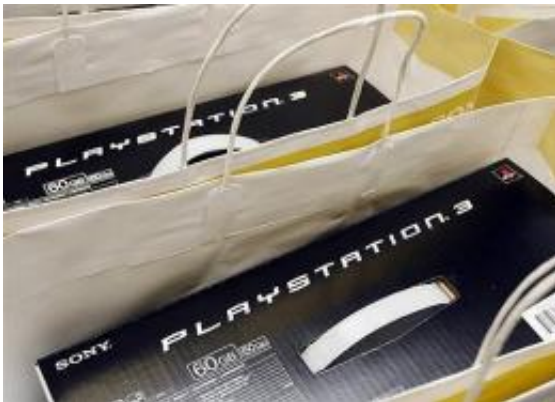


Sony PS3 tops Nintendo Wii in Japan in March: survey

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The first copies of the new Sony Playstation 3 (PS3) are packed and ready to go on sale after midnight in 2007 at the Sony Center in Berlin. Sony has been given a vital boost in the battle for the multibillion-dollar video game industry, with a survey showing its PlayStation 3 outsold Nintendo's Wii in Japan for the first time in 16 months.

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Japanese sales of the PS3 surged 80 percent in the five weeks to March 29 from a year earlier to 146,948 consoles, while demand for the [Wii](#) plunged almost 63 percent to 99,335, publishing firm Enterbrain Inc said.

The PS3 got a boost from the release of popular new games such as Resident Evil 5, putting the [console](#) ahead of the Wii for the first time since November 2007, when Sony was lifted by the launch of a new slimmed down version.

Experts said Nintendo has already sold so many Wii consoles that it appears to be struggling to find new buyers, but it should continue to enjoy strong demand for games and accessories.

"PS3 hardware sales picked up due to brisk-selling software. But I don't see any drastic change in the industry landscape," Okasan Securities analyst Masashi Morita said.

The Wii, launched in 2006, is known for its innovative motion-sensitive controller which has appealed to people buying a [video-game](#) machine for the first time.

While Sony put the emphasis on chip power and ultra-realistic graphics for the latest addition to the PlayStation series, Nintendo opted to develop a cheaper, easy-to-use console that would appeal to a wider audience.

The strategy has paid off handsomely, rewarding Nintendo with surging profits in recent years. More than 10 million Wii machines were sold in the United States alone in 2008, setting a new video game record.

"The market for the Wii is saturated. People who already have a Wii console may as well go for another game console, such as the PS3," said Osamu Hirose, an analyst at the Tokai Tokyo Research Center.

"But it also means Nintendo has more potential to grow because it can start selling software once people have its hardware consoles," he said.

Even so, the drop in hardware sales is the latest sign that the once-invincible video game titan is feeling the pinch.

Nintendo has forecast a 10.6 percent fall in net profit to 230 billion yen (2.3 billion dollars) in the year to March 2009, though that would be a much more respectable performance than Sony, which is bracing for a big loss.

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