

Global tablet sales surged in past quarter

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South Korean women show Google's new tablet PC, Nexus 7, in Seoul on September 27, 2012. Worldwide tablet sales jumped in the fourth quarter beyond even some of the most optimistic forecasts to 52.5 million, with Android-powered devices pacing growth, a survey showed Thursday.

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The preliminary survey by business research firm IDC showed the [tablet market](#) grew 75.3 percent year over year in the quarter. and rocketed 74.3 percent from the previous quarter's total of 30.1 million.

IDC said the strongest growth came from Android, including tablets made by [South Korea](#)'s Samsung and Taiwan's Asus, which makes a [Google](#)-branded [Nexus](#) tablet.

Apple remained the biggest seller, but its market share was under 50 percent, IDC said.

The survey found that Microsoft, which launched its new Surface tablet in the quarter, failed to break into the top five sellers and shipped a modest 900,000 of the devices in the quarter.

Overall, the market's strong gains came from a spate of new product launches, including the iPad mini, and lower prices, which encouraged buyers over the [holiday shopping](#) season, IDC said.

"We expected a very strong [fourth quarter](#), and the market didn't disappoint," said IDC analyst Tom Mainelli.

"The record-breaking quarter stands in stark contrast to the PC market, which saw shipments decline during the quarter for the first time in more than five years."

Apple's [iPad](#) held its top position with 22.9 million units shipped. That was up 48 percent from a year earlier, but lower than overall market growth.

As a result, Apple's market share declined for a second quarter in a row to 43.6 percent from 46.4 percent in the third quarter.

Samsung, the number two vendor, saw year-on-year growth of 263 percent, selling 7.9 million tablets and grabbing a 15.1 percent market share.

IDC said [Amazon](#), which does not provide its own sales data, delivered some six million tablets in the quarter to retain its spot as the number three vendor.

That represented 26.8 percent growth, giving Amazon a market share of 11.5 percent, IDC said.

Fourth place belonged to Asus, which sold 3.1 million tablets, year-on-year growth of more than 400 percent. That gave the Taiwan-based firm a 5.8 percent [market share](#).

Barnes & Noble sold one million of its Nook tablets and accounted to 1.9 percent of the market, the survey found.

IDC analyst Ryan Reith said Microsoft will need to shift its strategy to compete better in the tablet market.

"There is no question that Microsoft is in this tablet race to compete for the long haul," he said, calling the market reaction to Surface "muted."

"We believe that Microsoft and its partners need to quickly adjust to the market realities of smaller screens and lower prices. In the long run, consumers may grow to believe that high-end computing tablets with desktop operating systems are worth a higher premium than other tablets, but until then (selling prices) on Windows 8 and Windows RT devices need to come down to drive higher volumes."

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