



USB Flash Tracker™

Trends for USB Flash Drive Markets

Vol. 9 No. 4

Q4 2012

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY–Q4/Year-End 2012

USB flash drive shipments grew to 64.255 million units in the fourth quarter of 2012, a rise of 1%, influenced by the holiday buying season. SCCG forecasts drive shipments to decline modestly in Q1/13, reflecting the seasonal shift in buying patterns. Unit shipments reached 255.642 million units in 2012 and are estimated to grow to 269.242 million units by the end of 2013.

Europe had the leading regional share in Q4/12, with 35%. The Americas region was the second-largest region, with 32%; Asia/Pacific followed, with 27%; and Japan had 7%.

In Q4/12, the leading capacity segment was 16 GB, with 29%; followed by 8 GB, with 25%; 32 GB, with 20%; 4 GB, with 18%; 64 GB, with 6%; and 2 GB, with 2% of units shipped. Globally, average capacity changed from 17419 MB in Q3/12 to 18548 MB in Q4/12, an increase of slightly more than 6%. Average capacity for 2012 was 16988 MB.

Pricing showed a decrease in the fourth quarter, with capacity growth slowing and overall pricing in decline. Some of the higher-capacity chips and USB flash drives were in better supply during the quarter. The mobile market is typically a factor in supply in Q4, which influences availability and pricing for NAND in the USB flash drive markets. For the online market, \$9 or less was the sweet spot for 8 GB drives. Online prices ranged from a low of \$6 for a 2 GB drive from various Taiwan sources to more than \$500 for 128 GB USB flash drives. Pricing across the regions varied, with Europe and Asia/Pacific being the most aggressive. Vendors continued to promote features for differentiation and value-add, especially in areas such as security and backup; however, these applications remained niche markets.

Global branded market leaders in Q4/12 were SanDisk–20%, Kingston–19%, Transcend–11%, Verbatim–6%, H-P–5%, Sony–4%, Buffalo–2%, Imation–2%, and PNY–2%.

NAND producers advanced products and are now producing high-density (19-nanometer wafers) 64 Gbit chips, which allow a 8 GB device to have a single chip.
