

Mobile Handset Framework Case Industry Report, 2006

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Date: March 2007 Pages: 145 Price: US\$ 1,500.00 (Single User License) ID: MDC6BF9051EEN

Abstracts

Handset case is a field with high technical threshold. At present, China only has a few handset case manufacturers whose products could meet the middle standards although it is world's largest production base of plastic products. Globally, only about 11 to 15 suppliers could embark upon the production of handset cases in accordance with middle standards.

Experienced years of development, the market of plastic handset case is in maturity and the competition becomes fiercer and fiercer. Nearly all plastic handset case suppliers suffer from a sharp drop in the operating profit margin. In 2003, most suppliers could keep an operating profit margin of 20-25% or so, but the figure decreased to 10% or even less in 2006. Probably, it is difficult for those suppliers in year of 2007. After years of probe in the market and being led by the trend of Motorola's super-thin handsets, metal case rapidly seized the market of high-end handsets. Since the high threshold of metal case, it will be hard for handset manufacturers that are specialized in plastic cases to enter this field. Currently, the world's major handset metal case manufacturers cluster in China's Taiwan, including Chi Cheng, CATCHER, Foxconn, Waffer and ICHIA, etc., and 90% of metal handset cases are produced in Taiwan. Besides, the Korean supplier HV-VATEC should also not be neglected.

There are two trends for the development of handset cases in the future. The metalized case has become the mainstream in middle-standard handsets of plastic handsets; the other is the increasing proportion of metal handset cases, particularly in high-end handsets. Metal case enjoys many advantages over plastic case. To begin with, metal handset case can be made lighter and thinner, and its intensity is superior to that of plastic ones. Thinness and lightness means a lot for handsets in the market nowadays. Secondly, metal case is characterized by excellent thermal conduction. Presently, the



ever increasing power consumption of handsets, particularly the ones adopting 0.18-um technique, will lead to the heat threat to handset users in talk time. Next, metal case is merited by electro-magnetic interference, far superior to plastic case and with less harm to users' health. Lastly, metal case is environment-friendly and can be recycled, while it will take decades for plastic case to break up and does a lot harm to the environment. However, metal handset case has disadvantages such as long development period, high cost of materials, excessive manufacturing procedures and low good yield, etc. This shows that metal case is suitable for high-end handsets and smart phones with large shipment.

In 2003, the handsets adopting plastic cases enjoyed a proportion of 99%, while metal case (aluminum alloy) only 1%. The proportion of aluminum alloy case can be up to 8% in 2006 and 10% in 2007. In quantity, the figure will increase from 110 million pieces in 2006 to 157 million pieces in 2007, up by 43% year-on-year.

There is a trend of Mg-alloy case to substitute for plastic materials. Motorola will increase the proportion of adopting Mg-alloy framework to be 50%. In addition, there will be also a growth of 15% to 20% for Nokia in 2006, and about 20% for Samsung. The proportion for the mobile framework adopting Mg-alloy was 90% in 2005, 17% in 2006, and 25% in 2007. The annual shipment in 2005 got to 72.9 million pieces, up by 53%, and the shipment in 2006 increased to 102.8 million pieces with a growth rate of 141%. In 2007, the shipment will rise to 285 million pieces. As far as the plastic case is concerned, the market is shrinking, and the shipment will decreased from 805 million pieces in 2006 to 700 million pieces in 2007.



Contents

- 1. Brief Introduction to Handset Framework and Case
- 1.1 Development Trend of Handset Framework and Case
- 1.2 Status Quo of the Metalized Trend of Handset Case
- 1.3 Brief Introduction to Metal Handset Framework and Case Materials
- 2. Handset Framework and Case Market
- 3. Handset Framework and Case Industry
- 4. Research on Handset Framework and Case Suppliers
- 4.1 Intops
- 4.2 P&TEL
- 4.3 KH-VATEC
- 4.4 Green Point (Acquired by Jabil)
- 4.5 Chi Cheng
- 4.6 PERLOS
- 4.7 HI-P
- 4.8 CATCHER
- 4.9 Foxconn
- 4.10 Balda
- 4.11 Nolato
- 4.12 Nypro
- 4.13 Smuggled and Refurbished Handset Case Manufacturers in Mainland China
- 5. Research on Handset Manufacturers
- 5.1 Handset Manufacturers
- 5.1.1 Samsung
- 5.1.2 Sony-Ericsson
- 5.1.3 Nokia
- 5.1.4 LG
- 5.1.5 Motorola
- 5.1.6 BenQ
- 5.1.7 Bird
- 5.1.8 TCL Communication
- 5.1.9 Lenovo Mobile
- 5.1.10 Konka
- 5.1.11 Amoi



5.1.12 Yulong
5.2 OEM/ODM Manufacturers
5.2.1 HTC
5.2.2 Compal
5.2.3 Arima
5.2.4 Foxconn
5.2.5 Flextronics
5.2.6 ELCOTEQ
5.3 Summary of China Handset Industry

