

## 'Selfie sticks' give new perspective at tech show

LAS VEGAS, USA: "Selfie sticks" - the lightweight monopods which hold smartphones to get a better angle for self portraits - are making the tech community look at things from a new perspective.



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These devices became a hot item at this week's Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas, where dozens of manufacturers and distributors were fielding orders to meet consumer demand.

Priced as low as US\$5, the selfie sticks took some of the limelight in a show that features \$10,000 television sets and other pricey hardware.

"They're flying off the shelves, they are one of our hottest items," said Katie Kunsman with the New Jersey-based manufacturer and wholesaler Motion Systems, at her booth at the Las Vegas tech gathering.

Kunsman said the trend has taken off in the past few months, led by enthusiasts of extreme sports like rock climbing.

"If you go rock climbing you can get a picture from a good angle hanging off a cliff," she said.

The origins of the selfie stick are unclear. Some say the trend began in Asia, others point to the extreme sports community and similar devices made for the GoPro camera.

"When I go to a music event, everyone has one," said Aaron Sanchez at the stand for Mybat, a wholesaler of wireless

accessories.

"You can take pictures from different angles that you wouldn't be able to get otherwise, you can take group selfies. You can get everyone in the picture and you don't have to ask someone to take it."

The selfie sticks extend the smartphone camera away from the user by up to about 1.5 meters (60 inches), providing a better angle than is possible by simply extending the device at arm's length.

Some of the gadgets are sold at a very low price, but adding a wireless Bluetooth button to snap pictures can boost the cost to \$30 to \$40 or more.

Sometimes called "narcissticks" because they promote the self-centered picture trend, the devices have faced a ban in South Korea if they use unauthorized radio frequencies.

On the CES show floor, Christina Hutchinson offered visitors a chance to snap a picture to promote "The Selfie Stick" sold by New York-based LOTP Marketing.

LOTP's Robert Rickheeram said his firm began manufacturing and selling the sticks last year, after his parents bought one in Greece at the same time he found one in China.

"We were one of the first, although I can't confirm we were the first" to start manufacturing and selling in the United States.

"We recognized the trend and we were able to get the website [theselfiestick.com](http://theselfiestick.com)."

Rickheeram said it's not clear if any single company can be dominant in the emerging stick sector.

"Anyone can make these," he said. "There are no patents, although we have a patent pending."

He said his device was designed with a strong clamp that holds the smartphone securely in place.

"It has a little more bulk, but we don't want anyone breaking their \$500 smartphone," he said.

Source: AFP via I-Net Bridge

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