

# Berlin's IFA fair dons virtual reality headsets

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Virtual and augmented reality gadgets are expected to hog the limelight at Berlin's mega consumer electronics show IFA this week, as Pokemon Go gave a tantalising preview of the appetite for reality-altering technologies.

VR headsets and cameras will jostle for attention, while analysts expect

smartphone makers to also unveil new models compatible with the latest in such technologies.

The annual IFA show, which began as an exhibition on the new medium of radio more than 90 years ago, is today a massive showcase for consumers to touch and feel the latest in technological innovations.

Over six days from Friday, tech giants will be seeking to grab consumers' attention with novelties as diverse as the latest in high definition resolution television screens to 3D printers to fitness gadgets.

Two days before the show opens to the public, Samsung launched its latest smartphone Gear S3 Wednesday, while Asus showed off its round-faced ZenWatch3.

Sony and Huawei are due to showcase their latest creations on Thursday.

Being the last major show before Christmas, it has a large influence over the critical European holiday gift giving season.

Smartphones and tablets have in recent years dominated the headlines at the show, but faced with a maturing market, manufacturers are struggling to find new innovations to persuade consumers to swap their already fancy phone with an even fancier one.

But virtual reality and augmented reality may be the next cash cow.

Gaming app Pokemon Go, which combines both, has been a runaway hit, sending millions of people young and old out into the streets to catch digital monsters.

"The game gives a preview of how fascinating reality technology is for many people. Virtual reality has the ability to turn our daily habits upside

down," said Hans-Joachim Kamp, who heads gfu, Germany's federation for consumer and home electronic firms.

## **'Very early market'**

Goldman Sachs predicted earlier this year that the virtual reality and augmented reality markets would reach \$80 billion (72 billion euros) by 2025.

The difference between the two is that while virtual reality blocks the user's view of the real world through special glasses, augmented reality blends real life with virtual reality.

Consultancy Deloitte, which presented a joint study with high-tech group Bitkom Wednesday, said VR could be used in screening concerts, sports events, films and even news.

For IHS Insight analyst Ian Fogg, "VR is very much a trend of the moment, a trend of what's happening."

"The really interesting thing is how big is the market, what role do smartphones play in this, what kind of concept will work on VR and what kind of consumers will embrace VR," he said.

Fogg said the industry was still testing the waters.

"A lot depends on Google Daydream initiative, whether they're going to talk about that around IFA, or whether they are going to wait until a date in the autumn," he added.

Daydream is essentially a mobile store for VR games and apps.

Once that is up, it could potentially spur consumers to purchase headsets

or motion controllers that are compatible with Daydream.

It is unclear when Daydream will launch, but a key hurdle was cleared last month when Google released the Nougat update of its Android operating system that is capable of running the platform.

Beyond VR, major smartphone and smartwatch makers have all lined up to unveil new offerings.

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