

Apple may be sued by a Chinese Tech Co.

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A Chinese company that sells a tablet PC like Apple's newly announced iPad may sue the U.S. company over the similar design between the devices, it said Monday.

Shenzhen Great Loong Brother Industrial started selling its P88 tablet last year and is not ruling out a lawsuit against Apple, a company representative surnamed Wu said by phone.

The company is based in a southern Chinese city known for producing knock-off phones, which are called "shanzhai," or "bandit" phones, and sometimes take the form of counterfeit iPhones or other popular handsets.

"For this thing we are not shanzhai, because we were first," said Wu.

The P88 weighs more than the iPad and has much shorter battery life at just over one hour during active use, compared to Apple's stated battery life of 10 hours for the iPad. But both devices use touchscreens that have a black border and a similar size, at 10.2 inches for the P88 and 9.7 inches for the iPad. Wu said his company's tablet is sold in the U.S., but declined to say at which outlets.

An Apple spokeswoman declined to comment.

China's gray market for electronic devices also reacted quickly to Apple's announcement of the iPad last week. Some users on Taobao.com, a Chinese auction and retail site, are taking pre-orders for iPads they will first obtain in Hong Kong or elsewhere. Popular devices such as the iPhone or the Hero from Taiwan's High Tech Computer (HTC) are often brought into China informally and sold there online or at electronics bazaars.

Apple has not said if the iPad will be sold in China. Local carrier China Unicom started selling the iPhone last year, but gray-market versions of the device were already widely sold in China.

Japanese electronics company Fujitsu has also said it owns the rights to the name "iPad," raising another possible legal challenge for the Apple device.