

Global tech sales to surpass \$1 trillion in 2012: forecast

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A Brazilian boy looks at an iPad at the retail shop of Apple products in Sao Paulo. Smartphones and tablet computers will help push worldwide consumer electronics spending over \$1 trillion this year but growth is sluggish compared to last year, according to industry analysts.

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"Most product categories are slowing down or going into contraction," Steve Bambridge, global business director for GfK Boutique Research said Sunday ahead of the annual Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in Las Vegas.

"Really there's two main exceptions: tablets and smartphones,"

Bambridge said at a briefing for reporters before the official opening Tuesday of the high-tech gadget extravaganza.

GfK and CES sponsor the Consumer Electronics Association (CEA) forecast that global spending on technology products will grow five percent in 2012 to \$1.04 trillion compared to eight percent growth last year and \$993 billion in sales.

GfK and CEA said they expect smartphone sales to grow 22 percent this year compared with 59 percent last year while overall tablet sales are expected to double to more than 100 million this year.

As demand slackens in the United States and Western Europe grapples with an economic crisis and wobbly euro emerging markets such as Brazil, China and India will increase their share of spending on consumer electronics, GfK and CEA said.

Emerging economies are expected to account for 46 percent of global tech sales revenue in 2012, up from 37 percent in 2008, while developed economies will see their share fall to 54 percent from 63 percent over the same period.



The Blackberry Torch 9800 smartphone is seen after being unveiled at a news conference in New York City, 2010. Smartphones and tablet computers will help

push worldwide consumer electronics spending over \$1 trillion this year but growth is sluggish compared to last year, according to industry analysts.

CEA chief economist Shawn Dubravac said he expects more than 20,000 new products to launch at CES, which brings together over 2,700 exhibitors from around the world to the cavernous Las Vegas Convention Center.

Last year, more than 100 tablet computers alone were unveiled at CES as rival manufacturers sought to capture the magic of Apple's hot-selling iPad.

Dubravac said he expects to see about 50 new tablets this year and a plethora of snazzy smartphones which he described as "more like full-fledged computers."

Another hot product category at CES this year is expected to be the sleek, lightweight laptop computer known as the "ultrabook," DuBravac said.

He said he expected to see between 30 and 50 ultrabooks launched at CES as computer makers again seek to make up ground on Apple and its popular MacBook Air.

Getting the jump on the competition, Taiwan's Acer on Sunday took the wraps off what it said was the world's thinnest laptop computer, the Acer Aspire 5, which has a 13.3-inch (34-centimeter) screen and is 0.59 inches (15 millimeters) at its thickest point.

It weighs less than three pounds (1.35 kilograms).

Desktop personal computers on the other hand are a category of device which is "in decline if not completely dead," said CEA director of industry analysis Steve Koenig.

Television sales, meanwhile, are expected to be flat with whatever growth there is coming from emerging markets.

DuBravac said he expects to see more televisions capable of connecting to the Internet as the convergence of the Web and the TV set "evolves quite rapidly."

DuBravac said 12 percent of the TV sets sold in the United States in 2010 were Internet-enabled but nearly half of all televisions shipping in the US in 2012 will be able to tap into the Web.

He said he expected more products to incorporate gesture or voice control -- features of Microsoft's Kinect game console or Apple's iPhone 4S voice assistant Siri -- providing a "much more natural experience for many users."

There also may be hope for anyone ever faced with the bewildering array of buttons on a television remote control.

"I think 2012 will be the year of the interface," DuBravac said, with an emphasis on moving from "complexity to simplicity."

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