

IT & TELECOM

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Apple unveils 4G iPad

REUTERS, SAN FRANCISCO

Apple Inc's latest iPad sports a crisper display and an array of technology advances that, while less than revolutionary, may prove enough for now to keep rivals like Amazon.com Inc and Samsung Electronics Co Ltd at bay.

While stopping short of vaulting ahead of Motorola and Samsung, the device -- which comes 4G-ready and boasts a quad-core graphics processor -- is capable enough to help safeguard its two-thirds market share. "The screen is a notable feature for non-techie customers, as is the faster connectivity. That's something that mainstream consumers can identify with," said Morningstar analyst Michael Holt. "There's pent-up demand because a new device was widely anticipated. I they've made enough incremental improvements to do well."

Other analysts say the faster processing may begin to draw heavy gamers, encroaching on turf now dominated by gaming-hardware makers such as Microsoft or Sony.

Chief Executive Tim Cook, presiding over his second major product launch after debuting with 2011's voice-enabled iPhone 4S, introduced the highly anticipated third iteration of the tablet, which is available for pre-orders from Wednesday and will hit store shelves March 16.

But he stumped many in the audience by breaking away from the tradition of calling the third-generation tablet the iPad 3, as some had expected, referring to it simply as the "new iPad."

The company said it will continue to sell the iPad 2 but dropped its price by \$100. The older tablet now starts at \$399 while the new third-generation wi-fi only iPad starts at \$499.

The high-end model of Apple's latest iPad starts at \$629 and will be capable of operating on a high-speed 4G "LTE," or Long-Term Evolution, network. At speeds roughly 10 times faster than current 3G technology, that may help banish the sometimes shaky video quality of older devices.

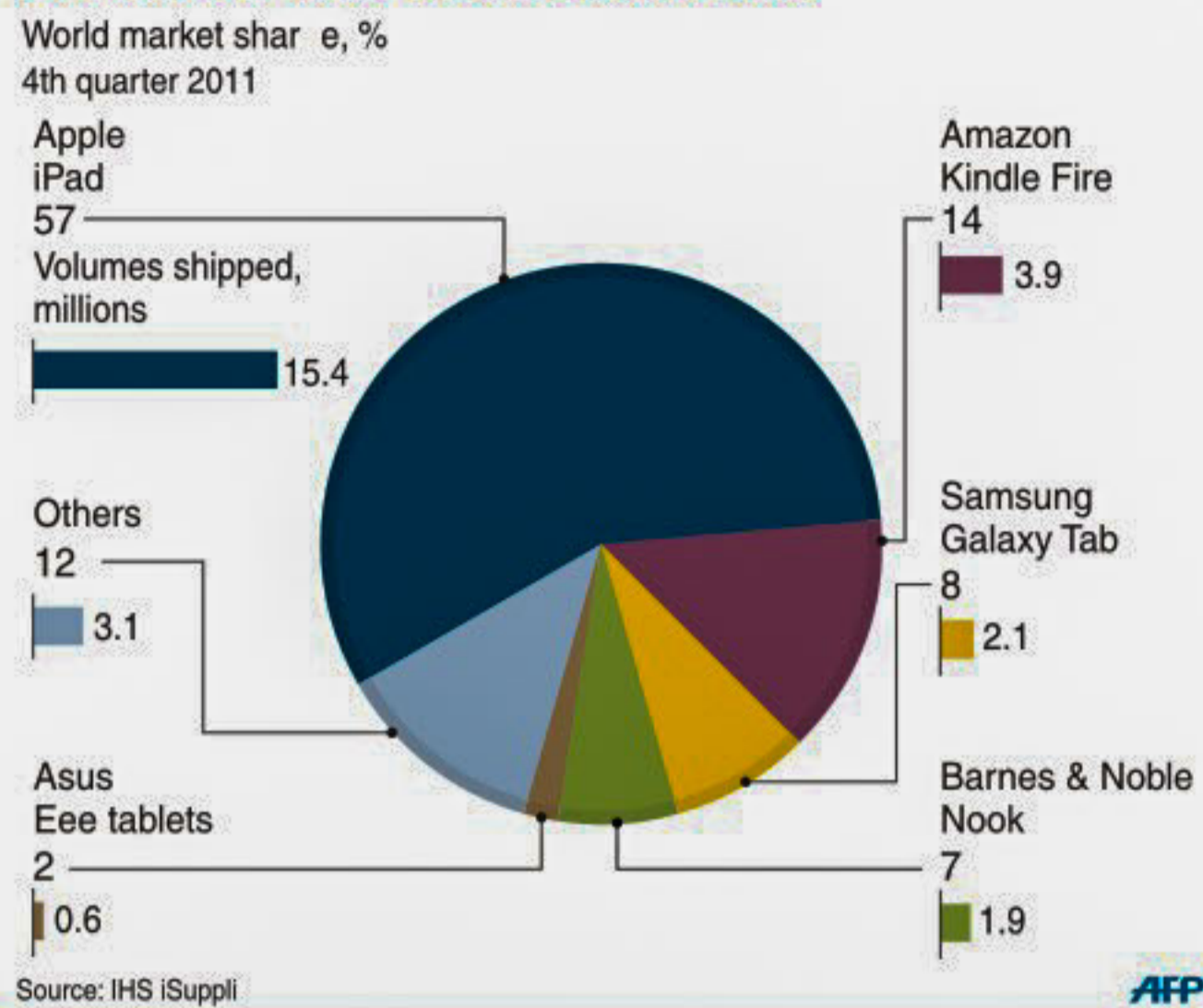
Wall Street had anticipated many of the features Cook showed off on Wednesday, including a higher-definition "retina display" screen - containing several times as many pixels within the same area - and a better camera.

