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Samsung and Microsoft mobile sales in Europe hit by Apple devices

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European sales of mobile phones from [Samsung](#) and [Microsoft](#) fell more than a fifth in 2014 owing to the success both of [Apple's](#) latest premium devices and low-cost Asian alternatives.

Sales in the western European mobile phone market fell for the second year in succession in 2014, according to International Data Corporation (IDC), with a decline in total shipments of 5.2 per cent to 174.1m units.

The fall reflects the end of the boom in mobile phone sales in Europe, where almost everyone now owns a device.

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However, smartphone sales have continued to climb, in particular following the excitement last year about Apple's larger-sized iPhone 6 and 6 Plus, even as the market for cheaper basic phones had become increasingly niche.

Shipments for Apple in the European mobile market grew 15 per cent in 2014 to almost 31m, even as Samsung's shipments fell 21 per cent to 61.4m and Microsoft almost 24 per cent to 19.7 per cent.

The popularity of low-cost smartphones priced at less than \$150 also led to growth in the market.

IDC counted 28 phone brands entering the European market in 2014, mainly focused on the more affordable end, which has attracted people previously using basic phones to smartphones for the first time.

More than two-thirds of people in Europe use a smartphone, according to IDC.

This shift meant that sales of so-called "feature phones" fell 39 per cent to 28.4m units, reflecting a total value of \$1.4bn.

"This is now a niche segment", said IDC, representing only 16 per cent of total units shipped in the year and 2.2 per cent of total market value.

By contrast, shipments of smartphones continued to grow in 2014 by 6.4 per cent to 145.8m units. However, this reflected a more modest 1.7 per cent increase in value to \$62.4bn given the sales of lower-cost devices during the year.

Samsung's shipments of smartphones dropped 12.5 per cent, but Microsoft's decision to produce lower-cost Windows devices proved more successful as it grew shipments by almost 32 per cent to 10m units.

"Although the total market was impacted by higher penetration rates, the smartphone segment hit a record high in 2014 in terms of units shipped and market value," said Francisco Jeronimo, European mobile devices research director at IDC.

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