

Apple accepts payment in China's yuan currency

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Apple has started accepting payment in China's yuan currency through its online store, opening it up to the biggest Internet market in the world, company officials said Monday.

The App Store, which sells [software applications](#) for devices such as iPhone and [iPad](#), started accepting the unit last week in an unannounced move.

"The service has been there since last Friday. It's really good news for our customers and local [application developers](#)," a spokeswoman for Apple China told AFP. She declined to comment on the timing of the move.

The App Store previously listed prices and accepted payment in US dollars, requiring consumers to use payment cards with access to foreign exchange.

The online store will now accept yuan credit cards as well as [debit cards](#) issued by more than 20 banks, a customer service representative said.

Chinese customers applauded the move. "It's more convenient. I immediately bought Fruit Ninja," Xiang Ke said on his microblog, referring to a popular game.

Die-hard fans in China, which has the world's largest online population with more than 500 million users, have been known to line up for days to get their hands on the latest Apple products.

The California-based has recently expanded aggressively in China, opening its first store in Hong Kong and its third in Shanghai in September, which brings the total to six in Greater China.

Greater China -- which includes Hong Kong and Taiwan -- has become Apple's fastest growing region, with revenue there second only to the United States.

But analysts said allowing yuan payment might not give a big boost to revenue since Apple users can also download pirated applications for free.

"Users who do not want to spend money in the first place will not spend money simply because you allow them to pay in yuan," said Sun Peilin, a Beijing-based analyst with consultancy Analysys International.

Still, the craze for all things Apple in China has triggered widespread [cloning](#) of the company's devices.

Several Chinese online stores have offered Apple fans the opportunity to buy a next-generation [iPhone](#) 5 -- even though it does not yet exist.

In July, an American blogger uncovered fake Apple stores in the southwestern city of Kunming, where even staff working there did not appear to know they were fake.

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