machines as its seeks to expand its business in Internet-connected homes, a top executive said on Tuesday.

The South Korean tech giant is seeking to plough more resources into the so-called Internet of Things (IoT) as the market for smartphones—one of its core product categories—becomes increasingly saturated.

The new appliances will work on Samsung's Tizen operating system, which the company has touted as a platform not just for phones but for a range of connected home appliances that can communicate with one another.

"We are preparing launches of Tizen-powered TVs, refrigerators, air conditioners and other premium-priced home appliances this year," B.K.

Yoon, head of Samsung's consumer electronics unit, told reporters.

The firm—the world's top mobile phone maker—plans to eventually make all its new products Internet-connected by 2020, he added.

"I think we have to make preparations for the IoT for future growth, as we previously grew in size by switching from... feature phones to smartphones," Yoon said.

Yoon unveiled the company's first-ever Tizen smart TVs at a consumer electronics fair in Las Vegas last month.

As part of its efforts to expand beyond the increasingly saturated smartphone market and meet demand for online-connected homes, Samsung bought SmartThings, a US home automation startup last year.

An employee demonstrates Samsung Z910F smartphone and the SM-R380 smartwatch, at the Tizen Developer Conference in San Francisco, California, on June 3, 2014

Tizen—Samsung's home-grown system—is a key part of the firm's campaign to carve out a niche in mobile software and services, to complement its hardware role.

By developing Tizen, Samsung has also tried to lower its reliance on Google's Android platform that powers the vast majority of Samsung's mobile devices.

But the use of Tizen so far has been limited to a handful of Samsung gadgets including a low-end smartphone and wearables.

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