Tables/Figures

Overview of Mainstream Handsets Adopting Metal Cases, 2006H2 Statistics & Forecast of Handset Case Prices, 2003-2008 Statistics & Forecast of Prices of Handset Frameworks, 2003-2008 Shipment & Forecast of Handset Metal Cases and Frameworks, 2003-2008 Global Market Shares of Major Handset Framework and Case Suppliers, 2006 Gross Profit Margin of World's Top 11 Handset Case Suppliers, 2006 Handset Case Shipment of Intops at China and Abroad, 2006Q1-2007Q4 Statistical Sales Income and Operating Profit Margin of Intops Tianjin Plant Proportion of Stockholders of P&TEL Revenue of P&TEL by Product, 2005Q1-2006Q4 Introduction to Main Production Bases of P&TEL Handset Case Business Flow of P&TEL Design Ability of P&TEL Main Products of P&TEL Sales Revenue of KH-VATEC by Product, 2006Q1-Q4 Latest Handset Models of Chi Cheng Sales Revenue of PERLOS, 2001-2006 Sales Revenue of PERLOS by Region, 2005-2006 Manpower Distribution of PERLOS by Region, 2006 Regional Distribution of Factory Area of PERLOS, 2006 Statistics on Revenue and Gross Profit Margin of HI-P, 2001-2006 Statistical Income of HI-P by Division, 2001-2005 Quarterly Income of HI-P by Division, 2005Q1-2006Q1 Handset Manufacture and Design Ability of HI-P Global Distribution of HI-P

Statistics & Forecast of Sales Revenue of Foxconn by Product, 2006Q1-2007Q4



Proportion of Stockholders of Balda Group Organizational Structure of Balda Group Organizational Structure of Balda (Asia) Core Competitiveness of Balda Main Clients of Balad by Field Global Distribution of Balda Statistical Revenue and Operating Profit Margin of Nolato, 2001-2006 Revenue of Noalto by Division, 2005-2006 Handset Shipment and Annual Growth Statistics of Samsung, 2001-2006 Quarterly Shipment of Samsung Handset, 2005Q1-2006Q4 Handset Shipment of Samsung by Region, 2005-2006 Revenue & Pre-tax Profit Margin of Sony-Ericsson, 2005Q2-2006Q4 Shipment & Average Prices of Sony-Ericsson Handsets, 2005Q2-2006Q4 Shipment & Average Prices of Sony-Ericsson Handsets, 2005Q2-2006Q4 Shipment of Nokia Handsets by Region, 2005Q1-2006Q4 Shipment & Average Sales Prices of Nokia Handsets, 2005Q1-2006Q4 Sales Income & Operating Profit Margin of Nokia Handsets, 2005Q1-2006Q4 Handsets Shipment of LG and Annual Growth, 2001-2006 Quarterly Shipment of LG Handsets, 2005Q4-2006Q4 Sales Income & Operating Profit Margin of Motorola Handsets, 2006Q1-Q4 Handsets Shipment and Market Shares of Motorola, 2006Q1-Q4 Framework of Mobile Business Division of BenQ Income Structure of BenQ by Division, 2004Q4-2006Q3 Organizational Structure of TCL Communication Revenue and Gross Profit Margin of TCL Communication, 2001-2005 Statistics & Forecast of Revenue of HTC by Product, 2006Q1-2007Q4 Statistical Revenue and Gross Profit Margin of HTC, 2000-2006 Corporate Structure of Compal Operating Income and Gross Profit Margin of Compal, 2001-2006 Organizational Structure of Arima Communications **Global Layout of Arima Communications** Product Roadmap of Arima Communications Income and Gross Profit Margin of Arima Communications, 2001-2006 Shipment and Average Sales Prices of Arima Communications, 2005Q1-2006Q4 Investments of Arima Communications in Mainland China Revenue and Gross Profit Margin of FIH, 2001-2006H1 Product Development Flow of FIH Statistical Revenue of Flextronics, 2005Q4-2006Q4 Revenue of Flextronics by Region, 2005Q4-2006Q4



Product Income Structure of Flextronics, 2005Q4-2006Q4 Core Strategies of Flextronics Quarterly Terminal Business Income of Elocteg, 2004Q1-2006Q3 Statistics on Quarterly Operating Profit of Elocteg, 2004Q1-2006Q2 Quarterly Revenue of Elocteq by Region, 2004Q1-2006Q2 Viewpoints and Strategies of Elocteg 7C Strategy of Elocteq **Business Workflow of Elocteq** Comparison between Features of Handset Case Materials Estimated Demand of Handset-use Mg-alloy Worldwide Estimated Demand of Handset-use Aluminum-alloy Worldwide Sales Income of P&TEL by CDMA, GSM and PCS, 2005Q1-2006Q3 Sales Revenue of Handset Components of P&TEL, 2005Q1-2006Q3 Financial Performance of Green Point, 2006 Proportion of Customers of Chi Cheng, 2005-2006H1 Main Suppliers of Components for Samsung Handsets Main Suppliers of Components for Sony-Ericsson Handsets Main Suppliers of Components for Nokia Handsets Main Suppliers of Components for LG Handsets Main Suppliers of Components for Motorola Handsets Main Suppliers of Components for BenQ Handsets Sales Volume, Sales Income and Average Prices of Bird, 2005-2006H1 Financial Performance of Associated Companies of Bird Main Suppliers of Components for Bird Handsets Main Suppliers of Components for Handsets of TCL Communication Handset Shipment and Sales Revenue of Lenovo Mobile, 2005Q2-2006Q4 Main Suppliers of Components for Konka Handsets Associated Companies of Amoi Main Suppliers of Components for Amoi Handsets Major Suppliers of Raw Materials for Arima Communications Proportion for OEM Companies of Motorola Proportion for OEM Companies of Nokia Production Bases of Flextronics in China Production Bases of Elocted Export Volume of Top 22 Handsets in China, 2006



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