

Apple iPad mini makes low key debut (Update 2)

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Customers show their newly purchased 7-inch sized iPad mini tablets at an Apple store in Tokyo, on November 2. The iPad mini made its debut as Apple takes on rivals Amazon, Google and Samsung with a smaller version of its coveted tablet computer, but it was a low-key start as sales began in Japan.

Apple's new iPad mini debuted on Friday with less fanfare than previous incarnations amid talk it might have come too late to the 7-inch tablet computer market.

The ghost of Apple founder Steve Jobs hung in the air two days after Halloween as the California-based company tried to lure shoppers with a slim tablet it insists is more than just a shrunken version of its coveted iPads.

The event stirred little of the excitement associated with previous Apple products, generating small lines of devotees at flagship stores around the world.

Tolga Arslan and his 10-year-old son were among the approximately two dozen people who queued outside an Apple Store in San Francisco's hip Marina District to be among the first here to get iPad mini tablets.

Arslan bought two of the gadgets, one for him and another for his wife, to take home to Turkey on Saturday at the end of his holiday in California.

"I like the technology," Arslan said, "It's compact."

"It looks like an iPhone but it's not an iPhone," his son added. "I'm going to play games on it."

In suburban Milan, a couple of dozen such fans were treated to coffee and buns offered by the local Apple store.

"I got up at 6:30 in the morning but it was worth it," said Daniele Messi, a 20-year-old marketing student who was first in line there.

"I decided to buy it even though I already have all of Apple's other products, I love them," he added.

Earlier in the day, around 300 people queued outside Apple's main store in Tokyo, some wearing fancy dress, to buy, or at least touch the new

product.

Around 20 people had camped overnight outside the shop, but the queue disappeared quickly following an initial rush.

In tech-mad Singapore numbers were well down from previous launches, while in Hong Kong around 30 people queued to collect their pre-ordered devices.

There was nothing like the days-long queues for prior Apple gadget debuts.

Nevertheless, acolytes said they were impressed by the physical charms of the 7.9 inch (20-centimetre) touchscreen device that weighs less than half the original iPad, at just 308 grams (0.68 pounds).

Around three dozen markets in Asia and Europe, as well as the United States, were due to see launches of the Wi-Fi only version on Friday.

In Seoul there was a 200-strong queue, some of whom had camped out overnight.

Die-hard fans noted there was less buzz this time around.

"It's not surprising people wait for hours to be the first to get new Apple devices, but now the hype doesn't seem to be as big as before," said Kim Tae-Min.

Market analyst Loo Wee Tech, head of Consumers Electronics Research said the new tablets "failed to excite" a sector that has grown accustomed to ever more amazing gadgets over the years.

"What iPad Mini offers is a form factor that is useable with one hand

and fits easily into most females' handbags," Loo noted.



Japanese Apple fans queue outside an Apple store, awaiting for sale to begin for the iPad mini, in Tokyo, on November 1. The iPad mini is being launched on Friday in about three dozen countries in Asia and Europe in addition to the US.

— iPad Mini to be season's top seller —

He forecast that despite structural liabilities that included "the lack of readily available and reliable Internet access and wifi hotspots," Apple would move a lot of its product.

"We expect the iPad mini to be the best selling electronic product for the year end holiday season. Consumers will be glad to pick up an attractively priced Apple branded tablet and Apple will further dominate the tablets market," he said.

Ahead of the launch analysts had warned the starting price of \$329 might seem steep to budget-minded shoppers who can buy Google Nexus or Amazon Kindle tablets for \$199.

But analysts at Sterne Agee brokerage noted that similar doubts greeted the introduction of the iPod nano, which wound up selling well.

"Devotion to Apple products has been compared to a religion," said an analyst from the US-based firm Gartner.

"But, I don't think Apple will be as dominant in the seven-inch tablet space because they let the Kindle Fire and the Nexus get a foothold in the market at a considerably lower price."

Mark Ranson, associate analyst at the global technology research firm Ovum, said the iPad mini marked something of a departure because it was an instance of Apple following the crowd, rather than setting the pace.



Apple's newly introduced iPad mini is seen during Apple's special event at the California Theatre in San Jose, on October 23, in California. The iPad mini made its debut on Friday as Apple takes on rivals Amazon, Google and Samsung with a smaller version of its coveted tablet computer, but it was a low-key start as sales began in Australia.

"This reactive nature of the iPad mini launch was largely the cause of the more muted public response," he said before adding that increasing competition was squeezing Apple.

"Samsung's continued growth, Google's further push into the device market with its Nexus line of products and the strong performance of Amazon's Kindle Fire, are all conspiring to bridge the gap between Apple and its competitors," he noted.

Apple's senior vice president for marketing Phil Schiller helped unveil the iPad mini last week, insisting that it was an entirely new design and

not "just a shrunken down iPad".

Like later versions of the original iPad, the new Apple tablet features rear- and front-facing cameras, and also has stereo speakers.

Facts and figures on the new iPad mini

These are the principal features, pricing and availability of the new iPad mini tablet computer, sales of which started in Australia on Friday:

— the iPad mini has a 7.9-inch (20.06-centimeter) touchscreen when measured diagonally, smaller than the 9.7-inch (24.6-cm) display on the original iPad

— the iPad mini weighs 0.68 pounds, 53 percent lighter than Apple's third generation iPad

— it is 7.2 millimeters (0.28 inches) thick, 23 percent thinner than the original iPad and thinner than a pencil

— the iPad mini has 10 hours of battery life, the same as the latest iPad

— the iPad mini runs on Apple's latest operating system, iOS 6, and features a dual-core A5 chip

— it has a front-facing HD camera and a 5-megapixel camera on the back for taking still pictures and recording 1080p HD video

— it has built-in stereo speakers.

— the iPad mini with Wi-Fi connectivity and 16 gigabytes of memory costs \$329, the 32GB model sells for \$429 and the 64GB version for \$529

— the 16GB iPad mini with Wi-Fi and cellular connectivity costs \$459. The 32GB model costs \$559 while the 64GB version is \$659

— Apple began taking pre-orders for the iPad mini from October 26. Sales of the Wi-Fi model started Friday in Australia and will also be on sale in Austria, Belgium, Britain, Bulgaria, Canada, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Puerto Rico, Romania, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United States.

— Apple said the iPad mini with Wi-Fi and cellular connectivity will start shipping a couple of weeks after the Wi-Fi model

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