Shares of Apple closed barely higher, up 43 cents at \$530.69. They hovered around \$530 throughout the unveiling event, which was attended by Marc Benioff, CEO of enterprise cloud computing company Salesforce.com Inc; Jeremy Stoppelman, CEO of online business review site Yelp Inc; and influential venture-capitalist John Doerr, among other industry luminaries.

Some had held out hope of a positive Apple surprise, recalling late CEO Steve Jobs and his now-iconic "one more thing" at the very end of such announcements. Others said the upgrades and tweaks to the iPad could only go so far in fending off hard-charging competition.

"While the hardware is notably enhanced, with an impres-

Battle of the tablet devices



Apple CEO Tim Cook speaks during an Apple product launch event at Yerba Buena Center for the Arts on March 7 in San Francisco. Apple Inc. introduced the third version of the iPad and an updated Apple TV.

sive retina display, better camera and faster processor, there are still some areas of improvement that Apple needs to work on, in order to stay ahead of its encroaching competitors," said Fred Huett, managing partner at Greenwich Consulting.

"As tablets are increasingly being used for personal media consumption, it is promising to see a better screen resolution. But will this be enough to ensure Apple's competitive lead in the marketplace? No."

Others say Apple is betting a 4G-equipped iPad will tempt more U.S. consumers to pay for higher-quality video on the go. That, in turn, should give Verizon Wireless and AT&T Inc a revenue boost, analysts say.

Google recasts Android Market with new name



REUTERS, San Francisco

Google Inc is renaming its online storefront for music, books and digital goods, its latest move to raise its profile in the market for electronic content sales and to better compete with Apple Inc and Amazon.com Inc.

The company has retired the Android Market name for its store that sells apps, videos, music and electronic books on the Web and on mobile devices. From Tuesday, the store will be rebranded as the Google Play Store.

The change is designed to make it clearer to consumers that Google offers a broad catalogue of content in addition to the apps programmed for smartphones and tablets based on its Android operating system.

"Some people see the Android icon on

their homescreen and they think it's just for apps," said Chris Yerga, engineering director for Android Digital Content, in an interview with Reuters on Monday.

The name is being introduced three and a half years after Google launched its Android Market as a central outlet for consumers to download the mobile apps created for the growing number of Android-based smartphones.

Android is the world's No.1 smartphone operating system, used in smartphones sold by Motorola, Samsung and HTC, among others.

There are more than 450,000 Android-compatible apps available from third-party software developers versus 550,000 apps available for Apple iOS devices such as the iPhone and iPad.

Telenor to make Wikipedia available to 135 million customers

ABDULLAH MAMUN, back from Barcelona

Telenor Group and the Wikimedia Foundation announced a new partnership to offer Wikipedia free of data charges on mobile devices by making versions of Wikipedia available to 135 million mobile customers of Telenor Group in Asia and Europe.

This was announced at the GSMA Mobile World Congress 2012 in Barcelona, Spain on February 28. According to a Telenor statement, the company involves millions in Asia through the I-Genius project, which has already reached out to 300,000 Bangladeshi students and school-children with a call to explore open knowledge on the internet.

It said customers with a Telenor SIM will be able to access a version of the

encyclopedia for as many times as they like in a given period free of charge, as long as they stay within Wikipedia's pages.

The initiative is part of the Wikimedia Foundation's mobile strategy, which focuses on reaching the billions of people around the world whose primary opportunity to access the internet is via a mobile device, the statement read.

