

# Mobile phone sales up six pct in 2008, 4th qtr weak

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A man holds an Emporia Telecom phone for senior citizens at the Mobile World Congress (GSMA) in Barcelona, on February 2009. Mobile phone sales grew by six percent in 2008 over the previous year but fell nearly five percent in the fourth quarter as the global economy weakened, market research firm Gartner said.

Mobile phone sales grew by six percent in 2008 over the previous year but fell nearly five percent in the fourth quarter as the global economy weakened, market research firm Gartner said on Tuesday.

Worldwide mobile phone sales totaled 1.22 billion units in 2008, up

from 1.15 billion in 2007, Gartner said.

In the fourth quarter, however, worldwide mobile phone sales declined 4.6 percent compared with the same period in 2007 to 314.7 million units, and the top five mobile phone vendors all saw a drop in fourth quarter sales.

Finland's Nokia sold 472.3 million mobile phones in 2008, increasing its market share from 37.8 percent to 38.6 percent.

Samsung was next with worldwide sales of 199.2 million units last year, increasing its market share from 13.4 percent in 2007 to 16.3 percent in 2008.

Samsung bucked the downward trend in the fourth quarter of 2008, selling 57.5 million mobile phones, up from 44.3 million in 2007.

"Samsung's quick response to demand for touch interfaces was the main reason for its success," Gartner said.

Motorola ranked third for the year, selling 106.6 million units, but its market share slipped from 14.3 percent in 2007 to 8.7 percent in 2008.

"Lack of compelling products throughout the portfolio has made it impossible for Motorola to slow down its sales decline," Gartner said. "It has been losing share in all key regions because it lacks 3G products and touchscreen devices."

LG sold 102.5 million mobile phones in 2008 and increased its market share to 8.4 percent from 6.8 percent in 2007.

Sony Ericsson was next on 2008 sales of 93.4 million units but its market share slipped to 7.6 percent from 8.8 percent in 2007.

Explaining the fourth quarter weakness, Carolina Milanesi, research director for mobile devices at Gartner, said "mobile phones have traditionally been one of consumers' preferred presents for Christmas. However, in the fourth quarter of 2008 consumers were concerned about taking on the (phone) contract."

Milanesi said Gartner does not expect mobile phone demand to stabilize before 2010.

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