HP to Make $169 Android Tablet, Eschewing Windows

PETER SVENSSON, AP Technology Writer

BARCELONA, Spain (AP) — Hewlett-Packard Co. is making a tablet computer that uses Google's Android operating system, steering clear of Microsoft's latest tablet-oriented version of Windows, the company said Sunday.

The HP Slate 7 will have a 7-inch screen, making it similar in size to the Amazon Kindle Fire. It will cost $169 when it goes on sale in April in the U.S.

Most tablet makers, including Samsung and Amazon, have chosen Android as the best and cheapest operating system for products that can compete against Apple's iPad. HP previously made a tablet based on Palm's WebOS software, but the effort fizzled. The company also makes a more powerful tablet with PC-type components for the corporate market, which runs a PC-style version of Windows 8. It hasn't produced a tablet using Windows RT, Microsoft's product for iPad-type tablets.

"When we looked at creating a real killer product for consumers, a very portable, very entertainment-focused device, we thought that Android was the better choice," said Alberto Torres, who signed on as head of HP's mobile devices division five months ago. Previously, he worked for cellphone maker Nokia Corp. "Of course, we continue to work closely with Microsoft on other products as well."

Torres didn't rule out using Windows RT in the future, saying the company plans a broad portfolio of tablets tailored toward different types of buyers. But HP's choice of Android for a consumer device and Windows 8 for a corporate tablet leaves little room for Windows RT, which Microsoft hopes will expand the reach of Windows

beyond corporate tablets.

Torres said the Slate 7 will use a relatively "vanilla" version of Android. The company is avoiding the interface modifications Asian manufacturers apply and the deeper changes imposed by Amazon and Barnes & Noble for their tablets. The Slate 7 will ship with the ability to talk to printers, HP's forte. At $169 the device is aggressively priced, costing half of what Apple charges for an iPad mini.

HP made the announcement on the eve of Mobile World Congress, the wireless industry's annual trade show, which starts Monday in Barcelona, Spain.

Competitor Samsung Electronics announced a new tablet earlier Sunday, to launch in the April to June time frame. The Galaxy Note 8.0 will be slightly larger than the Slate 7. It will run Android and accept pen input.

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