Barry Newstead, chief global development officer of Wikimedia said, "The Wikimedia Foundation is working to remove barriers to free knowledge, and for most people around the world right now, cost and accessibility are the two biggest hurdles. We applaud Telenor for joining us to deliver free access to Wikipedia for their customers."

This partnership supports Telenor's commitment to bring more value to its

mobile customers. Especially, the company has pioneered the development of value-adding services to rural and underserved communities in Asia.

Kristin Skogen Lund, executive vice president and head of digital services at Telenor Group said, "We are delighted to have the opportunity to work with the Wikimedia Foundation."

The 3-year partnership between Telenor Group and the Wikimedia Foundation will cover 135 million users. The agreement is signed by seven countries: Thailand, Malaysia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, Montenegro, and Serbia. By the end of the year, more markets are expected to join. The agreement will be implemented step by step throughout 2012, with the first markets launching during the second quarter.

Bijoya Citizen initiative against repression of women

IMRUL KAYES CHOWDHURY

Although we celebrated International Women's Day yesterday, we cannot ignore the fact that violence against women is still quite high in this country.

Amnesty International in its Annual Report 2011 published that according to Bangladesh government figures violence against women topped all crimes reported to the police in the first six months in 2011 alone. Of 7,285 complaints made, 1,586 were rape cases.

To make a difference in this grave issue, a group of people from home and abroad launched an online initiative called Bijoya.

Bijoya (<http://bijoya.crowdmap.com>) is an online citizen initiative to report incidents against women in Bangladesh with the help of technologies such as SMS, e-mail, tweets, Facebook and web.

This initiative lets people use easy and affordable technologies available to them to report any incidents against women in Bangladesh. Bijoya authorities also keep the identity of reporter anonymous if asked to.

It was launched on December 16 last year to coincide with the Victory Day of Bangladesh.

Shehzaad Shams from UK came up with the idea while he was working in Amnesty International Secretariat in London and approached his colleague Buddha Halder with the idea for his feedback.

Shams said they worked intensively in the role of technology, human rights and social change at Amnesty International (Shams left Amnesty later).

"I had been thinking for a long time on how to transfer what we know better such as technology and social change, for the betterment of Bangladesh. Having worked on various projects on behalf of Amnesty, we thought to take this personal citizen initiative out of our CSR (Citizen Social Responsibility)" Shams said.

The crowdmap identifies most vulnerable

locations in the country where incidents against women are on a rise. Law enforcement agencies and local government authorities with other established sources of information and evidence can take actions and preventive measures in order to ensure security and safety of women.

NGOs and women's organisations can also use this map in their development work for women and girls.

With Bijoya, its officials hope to see triumph of women in Bangladesh over social evils such as dowry, rape, harassment, eve teasing, acid throwing, domestic and other violence.

Partha Sarathi Kar, a Sylhet-based open source specialist and editor of the monthly e-Prithibi magazine, set up the technical backbone of Bijoya while Shams and Halder provided the directions from London.

When heard about Bijoya, Fatema Samina Yasmin, expressed her interest to voluntarily get involved with the initiative. She works at the Institute of Governance Studies, BRAC University.

Shams then approached Shahid Uddin Akbar of Bangladesh Institute of ICT in Development (BIID) who agreed to include Bijoya as one of their strategic projects on technology and social change.

Bijoya recently partnered with Maya (www.maya.com.bd) as their 'incident reporting partner'.

Shams also informed that talks are underway to forge alliances with some women's NGOs, blogs and leading newspapers and IT companies.

Bijoya has harassmap.org of Egypt and uShahidi as foreign partners, Shams said.

"This is a purely citizen initiative and we believe it is possible to make this work in the long run if institutional partners join hands in informing and involving general citizens", he added.



Google boss lays out future vision at world's top tech fair

AFP, Hanover

Google's executive chairman Eric Schmidt cast a science-fiction vision of the future as the world's top tech fair opened Monday, with the German IT sector predicting record sales in 2012.

"Think back to 'Star Trek', or my favourite the 'Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy'. Much of what those writers imagined is now possible," said Schmidt.

"Translating, voice recognition, electronic books. The people who predict that intelligent robots, virtual reality or self-driving cars will soon be commonplace are right," he added.

"Governments will be able to spot the economic makings of a crisis before they happen and doctors will be able to accurately predict the outbreak of disease before anyone feels it," predicted Schmidt.

The tech boss was speaking at the opening ceremony of the CeBIT, the world's biggest high-tech fair in the northern German city of Hanover, with 4,200 exhibitors from 70 countries expected to wow punt-



Eric Schmidt

ers with their latest gadgets.

This year, the fair was to focus on the possibilities offered by "cloud computing", the concept of storing data remotely rather than on individual machines, as well as "managing trust", or the hot topic of internet security.

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