

Global 2013 smartphone sales to hit 1 billion (Update)

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Smartphones in Seongnam, South Korea on June 11, 2013. Global smartphone sales are expected to top one billion in 2013, driven by low-cost handsets and gains in emerging markets, a research firm said Wednesday.

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International Data Corp said it sees the smartphone market growing 40 percent this year, and will likely grow to 1.7 billion annually by 2017.

Overall mobile phone sales will grow 7.4 percent, rebounding from a nearly flat year in 2012, IDC said. Total mobile handset sales are expected to be some 1.8 billion, with more than half of that in the smartphone segment.

Smartphone growth is the result of a variety of factors, including steep device subsidies from carriers, especially in mature economic markets, as well as a growing array of sub-\$200 smartphones.

"Two years ago, the worldwide smartphone market flirted with shipping half a billion units for the first time—to double that in just two years highlights the ubiquity that smartphones have achieved," said Ramon Llamas, IDC's mobile research manager.

"The smartphone has gone from being a cutting-edge communications tool to becoming an essential component in the everyday lives of billions of consumers."

By 2017, smartphones are expected to take over nearly all sales in the most developed economies, according to IDC's Kevin Restivo.

"Aggressive carrier subsidies of handsets, falling prices, higher consumer awareness, and a vast array of devices will mean almost all phones shipped to the developed world will be 'smart,'" he said.

"However, smartphone shipment volume will be dominated by emerging markets, such as China, even though the percentage of smartphones to feature phones won't be as high."

Llamas said the Google Android system will remain the top platform,

followed by Apple's iOS.

"What remains to be seen is how Windows Phone and BlackBerry's respective futures will play out pending their recent announcements," said Llamas. "Windows Phone has inched ahead of BlackBerry during the first half of 2013, and we believe that will extend into the future. However, overall shipments will continue to trail those of Android and iOS."

The IDC forecast indicates Windows Phone market share will increase to 10.2 percent by 2017 from 3.9 percent this year, while Android's share will slip to 68 percent from this year's 75 percent. Apple meanwhile is expected to see modest gains to 17.9 percent from 16.9 percent, IDC said.

A Kantar Worldpanel ComTech report released Wednesday indicated that Android still dominated the US market despite its share slipping more than seven percent to 51.1 percent in the second quarter of this year.

Meanwhile, Apple's iOS grew nearly eight percent to claim 43.4 percent of the US market, according to Kantar.

"However, with Microsoft's acquisition of Nokia, we may see a larger proportion of consumers choosing a Windows device over iOS or Android, replicating the strength seen in Europe and Mexico," Kantar said in its report.

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