

To "iPAD" or not to "iPAD".....that is the question

One of the hottest new devices to hit the tech market is Apple's "iPAD" which launched in April, 2010. Since then, momentum has been building amongst normal people like you and me, TV advertising is clever and catchy, and likewise, so is Apple's competition ramping up their revs in this field. If you have been watching news events, Barcelona has just been host to the "Mobile World Congress" where more than 1300 companies were exhibiting the newest cutting-edge products and technology that will determine our mobile future - mainly via telephonic devices - but all totally mobile equipment. This article's focus is on the world of tablets or netbooks in which the "iPAD" belongs. Many PC users are now opting for these smaller models because they are highly portable and simple to use in spite of the fact that they do not have CD/DVD-roms and may not have all the software programs one might need. They also tend to have limited performance hence they are not equal to a regular PC or laptop. The majority of tablet designs are conventional, similar to laptops and we could say are like shrunken laptops.

So what's so special about the "iPAD?" It's keyboardless, wireless, smaller than a laptop (9.56"H x 7.47"W x 0.5" D) and utilizes touch screen technology, not to mention it is lightweight (1.5 to 1.6 Lbs.), portable and one must admit has a cool, futuristic design (now copied by many other manufacturers). Beyond that, latest count in January showed there are over **60,000** applications (Apps) just for the "iPAD" mind boggling! (For those who don't know, "Apps" are web applications, i.e. software, that are used for specific purposes --- many are interactive, such as games, shopping, language, etc.....the list continues to grow daily.) "App" designers are a creative lot, developing software from simple to complex. For example, there is an "App" that allows you, while at a supermarket pricing the broccoli there, to price check the same item at other supermarkets. If you find it cheaper elsewhere, your favorite supermarket just lost its sale.

But the "iPAD" does have its drawbacks. Due to Apple's corporate decisions, it does not recognize Adobe "Flash" software which means you would not be able to view something that uses "Flash" technology. Another difficulty comes when you want to purchase from the "iTunes" or "App" store: when in Spain, you are relegated to what is available on the Apple Spain site so downloading a movie or an e-book from Apple U.K. or Apple U.S.A. is not possible.....**UNLESS** you manage to find your way around this blockage or via a downloadable "App" to get what you want. Furthermore, the current version has no USB ports and no built-in camera.

Competitors in this field are awash with features in their attempt to catch up to Apple's early success. This year alone will see Google's **Android** system in tablet form, as well as new tablets from Motorola, HP, Dell, Toshiba and Sony. Meanwhile, the current rumors are that the next "iPAD" launch will include a smaller version (7"-8"), be more lightweight, and have built-in cameras.

Apple expects to ship about 55 million units in 2011 while the competition is looking to sell 10 to 15 million.....see where this trend is going?

Best advice for those thinking about purchasing one of these 21st century devices? Do your homework well. Research the product first by visiting the manufacturer's website and taking a virtual tour, see and use one if you can, read what other users have experienced (i.e. online forums), and above all, **know what you will use it for**. If you currently use a laptop or tower PC with keyboard, be aware of what you cannot do with these devices. All in all, these are fabulous gadgets, very cool and trendy, relatively pricey and a definite sign of things to come. And in the event you DO decide to get yourself an "iPAD," check out this innovative new product for it: www.dodocase.com. The latest in computer technology is not for everyone but it never hurts to look!