

Global 1Q PC shipments jump more than 20 percent

April 14 2010, By JESSICA MINTZ , AP Technology Writer

(AP) -- Worldwide personal computer shipments increased more than 20 percent in the first three months of 2010 from the same period a year ago, a sign the PC business is on firmer ground after one of its shakiest stretches ever.

Analysts at research firms IDC and Gartner Inc. said Wednesday that the quarterly increase was higher than expected, and was driven by spending by both consumers and businesses. That could indicate that many kinds of technology companies, not just ones that sell PCs, will report stronger-than-expected first-quarter results as [Intel Corp.](#) did Tuesday.

Consumers' interest in low-cost laptops helped prop up the PC industry for the last three quarters. That remained true in the first quarter, a time when PC sales are typically slower. Consumers also started buying more of the slim "all-in-one" desktop computers that build everything into the monitor, IDC said.

In China, consumers flocked to deals offered around the Chinese New Year holidays, which helped push up [PC shipments](#) 45.4 percent in the country, according to Gartner.

The analysts also said businesses in the U.S. and Western Europe are starting to purchase new computers for the first time since the [economic downturn](#).

Mikako Kitagawa, an analyst at Gartner, said businesses spent more

freely as the overall economy improved. She also said Windows 7, [Microsoft](#) Corp.'s newest PC operating system, will push companies to replace computers faster in the second half of 2010 and the beginning of 2011.

Gartner said PC shipments rose 27.4 percent. IDC estimated shipments grew 24.2 percent. The two groups calculate the figure using slightly different methods.

The quarter looked particularly strong compared with a year ago, when PC shipments sank about 7 percent. The holiday period of 2008 and the first half of 2009 marked the industry's worst stretch in several years. But then consumers' interest in "netbooks" - tiny, inexpensive, low-powered laptops - and other cheap portable computers helped drive a turnaround, beginning with a tiny increase in shipments during the third quarter of 2009.

Hewlett-Packard Co. remained the top computer maker in the world, followed by Acer Inc., Dell Inc. and Lenovo Group Ltd. By IDC's measure, Toshiba Corp. was the No. 5 PC maker. Gartner's rankings showed AsusTek Computer Inc. of Taiwan on par with Toshiba.

Acer's shipments grew faster than HP's or Dell's in the quarter. Analysts from both groups said HP and Dell have had a hard time matching Acer's low prices.

In the U.S., HP and Dell remained the top two PC makers by a wide margin. But their market shares slipped a few percentage points, while Acer and Toshiba gained. Apple Inc. is No. 5 in the U.S.

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