

Amazon leads surging connected speakers market: survey

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A new survey shows Amazon leads the market for connected speakers with its Echo devices, like this one displayed at the 2017 Consumer Electronics Show

Amazon has grabbed more than two-thirds of the fast-growing market in the US for connected speakers with its family of Alexa-powered Echo devices, a survey showed Monday.

The survey by research firm eMarketer found Amazon's Echo speakers

held 70.6 percent of the US market, compared with 23.8 percent for Google Home and 5.6 percent for others including Lenovo, LG, Harmon Kardon and Mattel.

The report said 35.6 million Americans will use a voice-activated assistant device at least once a month this year, a jump of 128.9 percent over last year.

According to eMarketer, heaviest users of digital assistants are between the ages of 25 and 34, which represent 26.3 percent of virtual assistant users.

The research firm said it expects Amazon's market share to fall slightly in the coming years but that the online retail giant will remain the dominant player in the category for the foreseeable future.

"Consumers are becoming increasingly comfortable with the technology, which is driving engagement," said Martin Utreras, vice president of forecasting at eMarketer.

"As prices decrease and functionality increases, consumers are finding more reasons to adopt these devices."

Amazon does not disclose sales figures for its speakers, which are powered by artificial intelligence and can serve as connected home hubs.

But analysts at Consumer Intelligence Research Partners estimate that 10.7 million Americans have purchased an Amazon Echo device since its late-2014 introduction.

Awareness of Amazon Echo increased dramatically in the past year, and Echo owners use it as a voice-responsive Internet query device and household controller, in addition to a streaming music speaker,

according to CIRP.

The CIRP report said 52 percent of the Amazon devices sold were the low-priced Echo Dot, which retails for around \$50.

Separately Monday, Samsung-owned Harman Kardon announced the release of its new Invoke speaker powered by Microsoft's digital assistant Cortana and integrating Skype for making calls using the device.

The voice-activated speaker "can play your favorite music, manage calendars and activities, set reminders, check traffic, deliver the latest news and much more," according to a statement.

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