

# No new BlackBerry models for Japan

TOKYO, JAPAN: Troubled smartphone manufacturer BlackBerry will not launch its new models in Japan, effectively withdrawing from Japan's booming smartphone market where BlackBerry sales have virtually collapsed.



The Canada-based company, which is hoping its long-delayed BlackBerry 10 series will turn around flagging global fortunes, will not sell the handsets in the country, the *Nikkei* business daily said.

The report said BlackBerry's share of the Japanese market had slumped to 0.3% from about five percent in the past. The paper did not give a time frame for the withdrawal.

Domestic shipments of smartphones soared 40% year-on-year with 14m new phones sold between April and September but BlackBerry sales were believed to be only several tens of thousands, the paper said, without naming its sources.

Given the falling market share, the company decided it was too costly to develop a Japanese-language version of the new operating system, it said.

While BlackBerry helped create a culture of mobile users glued to smartphones nearly a decade ago, many of those customers have since moved on to Apple or Android-based phones.

The firm was until last week was known as Research in Motion (RIM) but rebranded itself with the launch of the BlackBerry 10 platform and Z10 and Q10 handsets.

*The Wall Street Journal* quoted Amy McDowell, a spokesman for BlackBerry as saying the new phone would not be sold in Japan "at this time".

"We are in the process of launching BlackBerry 10 globally in key markets and we are seeing positive demand for the BlackBerry Z10 in countries where it has already launched. Japan is not a major market for BlackBerry and we have no plans to launch BlackBerry 10 devices there at this time," McDowell said.

"However, we will continue to support BlackBerry customers in Japan," she said.

NTT DoCoMo, the carrier who started distributing BlackBerry in Japan in 2006, said that it was discussing new product launches with BlackBerry adding that it would continue to provide customer support.

SourceL *AFP* via I-Net Bridge

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