

'World's first' glasses-free 3D TV hits stores in Japan

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Japanese electronics company Toshiba unveils the world's first 3D television that does not require viewers to wear special glasses, called the "Regza GL1 Series", at an electronics trade show in Chiba.

Toshiba on Wednesday launched in Japan what it calls the world's first television that allows viewers to see 3D images without having to wear special glasses, amid intensifying competition in the market.

But while curious shoppers stopped to test out the screen at an electronics store in central Tokyo as the 12-inch model of the Regza GL1 Series went on sale, there were doubts as to whether the technology will catch.

The new model with a liquid crystal display carries a price tag of 119,800 yen (1,400 dollars), which may put off consumers accustomed

to falling prices. A 20-inch model will be released on Saturday.

While other 3D-capable TVs require glasses that act as filters to separate images to each eye, creating the illusion of depth Toshiba's new screens use processing technology to create depth-filled images.

The Regza GL1 Series also allows users to switch between 2D and 3D on normal TV programmes.

Kazuhito Gunji, a public relations official at electronics retailer Bic Camera, said the company had received several inquiries from customers on when they can get their hands on the product.

Electronics stores are hoping that the release of the latest technology will help offset declining sales as government incentives for purchasing environment-friendly home appliances were reduced this month.

The hugely competitive TV sector is a challenge for many electronics makers given that customers are increasingly accustomed to declining prices, making it difficult for the industry to generate profits.

Sony on Monday said it may fall short of its sales goal of 25 million liquid crystal display TV sets this fiscal year as it struggles to be profitable in the sector, and has also embraced [3D TV](#) technology in a bid to diversify.

Many in the industry say 3D television demand is being held back by a consumer resistance to wearing glasses and most shoppers Wednesday were curious but also cautious about the new [Toshiba](#) device.

"I want to watch on a big screen," said a 47-year-old man who has a 37-inch TV at home. "I'll wait for another year before buying," he said.

Another customer, 33, said: "It's great that we don't have to wear glasses, which is a nuisance."

"But I didn't feel images were flying out of the screen on some programmes," he added.

Toshiba says images on the 12-inch screen are best viewed directly from the front and some 65 centimetres (26 inches) away, making the 3D capability less effective for families that would view together from different points around a room.

"Customers currently think of 3D images as just an add-on function... but 3D is expected to become a standard eventually" with 3D films and video titles increasing, said Toshiba sales official Eiichi Matsuzawa.

Haruo Sato, analyst at Tokai Tokyo Research Centre, said it was "a big advantage" that the new series does not require viewers to wear glasses.

"That feature could help the product's popularity," he said.

But Sato was cautious about whether the 3D market as a whole would see strong demand despite the fact that equipped TV sets usually attract a lot of interest at retail stores as consumers try out the devices.

"It's questionable that consumers want 3D TVs as much as manufacturers are pushing them."

"People may not be finding the extra value" that convinces them to purchase the relatively new technology, he said.

Rival Sharp earlier this year unveiled a small glasses-free LCD touchscreen that shows 3D images for use in mobile phones, digital cameras and games consoles such as Nintendo's 3DS, which is set for

release in Japan in February.

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