

Android extends global smartphone lead, survey finds

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Three Motorola Razr smartphones, which all use Google's Android operating system, are displayed at a launch in September 2012. Google's Android operating system will power more than two-thirds of smartphones sold worldwide in 2012, and will remain the dominant platform for at least the next four years, a survey showed Tuesday.

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The survey by the research firm IDC showed [Android](#) will be the platform for 68.3 percent of smartphones shipped in 2012, far ahead of 18.8 percent for the iOS platform used on Apple's [iPhone](#).

"IDC forecasts Android to be the clear leader in the smartphone mobile [operating system](#) race, thanks in large part to a broad selection of devices from a wide range of partners," the market tracker said.

"[Samsung](#) is the leading Android smartphone seller though resurgent smartphone vendors LG Electronics and Sony, both of which cracked the top five smartphone vendors during the third quarter, are not to be overlooked. IDC believes the net result of this will be continued double-digit growth throughout the forecast period."

The report said Android will retain the top position through 2016, when it will have 63.8 percent of the market in the face of increased competition from Apple, Microsoft's Windows Phone and others.

"Android is expected to stay in front, but we also expect it to be the biggest target for competing operating systems to grab market share," said Ramon Llamas, research manager with IDC.

"At the same time, Windows Phone stands to gain the most market share as its smartphone and carrier partners have gained valuable experience in selling the differentiated experience [Windows Phone](#) has to offer."

Llamas said other players jockeying for market share will include [Research in Motion](#)'s BlackBerry, which releases a new operating system next year, and the open-source Linux system.

[BlackBerry](#), which until a few years ago was the dominant smartphone, will see its [market share](#) slide to 4.7 percent in 2012, according to IDC, and to 4.1 percent by 2016.

Linux will be used on two percent of smartphones this year and 1.5 percent in 2016, it said. Windows will grow from 2.6 percent this year to 11.4 percent in 2016, IDC said.

Apple's iOS will remain the clear number two platform but will be "cost prohibitive for some users within many emerging markets," IDC said.

"In order to maintain current growth rates, Apple will need to examine the possibility of offering less expensive models," it said.

The report said the overall worldwide mobile phone market will grow just 1.4 percent in 2012, the lowest annual growth rate in three years. The total number of devices sold is expected to be around 1.7 billion.

The forecast reflects an estimated 39.5 percent growth in smartphones, but declines in sales of other kinds of mobile phones.

"Sluggish economic conditions worldwide have cast a pall over the mobile phone market this year," said IDC's Kevin Restivo.

"However, the fourth quarter will be relatively bright due in part to sales of high-profile smartphones, such as the iPhone 5 and Samsung's Galaxy S3, in addition to lower-cost Android-powered smartphones shipped to China and other high-growth emerging markets."

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