newsworthy trends

Flat-Panel TVs Look to Brighten Holidays

(NAPSA)—If there were such a thing as No. 1 with a bullet for holiday presents, this year it would probably be flat-panel TVs.

That's the prediction from trend watchers who say prices of plasma and LCD (liquid crystal display) televisions are expected to plummet—possibly by as much as 30 percent, according to analysts at TVPredictions.com. The market research firm iSuppli says 40-inch LCD prices are falling especially fast. Additional reports show that 32-inch sets are already down to around $1,000, meaning a number of people may find some good-sized TVs under the tree this year.

Flat-screen prices have even attracted the attention of investors, with financial guru and TV host Jim Cramer advising viewers to buy stock in flat-screen suppliers.

Falling prices aside, though, gift givers still need to choose between plasma and LCD flat-screen sets. Techies say that, generally speaking, plasma screens have three drawbacks compared to LCDs. First, plasmas tend to not produce a good picture in real-life light—meaning, if you want a plasma TV in a sun-drenched room, you may have to shut the blinds to watch it. LCD TVs maintain picture quality in all light, and can even be used outside.

Second, plasmas are prone to something called "burn in." The phenomenon occurs when prolonged images (such as the channel logo emblazoned on the bottom corner of a screen during a sporting event) don't fade away after the channel is changed. Instead, they remain on the screen as ghost images. LCDs aren't vulnerable to burn in.

What's Hot? LCD TVs may be on the top of a number of wish lists.

Third, while plasmas are typically only available in larger sizes (37 inches and up)—less convenient for smaller rooms—LCDs come in small and large sizes.

As a final tip for those wishing to maximize their viewing experience, look for LCD sets with a technology called Vikuiti, developed by 3M. Featured in Sharp's very popular AQUOS line, these Brightness Enhancement Films (BEF and DBEF) increase the brightness of liquid crystal displays and make TVs more energy efficient by recycling what would otherwise be wasted light and focusing it on the viewer. The result is a sharp picture that's twice as bright.

For more information on LCDs, visit vikuiti.com.