

Mobile Phone Market Grew Nearly 2% in Q4

Written by Chelsey Drysdale
Monday, 28 January 2013 13:16 -

FRAMINGHAM, MA – The worldwide mobile phone market grew 1.9% year-over-year in the fourth quarter on strong holiday smartphone sales, says **International Data Corp**.

Vendors shipped a total of 482.5 million mobile phones during the quarter, compared to 473.4 million units in the fourth quarter of 2011, according to IDC.

For the full year, the global market for mobile phones grew 1.2% on shipments of more than 1.7 billion units.

Vendors shipped 219.4 million smartphones worldwide in the fourth quarter, or 45.5% of all mobile phone shipments, the highest percentage ever. The 36.4% year-over-year growth was slightly below IDC's forecast of 39.5% for the quarter. On an annual basis, 712.6 million smartphones were shipped globally in 2012, up 44.1% year-over-year.

Samsung set a new record for the number of smartphones shipped in a single quarter and in a single year. Its line-up of Android smartphones, particularly the Galaxy-branded Android family, combined with sustained demand for its midrange and entry-level models to account for the remarkable shipment volumes. 2013 is shaping up to be a pivotal year for the company, as its Tizen smartphone strategy takes shape. Samsung will continue to rely on Android as its primary operating system, however, as the move to Tizen will not likely take place overnight, says IDC.

Apple's record iPhone shipments in the quarter were driven by successes in Greater China, where shipments more than doubled, as well as the US, where 6.2 million iPhones were activated on **Verizon** alone. The company's success was due in large part to older models, in particular the iPhone 4, which Apple couldn't make enough of in the quarter relative to demand, says IDC.

Huawei suddenly finds itself among the top three smartphone vendors in the world, a first for the company. The company had previously been a Top 10 vendor. To reach this milestone, Huawei has courted both the mass market with its smartphones and the high-end of the market with its Ascend-branded product line. The company released the world's thinnest (6.68mm) smartphone last year, the Ascend P1, and this year it announced the upcoming Ascend Mate, the first smartphone with a 6.1" display.

Sony's strategy for becoming the worldwide leader in mobile entertainment, combined with its growing portfolio of high-end smartphones, drove its smartphone volumes higher throughout the year. This marks a significant improvement since Sony acquired **Ericsson's** stake in 2011 in the Sony Ericsson joint venture. Sony introduced its Xperia TL last quarter and recently announced the addition of the Xperia Z and the Xperia ZL, to be launched in the first quarter of

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this year.

ZTE maintained its spot among the Top 5 smartphone vendors globally thanks to continued international diversification efforts last quarter, says IDC. The vendor also shipped more smartphones than feature phones for the first time. ZTE has grown its smartphone sales of late thanks primarily to an uptick in lower-cost smartphone sales in many emerging markets. The company has traditionally relied on sales of phones to China, where the company is based. Notable progress has been made in developed markets too.