Taiwan firms display e-readers at computer show

Taiwanese electronics firms displayed a slew of e-readers at an industry show Tuesday, with one maker unveiling a lightweight model that can display a full magazine page in color.

The color model - developed by Delta Electronics Inc. and expected to go on sale by December - stood out among a number of monochrome e-readers at the Computex Show in Taiwan.

Named e-Magazine, the model uses particle-based technologies that Delta has developed in collaboration with Japan's Bridgestone Corp., in contrast with ink-based technologies available in the market.

The 13-inch display would allow users to read a magazine page by page without scrolling it up and down like the smaller sized e-readers on the market, said Delta executive Hui Lee.

E-Magazine - about half the weight of Apple Inc.'s iPad - is made especially for professionals to read magazines or documents with color charts, Lee said.

Apple's iPad and some e-readers sport LCD displays, which can show color. But those are harder to see in sunlight, cause eye-fatigue and consume much more power than the e-paper displays used in other e-readers.

While Delta's new technology is yet to be tested by the market, most other e-readers displayed at the industry show use ink-based displays.

Taiwan, a leading player in the digital book market, also supplies monochrome displays for Amazon's Kindle and Sony's e-Readers.

A leading supplier of the e-paper displays is Prime View International Co., a Taiwanese firm that obtained the cutting-edge electronic ink technologies by acquiring Cambridge, Mass.-based E-Ink.

At the show, Acer Inc., the world's second largest PC vendor, displayed a 6-inch e-reader, Lumiread. It comes with a camera that allows a user to scan a book's bar code to find out if it has a digital version for downloading.

Acer is working with leading publishers in the U.S., China and Germany to market the product in the third quarter this year, said company executive Trisha Pan.

Also using the e-paper displays is Hanwang Technology Co., a leading Chinese electronics firm which sold 266,000 e-readers last year, mostly in China.

Having marketed a 5-inch e-reader in 2008, Hanwang also displayed its latest 6-inch model that went on sale last month.

Hanwang Chairman Liu Yingjian said the Chinese firm is seeking Taiwanese partners to jointly explore the world market, noting Taiwan's full hardware supply chain and its rich Chinese-language book content.

E-paper technologies are being developed at a fast pace.

Prime View has announced plans to develop e-inks for color display as well as a rollable paper display that can be folded.

Delta's Lee said the company hopes to develop in two to three years particle-based displays that can display sharper colors like magazine pages, instead of the more shady colors its e-Magazine now displays.

No price tag was given for e-Magazine. Lee said publishers may offer the e-readers free with a two or three years magazine subscription.

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