

Buyers camp out for iPhone, though crowds smaller

October 14 2011, By CHIP CUTTER , AP Business Writer



Elliott Johns, of Boston, displays an iPhone 4S in front of an Apple Store location in Boston, Friday, Oct. 14, 2011. The faster iPhone with better software and an improved camera went on sale in seven countries Friday as hundreds of buyers camped out for hours to be among the first to get one. (AP Photo/Steven Senne)

Apple's latest iPhone arrived to an enthusiastic response from buyers camped out at stores Friday, but many observers noted the crowds were smaller than those that had gathered for previous releases.

The iPhone 4S, which went on sale in seven countries, is faster and comes with better software and an improved camera.

But with the fifth unveiling of its popular iPhone, Apple is finding it difficult to maintain the excitement of past iPhone introductions. For

starters, the phone is more widely available than in the past. In addition to Apple stores, people can buy the phone from one of three wireless carriers: AT&T Inc., Sprint Nextel Corp. and Verizon Wireless. Some Best Buy, Target and Walmart stores and authorized resellers also carry the phones. Buyers also were able to pre-order the phone on Apple's website and have it shipped to their home or office.

Many diehard Apple fans and investors were disappointed that Apple didn't launch a more radically redesigned new model - an iPhone 5. It's been more than a year since Apple's previous model was released.

That also may have contributed to smaller gatherings at some Apple locations.

"People are not as excited about this version as they might have been if a (iPhone) 5 came out," said Charles Prosser, 50, a retired teacher and a computer technician from Tuscaloosa, Ala.

Even so, hundreds of buyers camped out in front of stores for hours to be among the first to get an iPhone 4S. About 200 people were at Apple's Fifth Avenue store in Manhattan as the iPhone 4S went on sale.

Steve Wozniak, who created Apple with Steve Jobs in a Silicon Valley garage in 1976, was first in line at a store in Los Gatos, Calif., having arrived on his Segway the afternoon before.

Wozniak, who typically waits in line for new Apple products, said he barely slept Thursday night as he was busy chatting with Apple fans, taking photos and giving autographs. Wozniak pre-ordered two new iPhones; on Friday, he bought two more.

"I just want to be part of an important event, so I feel it more deeply," he said.

Many said the event resembled a remembrance to Jobs, who died last week, a day after Apple Inc. announced the new phone.

Emily Smith, a 27-year-old user experience designer in New York, checked in to the line on the location-centric social network Foursquare. She got a virtual Steve Jobs badge that read: "Here's to the crazy ones. ThankYouSteve."

Others joked that the 4S model stood "for Steve."

Tony Medina, a 25-year-old student from Manhattan, got in line at 11 p.m. and stayed despite getting soaked by an overnight thunderstorm. He said he planned on ordering the phone online, but decided to join the crowds to honor Jobs. "For loyalty, I felt I had to do the line," he said. "I had to say thank you."

In Chicago, Nicole Pacheco, 17, dragged her brother and a friend out to buy Apple's latest gadget.

"I wanted to see how it was, to come out here for once," she said as she looked at the line that stretched past her. "We're kind of a memory for Steve Jobs. It's one of his last inventions. It kind of motivated me to get the next one."

As was the case with past Apple product launches, employees at many Apple stores greeted customers with cheers and smiles and congratulated them on their purchases. The company provided free coffee.

Dina Nguyen, who works at the Great America amusement park in Santa Clara, came to the store with her brother, Kennedy, to pick up four iPhones for their family. They are the first Apple products for the siblings. Their mom has the iPhone 4.

The siblings said it was a bit sentimental to get the phones now, right after Jobs' death.

"He left a good legacy. He had a good life. He wanted to make people happy. It's good to support that," Kennedy Nguyen said.

Apple and phone companies in seven countries started taking orders for the iPhone 4S last Friday. Apple said Monday that more than 1 million orders came in, breaking the record set by last year's model, which was available in fewer countries and on fewer carriers.

The death of Jobs could be helping sales. Marketing experts say products designed by widely admired figures such as Jobs usually see an upsurge in sales after their death.

Una Chen, a 24-year-old banker, said she was just happy to swap out her BlackBerry Bold for the new iPhone, particularly after a BlackBerry outage affected her phone this week.

"It's not good to have a phone and not be able to use it," Chen said.

The base model of the iPhone 4S costs \$199 in the U.S. with a two-year contract. It comes with 16 gigabytes of storage. Customers can get 32 gigabytes for \$299 and 64 gigabytes for \$399. Customers have a choice of white or black.

The phones also debuted Friday in Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Japan and Britain. They are coming to 22 more countries by the end of the month.

The phone has a faster processor and an improved camera compared with last year's model. It has a new operating system that allows users to sync content without needing a computer. It also includes a futuristic,

voice-activated service that responds to spoken commands and questions such as "Do I need an umbrella today?"

©2011 The Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.

Citation: Buyers camp out for iPhone, though crowds smaller (2011, October 14) retrieved 17 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2011-10-buyers-apple-iphone-sale.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.