

Samsung bringing 'bigger and bigger' TVs to market to meet stay-at-home demands of coronavirus pandemic

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Credit: CC0 Public Domain

Samsung kicked off the 2021 CES trade show Wednesday with a showcase of new televisions meant to address changes in home life

brought on by the coronavirus pandemic.

The Seoul, Korea-headquartered tech giant, with a live-streamed event Wednesday, actually leapfrogged the beginning of the annual consumer electronics confab by a few days—the all-online conference officially begins Monday, Jan. 11.

For TV makers, home is where the action is—with many of us working and attending school there—and Samsung's newest sets address how our displays have become hubs of home activity.

TV sales grew during the pandemic. Despite workplace issues including layoffs and furloughs, Americans bought 20% more TVs in 2020, through mid-December, than in 2019, according to The NPD Group. And Samsung is a dominant with the largest chunk of global TV sales, about 23% of shipments in the third quarter of 2020, according to Strategy Analytics.

Nearly six out of 10 consumers (57%) exercise or work out in their living room now, according to the tech giant's internal consumer research. And the same amount say they are watching more shows and films on streaming services, according to research firm GlobalWebIndex.

As more life has revolved around the home, consumers have "rediscovered the value of TV," said Mike Kadish, director of TV marketing for Samsung, who recently previewed upcoming products for media.

So Samsung is focusing on bigger TVs—with more functionality—that allow you to truly create a home theater in your house.

Since locked-down consumers couldn't go to movie theaters during the

COVID-19 stay-at-home orders and recommendations "they started buying bigger and bigger screens to recreate that experience," said Grace Dolan, vice president of home entertainment marketing at Samsung. "And with bigger screens come a need for better quality screens to have that experience."

Yes, TVs at home can get bigger

Remember "The Wall," that 146-inch TV Samsung released in 2018? That same technology is being used to deliver smaller consumer-targeted 4K TV models in 110-inch, 99-inch and 88-inch sizes that do not require professional installation, as the original did. That mammoth-sized display—and an even larger version at 292 inches—came in modules that had to be connected and calibrated.

The goal, Dolan said, is to make microLED—it uses self-emissive pixels for improved picture quality—"more accessible, easier for the average consumer. You just pull it from the box. It's one single unit now so you don't need the complicated install."

Samsung did not release pricing or product availability on the new sets. But some online news sites have put the price of the 110-inch model at about \$159,000.

But the 110-inch model, which will come to market first, could be a hot product with consumers, says Tom Campbell, chief technologist for Video & Audio Center stores in Los Angeles. The L.A. area retailer already has the first 110-inch model it gets spoken for.

"I told him we didn't have an official price, but he said, 'I want it'," he said. "Because of COVID people buying bigger and bigger screens and paying the price for it."

Also coming are new Neo QLED TVs, with models up to 85 inches (no prices or availability announced), which encase tiny LEDs more compactly without the need of a lens. "There are so many more LEDs in there like thousands more," Dolan said. "You get much better contrast, you get a just crisper picture."

TVs get even smarter

Most of the new models will also have a Multi-View feature, which lets you divide your screen in up to 12 sections to display TV channels, games, web pages and other content simultaneously. The screens also let you display a Google Duo video chat onscreen.

Also available on most new displays: The Samsung Health Smart Trainer, which transforms your [living room](#)—or whatever room your TV is in—into a gym. An [artificial intelligence](#)-driven program displays a trainer on the left side of the screen and an image of you on the right, so you can monitor your posture.

"Almost like a personal trainer, you can monitor your form even as you are watching the content to make sure you are doing it appropriately. because not everyone is in the gym any more," Dolan said.

The trainer program will track how many calories you've burned and you can sync Galaxy smartphones and watches.

Many of the new models also have a special Super Ultrawide Gameview mode that caters to video game players, letting them create an extended widescreen with aspect ratios of 21:9 and 32:9 (the traditional widescreen ratio is a rectangular 16:9). And the Game Bar brings a menu of vital options to the bottom of the screen letting you quickly change aspect ratios and sound settings.

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