

PC shipments slide in 1Q, HP tops Dell in US (Update)

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(AP) -- Global shipments of personal computers fell 7.1 percent in the first three months of the year, but the decline was smaller than expected and research group IDC on Wednesday said the industry could turn around by the end of the year.

A second research group, Gartner Inc., calculated first-quarter PC shipments fell 6.5 percent from the same period in 2008. The two groups use different methods to track PC shipments.

IDC had predicted worldwide shipments would fall 8.2 percent in the quarter. The U.S. market was also much stronger than IDC forecast, with PC shipments falling 3.1 percent from a year ago, compared with an expected 8.9 percent drop. By Gartner's count, U.S. shipments dipped less than one percent.

"Based on the U.S. being the center of the financial crisis, and looking at trends of last recession, we were concerned that demand and growth would continue to decline," said Loren Loverde, an IDC program director.

Instead, the U.S. PC market, which took a beating in the fourth quarter, benefited from intense price competition among PC makers as well as the growing demand for netbooks, or small, cheap, low-powered laptops.

Both groups reported that Hewlett-Packard Co. used the trend to overtake Dell Inc. as the top PC maker in the U.S. HP's lower prices and

more established brand among shoppers helped push its market share to 27.6 percent. Dell's share fell to 26.3 percent as it struggled to reorganize its consumer business, according to IDC.

Taiwan's Acer Inc., the No. 3 PC maker in the U.S. and a force in the [netbook](#) market, snagged 10.5 percent of the market. Apple Inc.'s share edged up to 7.6 percent, and Japan-based Toshiba Corp., the fifth-largest, took 6.6 percent.

Worldwide, HP's market share crept up to 20.5 percent while Dell's slipped a few points to 13.6 percent, IDC reported. HP's shipments rose 2.9 percent as Dell's plunged 16.7 percent.

No. 3 Acer captured 11.6 percent of PC shipments worldwide. China's Lenovo Group's share was flat at 7 percent, and Toshiba's share edged up to 5.4 percent.

Chipmaker Intel Corp. on Tuesday said personal computer sales "bottomed out" in the first quarter. Neither IDC nor Gartner wanted to match Intel's bold assessment, but IDC took a more optimistic stance.

"I don't think Intel's comment was meant to say we're going to come roaring back next quarter," Loverde said. "It's likely we won't see growth deteriorate from here."

Before the release of Wednesday's numbers, IDC had forecast an 8.4 percent decline in the second quarter and a 4.5 percent drop in the third before seeing growth in the fourth quarter.

George Shiffler, research director at Gartner, said in a statement that retailers may be restocking inventory, but "this restocking should not be interpreted as a recovery in PC end-user demand. It's still unclear if the global PC market has hit the bottom."

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