

IDC raises 2012 forecast for tablet computers

The Associated Press

Research group IDC increased its forecast for tablet computer shipments this year after 2011 ended stronger than it had anticipated.

IDC said Tuesday that it now expects worldwide shipments of 106 million in 2012, up from the previous forecast of nearly 88 million. The new figure represents 54 percent growth from nearly 69 million shipments in 2011.

The November introduction of Amazon.com Inc.'s low-cost Kindle Fire, which runs a modified version of Google's Android operating system, helped 2011 growth, IDC said.

Tom Mainelli, IDC's research director for mobile connected devices, said he initially expected the Fire to take sales away from other Android tablets without having much of an effect on Apple's iPad. Instead, the Fire and the iPad both did well, as did other tablet computers.

"It seems all the attention that the Fire launch garnered raised awareness of media tablets in general, and a great number of vendors benefited from this increased awareness," he said.

In the fourth quarter, Apple sold 15.4 million iPads, more than double the 7.3 million sold a year earlier. Among all manufacturers, IDC says 28.2 million tablet computers were shipped in the final three months of 2011, about 2.5 times the number a year earlier.

The 68.7 million tablets shipped in 2011 represents a 9 percent increase from IDC's forecast of 63.3 million and is about 3.5 times the 19.4 million shipped in 2010.

That's still small compared with more than 350 million personal computers shipped in 2011. That number likely would have been even higher had there not been shortages of hard drives resulting from heavy flooding at manufacturing centers in Thailand.

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