

Wal-Mart Shoots Down Cheap HD DVD Rumor

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Wal-Mart denied rumors that it had placed a substantial order with a Taiwan supplier for ultra-cheap HD DVD players that could swing the format wars in that direction.

A spokesperson for the company said Thursday that reported leaks concerning Taiwan-based consumer electronics manufacturer, Fuh Yuan, partnering with TDK in China to manufacture the \$250-299 players, had no merit. The report first appeared in AVS Forums , and was picked up by other Web sites.

"The article... was full of inaccuracies and we had no participation in it," the spokesman said in an e-mail to PC Magazine . "Most of the facts, including the purchase, were untrue," she added. "Not sure how it originated."

When asked to comment specifically on a statement appearing on Fuh Yuan's site, which implies the retailer is at least interested in ordering the players, the spokesperson said she could not comment on or disclose Wal-Mart's internal business with suppliers and our orders. However, the supplier said that no deal was imminent.

Wal-Mart, the world's largest retailer, could play an important role in determining the success or failure of a particular format. So far, however, the company has at least publicly supported both camps.

On Thursday, the following statement appeared on Fuh Yuan's site:

"We are sorry to correct the statement that we have two million HD-DVD players order from Wal-Mart and manufactured by China Great Wall Group," Fuh Yuan said. "The actuality is that we had not received yet. We are asked to provide the schedule to Wal-Mart and cost to determine the quantity even more than two million, if the cost is good enough and timing is correct. So the capacity is under consideration. Any qualified manufactured base group will be welcome."

While Wal-Mart denied that any orders had been placed, the company did say that it plans to sell both Blu-ray and HD-DVD components in its stores and online, at least until a definitive winner in the format war is declared.

Currently, the retailer sells both HD-DVD and Blu-ray players, including Philips' \$900 Blu-ray BDP900/37 player and Toshiba's \$350 HD-D1 HD-DVD player.

"Today, we sell both Blu-ray and HD DVD in our stores nationwide (approx. 750 stores). As with all new technologies, we are committed to providing the best value on products that customers choose as most relevant to them. With new industry developments, we will make shifts in our selections as customer preferences evolve and they vote with their purchase," the company said in a statement.

The spokesperson added: "We expect that as prices decrease and new elements are added in the coming months that consumers will choose which format will dominate, and that could happen by the end of this year."

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