

China Mobile hopes to agree iPhone deal

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China Mobile has said it hopes to reach a deal with Apple to sell the iPhone, several months after rival China Unicom launched the iconic smartphone in the country.

China Mobile said on Thursday it hopes to soon reach a deal with Apple to sell the iPhone, several months after rival China Unicom launched the iconic smartphone in the country.

The world's biggest [telecom operator](#) also said it was interested in selling Apple's new [iPad tablet computer](#) in the fast-growing Chinese market.

Wang Jianzhou, China Mobile's chairman and chief executive, did not elaborate on why talks over selling the handsets in China had not yet resulted in a deal.

"We're hoping we'll come to an agreement (with Apple) on the iPhone as

soon as possible," he told a news conference in Hong Kong to release the company's 2009 results.

"We will continue to express our interest in the iPhone. But not just the iPhone, also the iPad."

Wang said [China Mobile](#) still had room to grow by rolling out new products and tapping the country's vast rural market, despite the fact that it surpassed half a billion users in 2009.

"China Mobile is still a growing company," he said.

"There are a lot of new areas (of business) that have been opened up to us. There is a lot of potential for growth... Agricultural users, students, they are new users -- a lot of the new business will be from this area."

Wang confirmed that Hong Kong-listed China Mobile was still eyeing floating its shares in mainland China, while dismissing concerns about the prospect of [Google](#) leaving the country over a high-profile censorship spat.

If the search engine left, China Mobile customers could still search the Internet on Yahoo! or China-based Baidu, Wang said.

China Mobile said it added 65 million new customers in 2009 -- bringing the total to 522 million --- with annual revenues up 9.8 percent to 452 billion yuan (66.2 billion US dollars).

Profits rose 2.3 percent to 115.2 billion yuan in 2009, it said.

The firm said sales of so-called value-added products such as handset Internet access and a wireless music club grew 16 percent year on year, accounting for almost 30 percent of overall revenue.

Last week, the company said it was paying 5.8 billion-US-dollars for a 20 percent stake in mid-sized Shanghai Pudong Development Bank in a bid to break into the wireless banking market.

"We can see a lot of other services that we can add on," said Li Yue, a China Mobile executive director and vice-president.

"That will bring up our future growth."

But Li also warned that the company's profit margin may shrink in the future amid intense competition and customer demands for price cuts.

China Mobile shares closed up 1.2 percent to 76.4 Hong Kong dollars (9.84 US dollars).

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