

China Unicom in talks to launch iPhone 4, iPad in China

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A woman applies a screen protector to a customer's iPhone at a shop in Shanghai. China's second largest cell phone operator is in talks with Apple to launch the iPhone 4 and iPad in the country, reports said on Thursday, as the new smartphone went on sale.

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China Unicom Vice President Li Gang said formal talks with the US giant had already started, the China Business News said. Li did not provide a timetable for the launch, but told the newspaper "the sooner the better".

Unicom, the only Chinese telecom operator that offers [iPhone](#) in the

world's largest mobile phone market, will by the end of the year sell the [smartphone](#) with Wifi in China for the first time, Li said.

Previous rules required that Apple disable the Wifi function in phones sold on the mainland.

California-based Apple launched the much-anticipated [iPhone 4](#) around the world to much fanfare on Thursday, with hundreds queueing up to get their hands on the new gadget early in Tokyo.

The country's grey market in Apple products has developed for years to satisfy demand for the iPhone, which only officially went on sale in China in October -- more than two years after its US launch.

A spokesman at Beijing-based [China Unicom](#) was not immediately available to comment on the report.

Unicom's rival, China Mobile, the world's biggest mobile phone operator, said in May it was interested in selling the [iPad](#), and that talks with Apple over the sale of iPhones were ongoing.

The iPad went on sale in the US in April while it landed on shelves on May 28 in nine other countries.

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