

(BN) Sony Will Introduce Xperia Tablet to Challenge Apple (Correct)

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BN 01/21 05:53 *SONY MOBILE UNIT COMMENTS IN STATEMENT BN 01/21 05:53 *SONY TO
INTRODUCE NEW TABLET PC IN JAPAN THIS SPRING

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Sony Will Introduce Xperia Tablet to Challenge Apple (Correct)
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(Corrects market forecast in fourth paragraph.)

By Mariko Yasu

Jan. 21 (Bloomberg) -- Sony Corp., the electronics maker struggling after four straight annual losses, will sell a new tablet computer in Japan this year as it tries to lure customers away from Apple Inc. and Samsung Electronics Co.

The Xperia Tablet Z will be 6.9 millimeters (.27 inches) thick, weigh 495 grams (17 ounces) and have a 10.1-inch (26-centimeter) display, Sony's mobile unit said in a statement today. The waterproof device may debut in Japan as soon as March before appearing elsewhere, Noriko Shoji, a Tokyo-based spokeswoman for Sony, said by phone today. The price hasn't been determined, she said.

Sony Chief Executive Officer Kazuo Hirai is focusing on mobile devices to revive the company, whose TV unit has been unprofitable for eight straight fiscal years. The Tokyo-based company introduced its first tablet model in 2011, making it the last among the world's top 10 laptop makers to tap the surging demand triggered by Apple's iPad.

Worldwide tablet shipments probably totaled 120 million last year and may reach 340 million by 2016, market researcher IHS Inc.'s iSuppli said in December.

In October, Apple introduced a smaller version of the iPad with a 7.9-inch screen and prices starting at \$329. Sony also faces competition from Amazon.com Inc.'s updated set of Kindle Fires and Google Inc.'s Nexus 7.

Sony shares rose 3.3 percent to close at 1,187 yen in Tokyo after the announcement, extending their gain this month to 24 percent. Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 Stock Average fell 1.5 percent today.

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