South America's first Apple store opens in Rio

February 16 2014

The first Apple Store in Brazil in the shopping Village Mall in Barra da Tijuca, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on February 13, 2014

Some 1,700 impatient shoppers lined up for hours Saturday for the grand opening of Apple's store in Rio de Janeiro—the first official outpost in South America.

First in line was Thiago Cuba, 31, who said he was looking forward to

shopping at the glistening new computer store in a tony section of Rio—even though he was experiencing sticker shock.

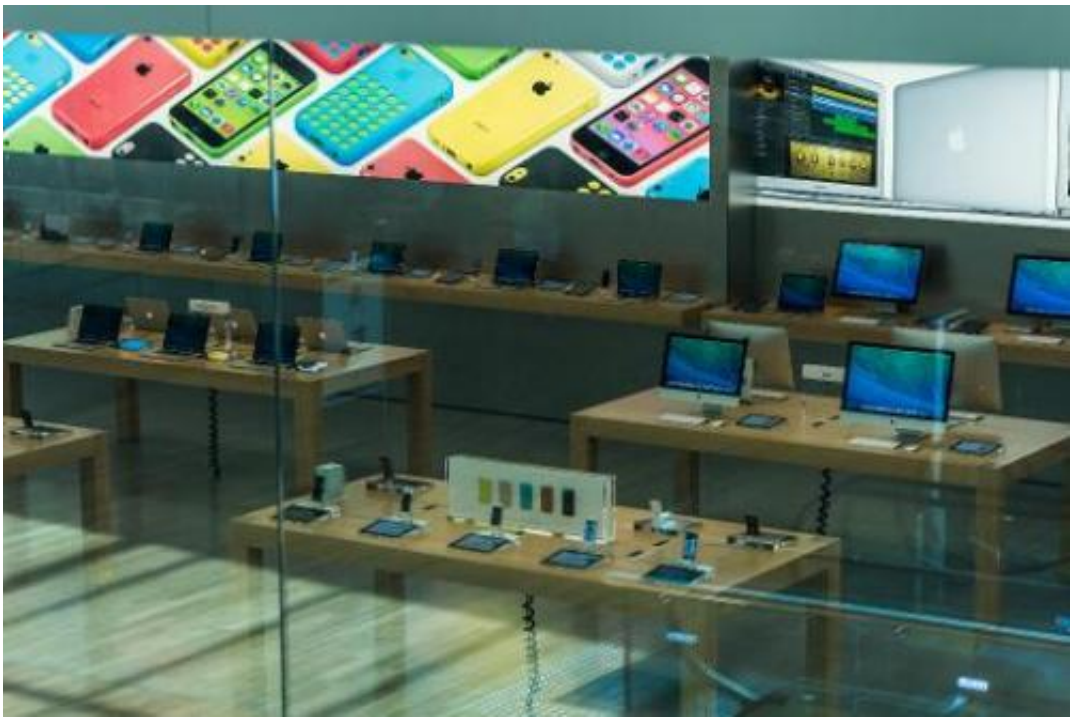
The price of Apple prices in Brazil "continue to be very high," but gradually are coming down, Cuba told the O Globo newspaper.

"There are some (Apple products) here that are close to what they would cost in dollars," said Cuba, as he prepared to shell out hard-earned reales for a new printer, headphones, and some cell phone cases.

"I expect that the prices will fall," he said, adding that "the quality of the products is worth it."

Part of the reason the products are so expensive here is the high import taxes in Brazil. An iPad Air that costs $499 in the United States, goes for more than $700 in Brazil.

Apple officials said they were delighted finally to tap the enormous pent-up demand of customers in this huge country with its burgeoning population of middle class consumers.



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Robust economic growth over the past decade has allowed more than 40 million people to exit poverty and join the ranks of the middle class.

"We are very excited about the first of what we hope will be many stores in Brazil," said Steve Cano, Apple's senior vice president, speaking to the Valor business newspaper.

Brazil—South America's most populous country— is the world's seventh-largest economy and Latin America's biggest.

There are just 26 million smartphones in a population of some 200 people, making the market ripe for growth.

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