

Samsung Puts Smartphone Crown In Dispute

Peter Svensson, AP Technology Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Smartphones are the hottest gadgets in the world. But who's the biggest smartphone maker? We don't really know.

Samsung, Apple's chief competitor, gives only vague indications of how many it makes, which means industry watchers come up with widely diverging estimates. Apple Inc. reports its iPhone sales down to the thousands. In the January to March period, it shipped 35,064,000. South Korea's Samsung Electronics Co. may have sold 32 million, 37.5 million or 44.5 million, depending which analyst you believe. The company itself refuses to say.

What's at stake, of course, are bragging rights. More accurate sales figures from Samsung would also be useful to competitors and to partners like wireless carriers and retailers.

When it reported first-quarter results Friday morning, Samsung said only that overall phone shipments (including "dumb" phones) were down more than 10 percent from the fourth quarter, and that smartphone sales were about the same percentage of the company's overall sales as they have been before.

The problem is that Samsung hasn't reported any hard sales figures in a long time, so analysts are applying these vague hints to their own estimates, which in turn are based on vague hints from previous quarters.

There's even a debate about what Samsung's few guideposts really mean. Jan Dawson, an analyst at Ovum, says the analyst community is split over the interpretation of Samsung's reported "300 percent" increase in smartphone sales in the third quarter of 2011, over the third quarter of 2010. A 300 percent increase means a quadrupling, but did Samsung really mean that? Or did sales triple, and they made the common mistake of calling that a "300 percent increase?"

The two schools of thought account for some of the widely diverging estimates, Dawson believes. Analysts and reporters haven't been able to get Samsung to clarify the issue.

Wayne Lam, an analyst with IHS iSuppli, likens the process of estimating Samsung sales to "using compasses instead of GPS." His estimate for first-quarter smartphone sales is 32 million, which would put Samsung behind Apple.

IDC Corp., a research firm that tracks phone sales, postponed the release of its quarterly phone sales ranking. It was originally scheduled for just after Samsung's report, but analyst Ramon Llamas said "additional insight" was needed.

Analysts agree that in terms of overall phone sales, including non-smart ones,

Samsung Puts Smartphone Crown In Dispute

Published on Industrial Maintenance & Plant Operation (<http://www.impomag.com>)

Samsung outdid long-time No. 1 Nokia Corp. in the first quarter. But they differ on the margin of victory. Finland's Nokia said it sold 82.7 million phones. ABI Research's Michael Morgan puts Samsung at 83.4 million, only just ahead. Strategy Analytics has it at 93.5 million.

The estimates differ by 10.1 million phones, roughly enough for all the adults in New York, Los Angeles and Chicago.

Samsung is not alone in espousing vagueness. Taiwan-based smartphone maker HTC Corp. recently stopped reporting how many phones it makes, possibly because its sales are in decline.

"The bottom line is Samsung and Apple are definitely consolidating at the top," Lam said. "The lead will trade back and forth a bit."

Source URL (retrieved on 12/17/2014 - 9:16pm):

http://www.impomag.com/news/2012/04/samsung-puts-smartphone-crown-dispute?qt-most_popular=0