

Honor rises to number one in China with excellent Magic6 Pro

 By [Lindsey Schutters](#)

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China's smartphone market experienced a strong rebound in the first quarter of 2024, with [shipments surging 6.5% year over year to reach 69.3m units, according to the International Data Corporation](#) (IDC). This marks the second consecutive quarter of growth, signalling continued recovery after a period of slowdown. The resurgence was fuelled by robust performances from Honor and Huawei, propelling the overall Android market to a 9.3% year-over-year increase.



Honor Magic6 Pro is the brand's flagship offering in South Africa.

Apple, however, saw a 6.6% decline in shipments during the same period amidst intensified competition.

While analysts attribute the positive results partly to the Lunar New Year celebrations in Q1, which stimulated consumer spending on low- to mid-range devices, one phone has emerged as a clear favourite.



Huawei's comeback adds diversity to stagnant consumer electronics market

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"Honor achieved the top market position due to its well-balanced product offerings and the popularity of its Magic 6 series, which boasts sought-after AI features," noted Arthur Guo, senior research analyst at IDC China.

"Huawei also staged a strong comeback, tying with Honor for the lead, although supply constraints remain a challenge. Apple's promotional pricing in the quarter did little to offset the fierce competition from Android rivals."

Back to basics

Many Android vendors have turned to artificial intelligence (AI) and foldable phones to differentiate themselves from Apple to attract consumers.

But Honor has gone back to its Huawei roots and found success copying the Cupertino brand's phone to a fault.



China Smartphone Market, Top 5 Company Shipments, Market Share, and YoY Growth, Q1 2024			
Company	2024Q1 Market Share	2023Q1 Market Share	YOY Growth
1. Honor	17.1%	16.1%	13.2%
1. Huawei	17.0%	8.6%	110.0%
3. OPPO	15.7%	19.8%	-15.5%
3. Apple	15.6%	17.8%	-6.6%
5. vivo	14.6%	17.4%	-10.7%
Others	20.1%	20.4%	4.8%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	6.5%

Source: IDC Quarterly Mobile Phone Tracker, 2024Q1

When Apple unveiled Face ID on the iPhone X in 2017, it completely shifted market expectation for the convenience of biometric security.

Huawei was, as expected, the first Android vendor to respond with similar secure facial recognition tech on the wildly popular Mate20 Pro in 2018, with the Korean duo of Samsung and LG firing their respective Face ID salvos at the beginning of 2019 with the respective Galaxy S10 5G and G8 ThinQ devices sporting 3D time-of-flight (ToF) camera sensors.

All successive Pro variants of Mate devices have since sported an ever-shrinking cluster of face scanning sensors for secure biometrics.

Honor – which spawned out of Huawei as an online brand for the youth market in 2013 – has since carried the torch for Face ID on Android phones with Google Mobile Services.

The Magic6 Pro took this a step further by adding in a copycat of the iPhone's *Dynamic Island* interface.



Generous copying of the iPhone feature set makes this an interesting market entry.

While the brand will never say it out loud – because it has tried to distance itself from its parent company since a well-publicised split in 2021 – the [Honor Magic6 Pro](#) shares many parts with the well-received Huawei Mate60 Pro.

It's unsurprising, then, that both devices are cited as driving factors behind the Chinese market resurgence.

"The tight race amongst leading brands suggests that Chinese consumers are increasingly open to switching brands," observed Will Wong, senior research manager at IDC Asia/Pacific.

"This underscores the need for vendors to continuously innovate in order to retain customer loyalty."

Battery endurance champion

Bizcommunity received a Honor Magic6 Pro review sample that has provided otherworldly battery endurance from its 5,600mAh silicon-carbon battery cell without the annoyance of excessive background task management typical of Chinese device makers.



Full-fat Android 14 runs smooth on the Qualcomm Snapdragon 8 Gen 3 processor, even under the weight of the custom code Honor had to layer on for the MagicOS 8 special features to work.

Honor promises a slew of AI features in a future update, but access to Google's Gemini as an alternative to the Google Assistant, as well as all the generative-AI editing features baked into Google Photos fills the void until then.

While Honor did benefit generously from the Mate60 Pro parts bin, the camera lags behind other top Android performers and even Huawei's P60 Pro from last year.

You get generally pleasing performance from the trio of rear sensors – which includes a high-resolution, 180MP 2.5x periscope zoom camera – but nothing that will, at least in this author's opinion, give Samsung too many headaches.

Magic6 Pro will also be eclipsed in image quality by Huawei's recently announced Pura 70 which will arrive in SA later this quarter - which should snatch the [DxO Mark crown from Honor](#).

Market signals

What will bother the world's biggest smartphone vendor is that, when faced with a choice, it appears Chinese customers will shop for the closest thing they can get to the iPhone experience of premium build and secure Face ID.



Samsung regains smartphone crown as global market rebounds

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Continued success in other markets like South Africa will send a clear signal to Android phonemakers to copy the features that improve user experience and not the proprietary vertical integration from Apple – a strategy that is facing increased regulatory scrutiny.

The Honor Magic6 Pro is proving to be a globally significant Android handset at a time when international bodies are pushing for better interoperability across mobile devices and services.

ABOUT LINDSEY SCHUTTERS

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