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# New technology key to gaming sector in downturn

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By [Christoph Steitz](#)

COLOGNE, Germany (Reuters) - Luring new audiences by moving away from traditional gaming consoles is more crucial than ever as the downturn curbs consumer spending in a sector once seen as recession-proof, analysts and executives said.

The videogames sector at first looked set to ride out the recession as people cut back on going out and sought cheaper entertainment at home. But sales this year have slumped in the important U.S. market.

Gathering at Gamescom, Europe's largest videogames trade fair taking place in the German city of Cologne, the industry's bellwethers said they hoped plenty of non-traditional customers would be

among the 200,000 visitors expected.

"In the current environment, it's really about getting those people to play that have not been previously attracted to gaming," Ed Barton, analyst at London-based media research company Screen Digest, said.

"Nintendo's DS handheld, for instance, is owned by more females than males in Europe as it offers more than the usual massacring armies of aliens."

Analysts say a strong second half of 2009 will help the industry, and Electronic Arts executive Jens Uwe Intat told Reuters before the fair that the world's biggest videogames publisher expected an improvement in Europe.

### RETRO CORNER

Alongside new releases in blockbuster franchises like Need for Speed, EA will launch a new fitness game later this year for the revolutionary Nintendo Wii with its motion-sensing controller.

"Target groups of novel game consoles will never use a classic controller," said Pascal Schmidt, head of marketing for Nintendo in Germany.

In March, Nintendo said it had shipped more than 50 million Wiis, outselling Sony Corp's PlayStation 3 and Microsoft's Xbox 360. It is the second time Nintendo has caused a major upset in the industry, after its novel handheld GameBoy in the 1980s.

In the wake of the Wii, Microsoft introduced new technology in June that allows users to control a console through gestures.

"Extended target groups are of significant importance. They will grow in relevance and are indispensable in the long term," Oliver Kaltner, Microsoft's head of entertainment for Germany, told Reuters.

However, fans of traditional joy-pad gaming should not despair, Screen Digest's Barton said.

"I wouldn't say that the big developers are trying to replace the classic console with these new interfaces. Rather, they're trying to make it more approachable for people that have not grown up with videogames," he said.

Maybe that's why the so-called "Retro Corner," featuring early classics such as "Space Invaders" is so popular at this year's Gamescom.  
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