Written by Marco Attard
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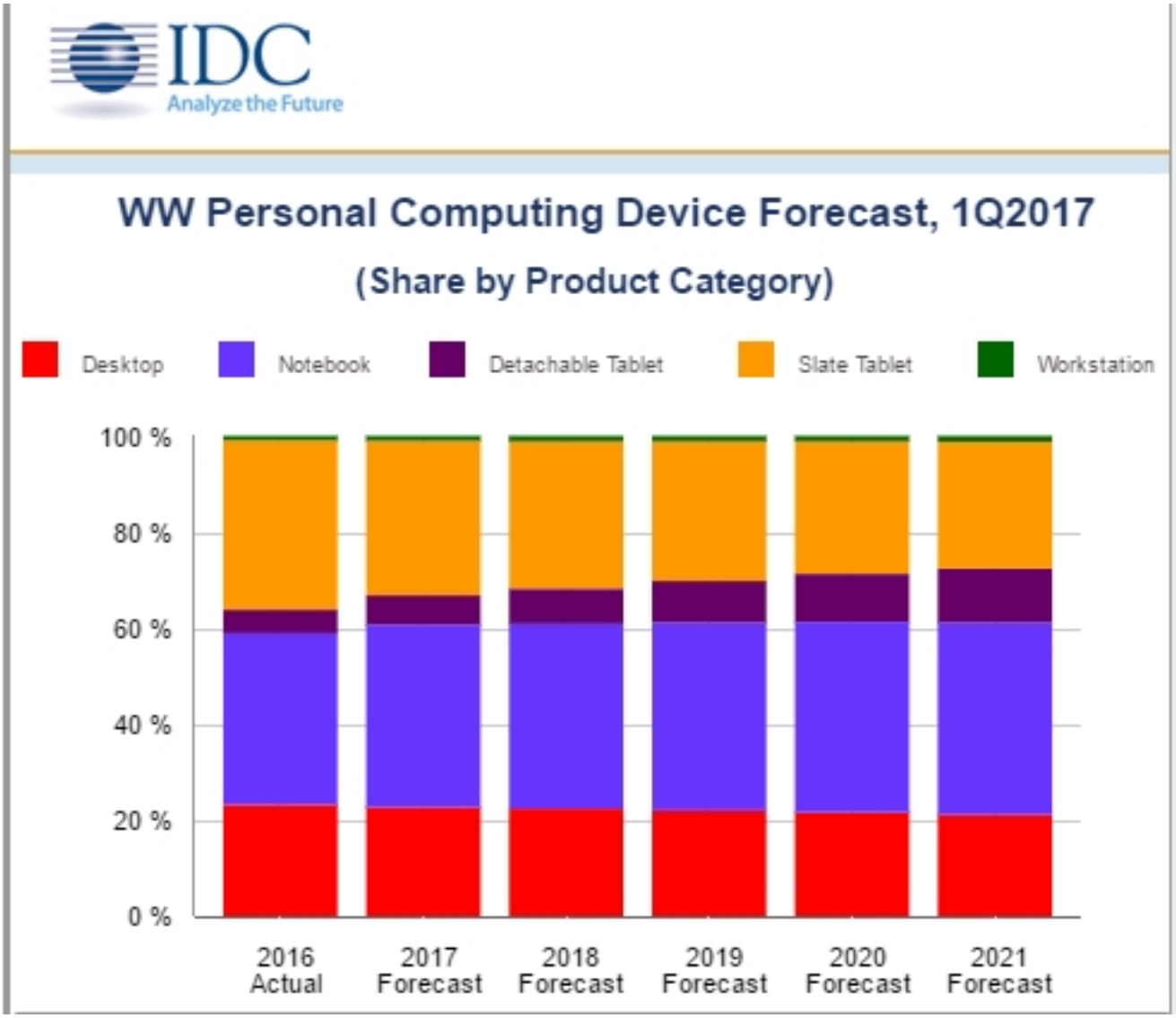
According to IDC, global personal computing device (PCDs) shipments, bringing together traditional PCs and tablets, will decline from 435 million units in 2016 to 405.2m in 2021, for a 5-year CAGR of -1.4%.



The analyst reduced its overall PCD forecast from the previous version by up to 3% depending on the year, with the largest reductions coming from the tablet category. However, the collective PCD market is set to return to "marginally small" growth in 2019, starting from the modest EMEA recovery of Q1 2017, the first quarter of positive Y-o-Y PC growth since 2012.

IDC expects traditional PC shipments to return to slow decline, until the positive growth forecast of 2019. Desktop volumes should continue to decline as consumers move to other platforms, while the commercial market and a "steady" move to ultraslim and convertibles boost notebook shipments.

"The steady refinement of slim and convertible designs, as well as rising commercial spending are helping stabilise overall traditional PC shipments," the analyst continues. "Although traditional PC shipments will decline slightly by the end of the forecast, rising replacements and steadier growth in emerging regions will keep commercial growth in positive territory and sustain total annual shipments above 252m throughout the forecast."

Meanwhile the high-level tablet story remains as it is. Regular "slate" tablets will continue to decline at double-digit rates in 2017, with the contraction slowing in the later years of the forecast. On the other hand, detachables should continue "strong" growth, even if IDC reduced its overall detachable tablet forecast following a weaker-than-expected 2016.

"Sales of detachable tablets haven't quite met our expectations and as a result we've reduced volume projections throughout the forecast period," IDC remarks. "New detachable tablet products continue to hit the market but the reality of this relatively new product category is that Microsoft and Apple control close to 50% of the volume and both companies have very cyclical product releases and relatively high price points."

An interesting trend to keep an eye on is the movement of OEMs from smartphones to Windows devices-- something happening with both detachable tablets and notebook PCs. For instance, Huawei recently launched such devices in both categories.

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