

Smartwatches to star at Berlin IFA electronics show

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A woman tries out mobile phone and media player wrist watches at the Sony booth at the IFA trade fair in Berlin on August 30, 2012. Smartwatches look set to dominate this year's IFA consumer electronics fair in Berlin, which opens Wednesday, stealing the limelight from smart phones and tablet computers.

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"One of the big hype products and topics this year for IFA are smart watches," said Annette Zimmermann, analyst at consultancy Gartner.

South Korean giant Samsung will once again set the tone, since US rival Apple never traditionally exhibits at international electronics fairs.

And Samsung, which already dominates the smartphone market, is scheduled to unveil its hotly anticipated Galaxy Gear watch on Wednesday, for once pipping Apple at the post on a major product launch.

The opening of last year's IFA was overshadowed by a patent war between the two bitter rivals, with Apple having just won an important legal victory over Samsung.

But this time, innovation will be the battlefield, with the Koreans one step ahead.

After months of rumour, Samsung will premiere its smart watch, while reports suggest Apple's "iWatch" is still being manufactured in Taiwan.

Samsung has been whetting appetites for days now.

Last week, the group's head of [mobile business](#), Lee Young-hee, confirmed the Galaxy Gear launch to the Korea Times.



People queue for the opening day of the IFA trade fair in Berlin on August 31, 2012. Smartwatches look set to dominate this year's IFA consumer electronics fair in Berlin, which opens Wednesday, stealing the limelight from smart phones and tablet computers.

"The new device will enhance and enrich the current smart mobile experience in many ways. It will lead a new trend in smart mobile communications. We are confident that the Gear will add meaningful momentum to the [mobile industry](#)," Lee said.

Following smartphones and tablets, wearable computers look set to be the way forward for the high-tech industry.

At the start of the year, Google gave a foretaste when it unveiled a prototype of Internet-enabled interactive spectacles.

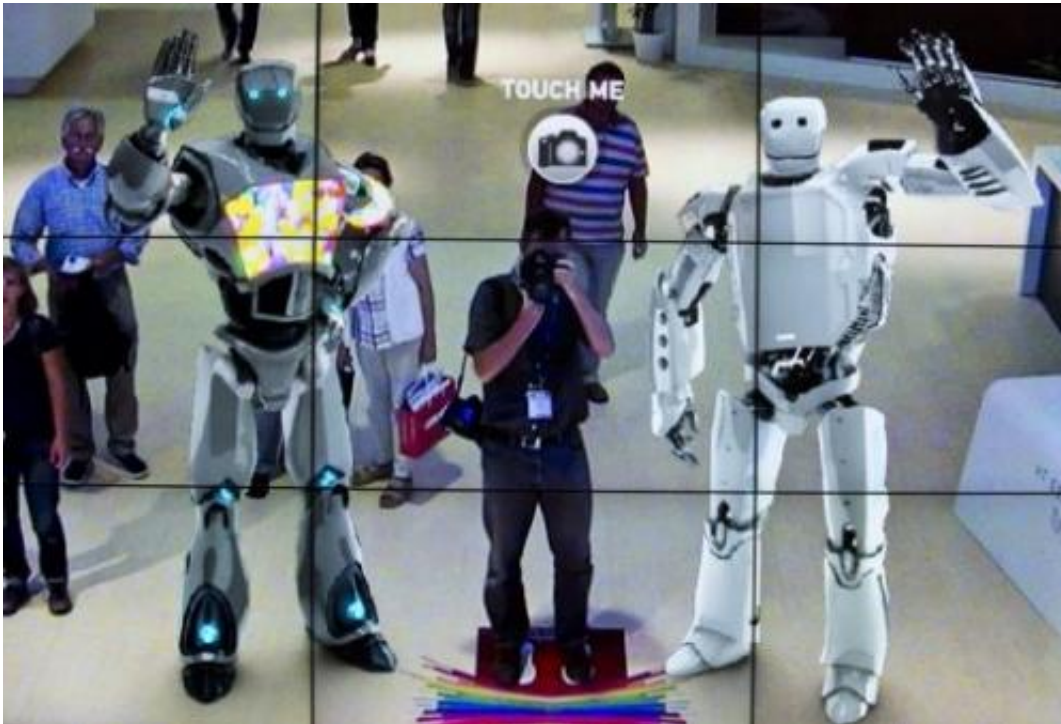
Manufacturers such as Sony, Motorola and Casio are also lining up to launch smart watches.

Zimmermann at Gartner said "ultramobility" was one of the themes of this year's IFA.

"Users today have strong mobility/portability needs and vendors are trying to address that," she said.

E-Mail access, social networks and photos are all becoming indispensable.

So-called "phablets", devices that are mid-way between phones and tablets, are also attracting attention, and hybrid tablets or "smart PCs" combining touch screens and keyboards were already the buzz of last year.



Virtual robots are "mixed in" to a screen showing live footage of fairgoers at the stand of Turkish consumer electronics giant Vestel during the IFA electronics trade fair in Berlin on September 3, 2012. Smartwatches look set to dominate this year's IFA consumer electronics fair in Berlin, which opens Wednesday, stealing the limelight from smart phones and tablet computers.

For household electronics, the new buzzword is ultra-HD—TV screens with four times the resolution of Full HD sets. Last year, 3-D television was the hot novelty.

Even if many hi-tech gadgets never actually establish themselves, electronic products exert an "unbelievable fascination," said Christian Goeke, head of Messe Berlin, the exhibition centre's operator.

The IFA's exhibition space this year has grown by 2.0 percent to 145,000 square metres.

And last year, the show attracted a total 240,000 visitors.

The IFA is Europe's answer to the International Consumer Electronics Show held each January in Las Vegas, and sets the trend for Christmas gift giving.

While phones and TV sets are by far the biggest draw for visitors, IFA is also a showcase for household goods such as refrigerators, coffee machines and state-of-the-art ceramic top stoves.

Wednesday and Thursday are reserved for the media, but the general public can gasp at the technological wonders from Friday through Wednesday next week.

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