

Apple Watch: Battery life, iPhone dependence, other troubling issues

September 12 2014, by Paresh Dave, Los Angeles Times



The Apple Watch, which is to go on sale early next year with more than 20 different looks and a minimum price of \$349, has its share of innovations: A screen made out of sapphire glass on some versions to increase its scratch-resistance. A "digital touch" feature that allows people to give their contacts physical taps on the wrist via the Internet. And an invention Apple compared to the iPod's click wheel - a watch crown that can be pressed or rotated to scroll, access Siri and return to the main screen.

There were some details, though, that Apple didn't discuss much Tuesday that could become troublesome for Apple Watch's success.

In announcing Apple Watch, the company made no mention of the word "battery." You charge the watch by slapping a magnetic connector onto its back, a solution that came out of a goal "to make Apple Watch easy to charge in the dark without looking while being only partially awake," Apple said.

Turns out that process might have to happen every night. Technology analysts had hoped for at least a couple of days of juice.

Apple didn't respond to a request to comment on the battery, but the Wall Street Journal reported it was told by an Apple spokesman that the watch will have to be charged once a day.

NOT SHIPPING THIS YEAR

Though the timing was expected, the price of Apple shares on the stock market dropped when Apple officially declared the watch would ship next year, according to financial analysts who follow the company.

Like the iPod until everybody had one, a watch makes for a good holiday present. But Apple had a few reasons that might have driven it to release the Apple Watch next year.

Apple needs more time to debug the device based on the testing members of the media and analysts did after the Apple event Tuesday. Launching a product for Christmas forces a company to manufacture more of it to meet the higher demand than during a slower shopping season. That means if there's an issue caught after the fact, Apple would need to correct fewer watches by skipping Christmas; it would also avoid a public relations fiasco.

The company might have also wanted the watch to launch with a large app library and needed to give app makers more time.

Carl Howe, an analyst at 451 Research Mobility, said there had been hope that the original iPhone would have come out for Christmas. Instead, it launched in June 2007.

"They are not a company that does things only for schedule," he said. "They will wait on things until they get it right."

The blessing in disguise is that a late winter or early spring release could give Apple a second-straight quarter with strong revenue, said Tony Sacconaghi Jr. senior research analyst at Sanford C. Bernstein & Co. Apple usually sees a spike in sales during the winter.

IPHONE CONNECTION

Although the Apple Watch can connect to Wi-Fi, it'll need to be connected to an iPhone via Bluetooth to be fully functional. The watch doesn't have a separate GPS chip, for example.

That concerned some observers and analysts who had hoped the watch would be more of a stand-alone product, especially given that Apple released three versions (Apple Watch, Apple Watch Sport and Apple Watch Edition).

The forced iPhone pairing caused Sacconaghi to say that his forecast of 30 million Apple Watch sales in the first year "now appears optimistic." Other analysts are now predicting that 5 million to 20 million of the devices will be sold next year.

LOOKS

Mixed reviews of how attractive the Apple Watch looks could have been expected. Since last year though, Apple has brought on executives from fashion labels such as Burberry and Yves Saint Laurent. Given the star-studded team, many people expressed surprise that what was unveiled was the best they could do.

Though it's "the first smart watch with a reasonable amount of appeal," it underwhelms overall, said Alex Gauna, an analyst at JMP Securities.

Some designers suggested that although the watch was not iconic on its own, the Apple name would be enough to get it to sell.

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