

Mobile users say best apps in life are free: survey

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A fair goer tries out an eBook reader app in March 2012. Nearly 90 percent of the apps downloaded for use on mobile devices worldwide are free, and most of the paid apps cost \$3 or less, a research firm said Tuesday.

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The report by [Gartner Inc.](#) said worldwide mobile app downloads will surpass 45.6 billion in 2012, with free downloads accounting for 40.1 billion.

Among the paid applications, 90 percent were less than \$3 each, Gartner said.

The research firm said it expects this trend to continue with apps between 99 cents and \$2.99 accounting for 87.5 percent of paid downloads in 2012, and 96 percent by 2016.

Apple's App Store has been the largest source of apps, and will account for 21 billion downloads in 2012, an increase of 74 percent over 2011.

"Apple's market share is the largest, considering its App Store accounts for 25 percent of available apps in all stores," said Brian Blau, research director at Gartner.

"The number of apps available is driven by an increasing number of stores in the market today... These stores will see their combined share of total downloads increase, but demand for apps overall will still be dominated by Apple, Google and Microsoft."

Gartner's Sandy Shen said Amazon is another important player in the market.

"Amazon has appealed to users with its strong brand, global presence and a good selection of high-quality content while [Facebook](#)'s recently launched App Center—supporting both [mobile devices](#) and desktops—will become a powerful competitor due to its strong brand and leading position in [social networking](#) and gaming," said Shen.

"In China, there is a boom market of independent Android stores, due to the lack of presence of [Google](#) Play and 'weak' stores from CSPs (communications firms). We expect to see more new entrants to the market, aiming to deepen relationships with their customers and/or to capture some of this growth market."

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