

Wave of new Windows 10 devices on show at Berlin tech fair

September 4 2015, by Frank Jordans



In this Sept. 2, 2015 photo visitors look at Acer laptops that run Windows 10 at the Acer company booth, during the first press day for the International Consumer Electronics Fair 'IFA', at the exhibition grounds in Berlin. (Rainer Jensen/dpa via AP)

Computer manufacturers are unveiling the first big batch of devices running Windows 10 at the IFA home electronics show opening in Berlin on Friday.

The industry has seen sluggish sales in recent years as consumers opt to spend their money on smartphones and tablets instead, so many companies are pinning their hopes for a revival in the PC market on the latest version of Microsoft's operating system.

Among them is Toshiba, which launched its new Satellite Radius 12 this week, priced at 1,449 euros (\$1,627) in Europe. The 12-inch laptop comes with a 4K screen designed to make the most of Windows 10's graphics ability. It also features a special microphone and a dedicated button for Cortana—Microsoft's voice-controlled digital assistant—as well as infrared cameras to identify users by their faces.

"We expect to see lots of new sales from October onward thanks to Windows 10," said Tony Alderson, a senior product manager at Toshiba.

The Japanese company also launched its new Satellite Click 10, whose screen can be detached and used as a tablet. It, too, is optimized for Windows 10 and will appear on shelves next month for about 499 euros.

Experts say the bet on Windows 10 could pay off, as consumers finally loosen their purse strings.

"Last few years, many people bought Android tablets instead of buying a new computer, but that market is saturated now," said Rudolf Aunkofer, global director IT at consumer research firm GfK. "At the same time laptops are getting quite old, so Windows 10 is likely to kick off a wave of replacements."

Aunkofer said the drop in sales seen in recent years may have been exacerbated by Microsoft's announcement about the new operating system, which prompted some consumers to hold back. Before that, buyers may have simply been unconvinced that upgrading their devices for Windows 8—widely seen as more of a cosmetic enhancement than a

real improvement—was worthwhile.

One problem for computer manufacturers is that Windows 10 is remarkably tolerant of old hardware, and upgrades are free. Microsoft says Windows 10 has already been installed on 75 million devices since its debut at the end of July.

"Many people who have a computer that's 1 to 3 years old will go for the free upgrade," said Aunkofer. "But there's a big base of machines that's 5 to 7 years old and those will be replaced."

The trend, he said, is toward so-called two-in-one devices which can serve as laptops or tablets, such as the Satellite Click 10, or tablets with a separate keyboard.

Microsoft is urging software designers to embrace its Universal Application Platform, so that desktop software and apps designed for other operating systems will run on Windows 10.

This strategy demonstrates one way in which Microsoft has learned from its recent missteps in the smartphone market. A lack of apps and the relative novelty of its operating system have been cited as a hurdle to consumer uptake, compared to more established smartphone systems such as Apple's iOS and Google's Android.

Nick Parker, vice president of Microsoft's OEM division, said the free upgrade for older Windows computers should help stimulate interest across devices, since it's designed to look the same on laptops, tablets and smartphones.

"Windows 10 lets you try new things and maybe accelerate purchase of new hardware," he said.

The same might be true for one of the low-cost educational computers launched at IFA this week. Acer's Aspire 1 Cloudbook is a fully functional PC for the price of \$169, giving Windows 10 the chance to take back market share in the sub-\$200 segment from Google's Chromebooks.

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