

Barnes & Noble's unveils \$249 Nook Tablet

November 7 2011, By MAE ANDERSON , AP Retail Writer



Barnes & Noble unveiled a \$249 Nook Tablet Monday just ahead of the crucial holiday shopping season as the book retailer fights for a larger share of the lucrative e-book market.

Tablets and e-book readers are going to be flying off the shelves before the holidays, and both Barnes & Noble Inc. and Amazon are hoping to challenge Apple and its dominant iPad for a piece of the holiday pie.

The Nook Tablet arrives just weeks after Amazon.com released its \$199 Kindle Fire tablet. Barnes & Noble conceded on price while offering more memory and a product that it says has a longer battery life than the Kindle Fire.

But it cut the price on its Nook Color, which doesn't have streaming services, to \$199, from \$239. It cut the price for its Nook Simple Touch Reader, a black-and-white reader that doesn't have a browser, to \$99 from \$139.

The Nook Tablet will be in stores and shipped to homes on Nov. 17. Like the Nook Color, it has a 7-inch color touchscreen. The tablet will also come preloaded with apps from Netflix and Hulu.

Morningstar Analyst Peter Wahlstrom said the tablet appears to be a solid device, and that most features were expected as part of the next iteration of the Nook Color.



This product image provided by Barnes & Noble Inc., shows the new \$249 Nook Tablet, which was unveiled Monday, Nov. 7, 2011, in New York. The e-book

reader includes more features of a full-blown tablet than its prior offerings as the tablet wars heat up ahead of the all-important holiday season. (AP Photo/Barnes & Noble Inc.)

"At \$249, it gives Barnes & Noble customers or potential customers enough to think hard about which device they want," he said.

Since introducing its first Nook in 2009, Barnes & Noble has spent heavily on its e-book readers and e-bookstore as people change the way they read, and also to fight off tough competition from discounters and online retailers. The New York company has struggled to turn a profit and saw its rival, Borders Group Inc., seek bankruptcy protection and then liquidate its assets.

In its most recent quarter, Barnes & Noble reported a narrower loss as revenue edged up 2 percent to \$1.42 billion.

The Nook Tablet weighs less than a pound, has a battery life that enables nine hours of video watching and comes with 16 gigabytes of memory with an expandable SD slot to add memory.

Another selling point is Nook's free customer service at the more than 700 Barnes & Noble stores, CEO William Lynch said.

If you bought a Kindle and had a question about it, Lynch asked, "where would you go, Amazon's headquarters in Seattle?"

Apple Inc.'s iPad is the king of tablets now. It starts at \$499 for a bare-bones version and costs \$829 for the most expensive model.

Analysts at Gartner Inc. predict that three of every four tablets sold this

year will be an iPad. Apple has sold nearly 29 million since it released its first in April 2010. Barnes & Noble and Amazon.com Inc. generally do not release sales figures.

In addition to being available online and at Barnes & Noble stores, the Nook Tablet will be sold at a variety of retailers including Target, Best Buy, Staples and Fry's.

Shares of Barnes & Noble Inc. fell 13 cents to \$11.48 during afternoon trading.

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