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Lapping up extra mobility

Laptops will overtake desktop PCs as the dominant form of computer in 2011, according to a report by analysts IDC.

The demand for bulky machines will continue to slowly grow, but at a declining rate as portable machines become quicker and more efficient.

The report predicts the laptop market will grow by 16.1 per cent year-on-year until 2011, compared to 3.8 per cent for desktop PCs.

There will also be a short burst of desktop shipments over the next year as Microsoft rolls out Vista, it predicts.

"The release of Vista and a desktop refresh will create some growth opportunity in late 2007 and early 2008, before resuming a declining growth trend in the out-years,"

IDC personal computing program analyst Doug Bell said.

More than 82 million portable computers and nearly 140 million desktop PCs were shipped around the world last year, according to the report.

Compared with the previous year, the number of laptops shipped rose by 26.3 per cent compared to less than 2 per cent for desktop PCs.

The gradual shift away from fixed machines may reflect the needs of an increasingly mobile workforce and the ubiquity of wireless networks.

A recent US survey by the Pew Internet and American Life Project found the number of internet users with wireless at home had doubled from one in 10 in January 2005 to one in five by December last year.