BlackBerry, Apple, Kobo Top Brands in Canada's Mobile Device Market

But as Smartphone, Tablet and eReader Markets Evolve, Will this Continue?

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Toronto, ON – It is clear that we love our mobile devices, as more and more Canadians purchase and use Smartphone, Tablet and/or eReader devices. But which brands are winning the bulk of that love? The most recent wave of Ipsos Reid's Mobil-ology Study of Smartphone, Tablet & eReader users in Canada examined each category and compared market share over the eight month period between January and August of 2011.

"Last month, we reported that sales of Tablets were set to take off while those of Smartphones are slowing down. But despite what you may hear, BlackBerry still dominates the battle of the Smartphone brands in Canada," says Mary Beth Barbour, Senior Vice President of Ipsos Reid. "Even when you consider the brand of the operating system - rather than just the brand of the device - BlackBerry still captures the largest share."

Perhaps related to the slowing pace of Smartphone adoption in Canada, market share has remained essentially unchanged this period. BlackBerry maintains close to forty percent of the market (41% in January and 38% in August), Apple captures one-quarter (23% in January to 25% in August), and a variety of other handset brands using the Android platform (Samsung, LG, HTC, Motorola, and Sony) continue to represent 27% of the market (up 1%age point from January's wave of the Mobil-ology Study).

"From a Tablet perspective, Apple's iPad has built a commanding presence in the Tablet sector - in fact it established the category," adds Barbour. "But the question is did the long awaited entry of BlackBerry's PlayBook change the dynamic of the market? Certainly BlackBerry has challenges ahead, but they are not out of the picture for Tablets yet and particularly not for Smartphones, a sector where at the moment they still lead."

At the start of 2011, Apple dominated the Tablet market with 78% penetration of the market. Eight months later and after the introduction of a series of new competitors, including BlackBerry's PlayBook, Apple still remains the top Tablet brand, although their dominance slipped to 56% in August. BlackBerry emerged from 0% to 10% in those eight months and a series of other smaller newcomers have staked out very narrow slices of the market share pie at this point.

On the eReader side of the mobile device market, three brands have emerged as the key players for Canadians. Indigo's Kobo has grown its share from 29% in January to 36% in August, while Amazon's Kindle held steady at 25% and Sony's eReader slipped a few points from 30% in January to 23% in August.
"In Canada, the Big Three brands remain BlackBerry for Smartphones, Apple for Tablets and Kobo for eReaders. But as the market continues to change with plateaus in Smartphone sales, high adoption of the Tablet and continued interest in eReaders, there is no doubt these brands will face new challenges and Canadians will welcome new choices," concludes Barbour. "BlackBerry's current troubles and the recent passing of Apple's Steve Jobs continue to keep these brands in the news, but the main challenge will be to stay fresh, remain relevant and peak the interest of buyers. And with Android and others gunning for their share of the pie, it will continue to be an exciting market to watch."

These findings are based on two studies (the first in January 2011, the second in August 2011). Both studies were conducted among adult residents of Canada via the Ipsos Opinions Online Panel, one of Ipsos Reid's national online panels. The initial online survey had an overall sample size of n=50,000, the second an overall sample size of n=46,000. The numbers quoted above are *based on subgroups of the larger sample size. Sub-samples are as follows: Smartphones (January n=11,000, August n=12,500), Tablets (January n=1,400, August n=2,500) and eReaders (January n=2,500, August n=3,900). The results are based on a sample where weighting was employed to balance demographics and ensure that the sample's composition reflects that of the actual online Canadian population according to Census data. A survey with an unweighted probability for the base sizes mentioned above and a 100% response rate would have an estimated margin of error that would not exceed +/-2.6% percentage points. Had the entire population of Canadian adults been surveyed, results would be accurate 19 times out of 20. All sample surveys and polls may be subject to other sources of error, including, but not limited to coverage error, and measurement error.*

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