

## Chinese buyers lead charge in iPhone 6 global debut

September 19 2014, by Harumi Ozawa

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Apple fans show off their new iPhone 6 handsets at an Apple store in Ginza, Tokyo on September 19, 2014

Buyers from China, deprived of the latest iPhone launch at home, were Friday among the first in line in Japan to grab the "6" and its new large-screen cousin as Apple hit back at rivals.

Licensing problems in China meant the global rollout went ahead without the huge and lucrative market, in a blow to Apple which had trumpeted its inclusion in the initial wave of the last iPhone launch.

Outside Tokyo's flagship Apple store in glitzy Ginza, dozens of Chinese were among those waiting.

"I'm queuing because it's not sold in China yet," said Chen Manyan, a 21-year-old tourist from Fujian province, adding: "It's expensive, though."

Zou Zhiyang, 29, a Chinese student studying in Tokyo, said he intended to buy the maximum two handsets allowed.

"I'll buy one for myself, and another to sell to one of my friends in China," he said.

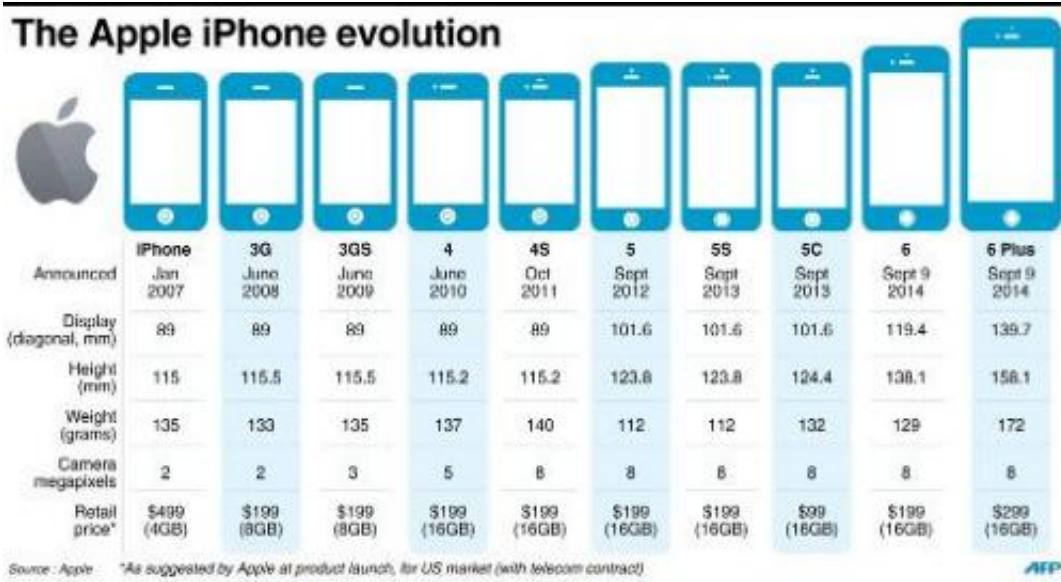
On the eve of the launch, Beijing said Apple had won two necessary approvals, one to certify the phone for the Chinese market and another for wireless devices.

"But iPhone 6 still needs to obtain a key network access licence before it can enter the Chinese mainland market," the Xinhua news agency said.

The delay has created a lucrative secondary market, especially in Hong Kong, where dealers pay over the retail price expecting to get even more in turn from mainland buyers.

"If we are talking about the 128 gigabyte version we would buy it for as much as HK\$18,000 (\$2,322)," said Gary Yiu, the manager of the iGeneration reseller store. That is more than double the price of the top-of-the-range iPhone 6 Plus.

"I have around 200 pre-orders with 60 to 70 percent of these from mainland Chinese customers," Yiu told AFP, adding he had dispatched 10 staff members to buy as many as possible.



Graphic on the evolution of the Apple iPhone since the first model was launched in 2007

Yiu said the golden version of the 128GB iPhone 6 Plus was the most sought after, and he could resell it for more than HK\$20,000.

"There will be very little stock for this model, so a lot of people will be going for it," he said.

Dozens of resellers outside Hong Kong's Apple stores handed over thick wads of cash to people selling their handsets.

"We have all the models here," one told AFP carrying more than a dozen bags carrying the phones.

The booming reseller market "means Apple products are still in high demand in China... their products are still highly accepted there", Hong Kong-based market analyst Jackson Wong told AFP.

"iPhone 6 or 6 Plus are not hugely innovative in a sense but demand is still very high, that means the loyalty for Apple products is still very high."

## Special delivery

In Sydney, where the phone first hit shelves, some buyers had also travelled a long way.

South Korean Jin-Sik Kim spent days in front of the store before the doors opened, revealing scores of Apple employees in blue T-shirts.



People wait for the release of the iPhone 6 in front of an Apple store in Ginza,



Tokyo on September 19, 2014

Kim, from Seoul, said he had been waiting since Sunday, sleeping out and eating at the nearby McDonald's.

"It's a very unique phone," said Kim who was queueing with six friends and wanting to buy both models. "It's bigger than the previous model."

In Japan, the country's famous customer service ethic was on display when a parcel company managed to deliver a package addressed to the man "At the very front of the line".

"It's not a regular service we'll be offering," said a spokeswoman for Yamato Transport.

Both new iPhones have larger screens in what some consider Apple catching up with the "phablet" trend pioneered by competitors.



Customers queue outside an Apple store to buy the iPhone 6 in Sydney on September 19, 2014

The iPhone 6 has a screen of 4.7 inches and the 6 Plus is 5.5 inches, reflecting a growing preference for bigger displays, despite Apple's earlier vow to stick with the traditional size.

Main rival Samsung has long had a range of larger handsets, which are popular in Asia, and will soon release a new Galaxy Note 4 phablet.

Apple says more than four million pre-orders were received in the 24 hours after the sale was announced.

Other markets launching Friday are Singapore, Britain, France, Germany, the United States, Canada and Puerto Rico. Some 20 more countries will get the new iPhone from September 26.

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