Smartphone Activations Hit Record Holiday Highs

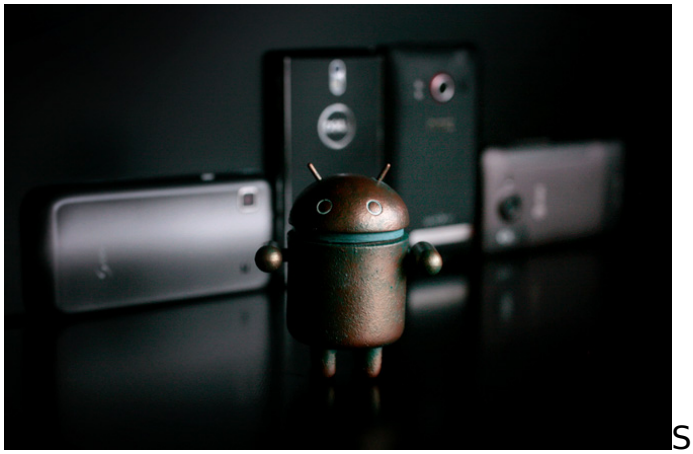

Smartphones were huge gift choices this holiday season, with activations reaching record highs.

Photo: Jim Merithew/Wired.com

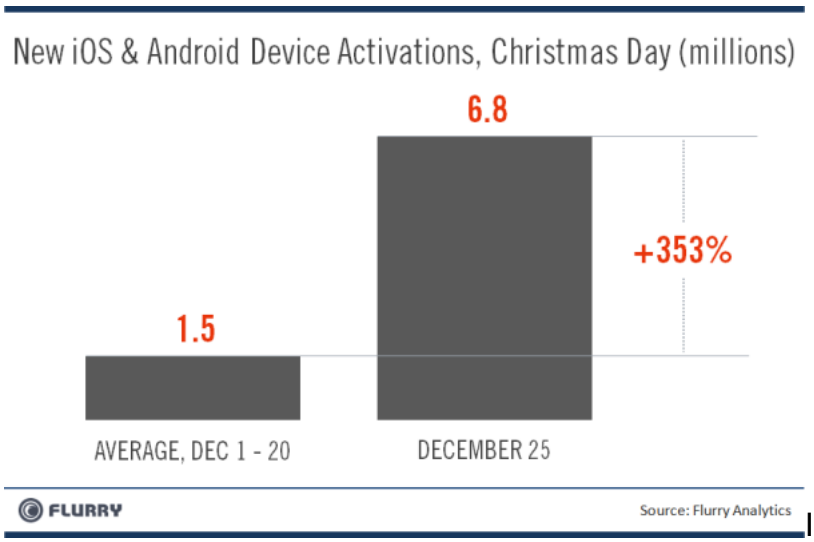
Secularly speaking, Christmas is about three things: Engorging oneself at massive holiday dinners, sitting awkwardly with family members you only see annually, and the presents. Oh, yes, the wonderful, wonderful presents.

Topping this year's smorgasbord of gifts, it seems, was the smartphone. More devices flooded into eager customers' hands than in any previous holiday season.

Smartphone activations hit record highs this Christmas, with combined Android and iOS activations topping the 6.8 million mark on Dec. 25 alone, according to mobile research firm Flurry Analytics. That's an uptick of more than four times the average number of activations during the three weeks that preceded the holiday, and a 140 percent increase from last year's Christmas Day activations.

And with such rapid hardware adoption, of course, comes a voracious appetite for apps. Google surpassed the 10 billion Android Market download mark earlier this month. An impressive milestone, though Apple *did* hit 15 billion downloads nearly six months ago.

App download rates will only skyrocket, if Christmas day numbers are any indicator. Flurry estimates more than 175 million Android and iOS apps were downloaded during the period from 11 am to 11 pm on Christmas day, with more than a quarter of a billion apps downloaded over the entire 24-hour period. That's nearly twice the amount of apps downloaded on a single day than ever before.



It's been a gadget-friendly holiday season overall, according to a number of recently released stats. One of every four smartphones sold in the U.K. this Christmas was an iPhone 4S, as the *Financial Times* previously reported. And earlier this week, Amazon claimed its Kindle tablets and e-readers were flying off of the virtual shelves, with online orders of Kindle devices reaching more than 1 million a week throughout the month of December. This includes the Fire, the Touch and the regular Kindle; Amazon didn't break down percentages.

While these figures are unprecedented, they come as little surprise considering the rise in smart device adoption over the past two years. In the U.S. alone, over 60 percent of those ages 18 to 24 now own a smartphone, according to data from research firm Nielsen. For 25- to 34-year-olds, smartphone ownership is over 50 percent.

Smartphone adoption will inevitably increase, as prices drop, and manufacturers work harder to penetrate the market. Microsoft, for example, will dive headfirst into the new year, with a huge push behind its Windows Phone platform. That means stronger partnerships with hardware manufacturers (like Nokia, for one), developer recruitment, and a re-dedication to bolstering the Windows Phone app ecosystem.

What's more, Google's latest iteration of Android (Ice Cream Sandwich), one of the company's most anticipated software releases, was made available to the masses just before Christmas. And, of course, Apple's iPhone 4S sales aren't showing signs of stopping.

So if you didn't find a smartphone under the tree this Christmas, fret not: There's always next year.

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