

What's hot and what's not at Berlin's IFA tech fair

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Every step you take: Activity trackers are definitely hot at Berlin tech show

Berlin's IFA technology fair, Europe's largest and a bellwether for the Christmas season, draws to a close Wednesday. Here is a quick overview of what's hot and what's not in the aisles.

On the out

- Tablets: the fever that greeted Apple's launch of the iPad in 2010 has

long dissipated. Smartphones boast increasingly large screens and high performance in a handier package than the not-quite-laptop devices.

- Energy efficiency: "It was a big topic in 2008, it remains important, but most devices conform to regulations now, we think it's time to turn to other things," said Reinhard Zinkann of Germany's Miele. As for phones, "it's become standard to recharge your phone overnight, now the idea is that there should be no need to charge it during the day," said Raoul de Gelis of Sony Mobile.

- Virtual reality: passion about the immersive headsets has faded from the levels seen in 2015 and 2016. Hardware remains pricey at around 500 euros (\$550), restricting VR to true gaming enthusiasts. "The VR market has been held back in 2017 by very limited supply of the OLED display panels needed," said IHS analyst Ian Fogg, suggesting 2018 may be the breakthrough year as more mobile users will be able to try out the tech.

- Photography: digital cameras are thin on the ground at IFA, as high-performance smartphone snappers crowd them out and the mania for instantly sharing lunch, travel and selfie shots on social networks rages unabated.



Virtual Reality is still a little too pricey for most consumers

On the rise

- Mixed reality: this technology blends [virtual reality](#) with the real world, as computer-generated images are added to the user's field of vision while they wear special glasses or a headset. Acer, Asus, Dell and Lenovo were all showing off headsets this year, while Microsoft announced a version of Windows compatible with the devices.

- Activity trackers: enthusiasm for the trailblazers of the wearable technology world shows no signs of fading, with more gadgets than ever on offer to count steps, swimming strokes, water intake or calories burned—or to prod you about your health goals. Samsung and Fitbit placed their fitness wearables centre stage at IFA.

- Connected speakers: Amazon Echo, Google Home and Apple HomePod all offer networked speakers that respond to voice commands—with research suggesting the market is set to balloon in the coming years. Sony's version with no buttons at all could mean the future of choosing music is all vocal.
- Male grooming: IFA's aisles used to host hairdryer or straightener demonstrations, but a growing number of brands are targeting style-conscious men. Bracelets, glasses and smart glasses are in vogue, while a cavalcade of devices promises to help maintain an immaculate beard.
- Vinyl records: In a vintage touch, record players are back on the scene at IFA, with pride of place going to Technics' SP-10R—touted as the best-ever turntable from the legendary DJ equipment maker. A quirky offer from Thomson attaches to the wall and plays records vertically.

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