

Apple opens biggest Asian store in Beijing

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Staff welcome customers at the new Apple store in Beijing's Wangfujing district on October 20. Apple on Saturday opened its biggest Asian store yet in Beijing, with hordes of shoppers descending on the three-floor complex that highlights the growing importance of China to the US tech giant.

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The shop, on the major shopping street of Wangfujing in the heart of the

capital, covers an area of 2,300 square metres (24,750 square feet), according to Chinese media reports.

China is now the second-biggest market for Apple after the United States but the company has also faced frequent criticism for the conditions in which its products are produced in China.

The enthusiasm for the company's gadgets among the country's fast-growing consumer class was clear Saturday as shoppers quickly packed out the new shop shortly after it opened at 9:00 am (0100 GMT).



Staff greet customers at Apple's new store in Beijing on October 20. Enthusiasm for the company's gadgets among the country's fast-growing consumer class was clear Saturday as shoppers quickly packed out the new shop shortly after it opened at 9:00 am.

Around 100 people also waited outside to enter the store, Apple's sixth official outlet in [mainland China](#), according to an AFP journalist at the scene. Many other shops in China are also licensed to sell Apple products.

The popularity of Apple in China is such that the [launch](#) of new [iPhone](#) models has in recent years led to huge crowds jostling to get their hands on the smartphones and spawned a black market in the gadgets.

The latest criticism to hit a company linked to Apple came earlier this week when Taiwan's [Foxconn](#), which makes products for the US tech giant, admitted employing children as young as 14 on assembly lines at a plant in China.

It was the latest in a string of problems to beset Foxconn, which has frequently been targeted for its labour practices following a spate of suicides in 2010 that activists blamed on tough [working conditions](#).

Apple has seen its sales soar in China.

The company took in \$12.4 billion in China in the first half of the current fiscal year to March, putting the company easily on course to eclipse the \$13.3 billion in Chinese sales in the prior 12-month period.

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