

Apple iPad outmuscles Android in global tablet sales

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Global shipments of tablet devices and e-readers slumped 38.4 percent

in the first three months of 2012 to 17.4 million, compared with a fourth quarter pumped up by the holiday gift-giving season, according to research firm IDC.

But year-over-year, tablet sales were up a whopping 120 percent, in a market shifting away from desktop and [laptop computers](#).

"Apple reasserted its dominance in the market this quarter, driving huge shipment totals at a time when all but a few [Android](#) vendors saw their numbers drop precipitously after posting big gains during the holiday buying season," said Tom Mainelli of IDC.

"Apple's move to position the [iPad](#) as an all-purpose tablet, instead of just a content consumption device, is resonating with consumers as well as educational and commercial buyers. And its decision to keep a lower-priced iPad 2 in the market after it launched the new iPad in March seems to be paying off as well."

Apple shipped 11.8 million iPads during the quarter, down from 15.4 million units in the fourth quarter of 2011, as its worldwide share rose to 68 percent from 54.7 percent.

[Amazon](#) saw a precipitous drop to four percent of the market, compared with 16.8 percent in the fourth quarter, and slipped to third place overall.

Samsung jumped ahead of Amazon to second place overall while Lenovo vaulted into the number four spot, followed by Barnes & Noble's Nook at number five.

Although total Android shipments were down sharply in the quarter, IDC said it sees a rebound with companies such as [Samsung](#) and Lenovo beginning to gain traction with new products.

"It seems some of the mainstream Android vendors are finally beginning to grasp a fact that Amazon, B&N, and Pandigital figured out early on: Namely, to compete in the media tablet market with Apple, they must offer their products at notably lower price points," Mainelli said.

"We expect a new, larger-screened device from Amazon at a typically aggressive price point, and Google will enter the market with an inexpensive, co-branded ASUS tablet designed to compete directly on price with Amazon's Kindle Fire."

The impact of Microsoft Windows 8- and Windows RT-based tablets, which are widely expected to ship into the market by the fourth quarter, is not yet clear, IDC said.

"The worldwide tablet market is entering a new phase in the second half of 2012 that will undoubtedly reshape the competitive landscape," said IDC's Bob O'Donnell.

"While Apple will continue to sit comfortably on the top for now, the battle for the next several positions is going to be fierce. Throw in Ultrabooks, the launch of Windows 8, and a few surprise product launches, and you have all the makings of an incredible 2012 holiday shopping season."

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