

Details of Apple's iWatch and iPhone 6

SAN FRANCISCO, USA: Apple has moved to recapture its role as a technology trend-setter with its highly anticipated smartwatch and two large-screen versions of the iPhone.



Apple Chief Executive believes the combination of the new iWatch, iPhone 6 and the Apple Pay system will appeal to users worldwide. Image: Apple

With the debuts of Apple iWatch and iPhone 6 models stretched to fit a hot "phablet" trend, the California company delivered what rumours had predicted leading up to the event.

"The Apple iWatch, a sleek wrist device that links to the iPhone, will redefine what people expect from this category," Chief Executive Tim Cook said at a carefully staged presentation in Apple's hometown of Cupertino, California.

Market tracker IHS saw Apple as aiming to reset the wearable computing market the way it transformed the world of smartphones with the release of the iPhone.

"But moving into a new category is a bold, expensive and risky effort," IHS said in an initial analysis of the Apple announcements.

Despite an array of smartwatch releases, no one seems to have found the key to the market, according to Analyst Roger Kay of Endpoint Technologies.

Expensive to link the watch to the phone

"Syncing Apple iWatch capabilities to iPhones also means that the overall cost of strapping one on could be close to \$1,000," Kay noted.

"I'm not getting the impression that Apple has nailed the category," Kay told AFP.

The iPhone 6 models boost screen sizes in what some see as the company catching up to a "phablet" trend combining features of smartphones and tablets.

"Bigger screen. Better performance. Elegant design. Welcome to the party," Taiwan-based smartphone rival HTC said in a message fired Apple's way on Twitter.

Apple's main rival Samsung has long had a range of larger handsets and has tried to market a smartwatch of its own. LG recently released a large-screen flagship G3 model with cameras tricked out to delight selfie-loving smartphone users.



Apple's slim and attractive iWatch that will only be available next year and will start at a price of \$349. Image: Apple

Bigger screens demanded by users

The iPhone 6 will have a screen of 4.7 inches and the 6-Plus will be 5.5 inches, allowing Apple to adapt to consumers' apparent preference for bigger displays.

The new iPhone 6 will start at the same price of existing iPhones at \$199 for US customers while the iPhone 6 Plus will be sold at \$299 with a two-year contract.

Apple said the devices would be available in at least 115 countries by the end of the year and that it will begin taking orders for iPhone 6 models this week.



Apple's bigger iPhone 6 can be used to pay for items while shopping using new technology and the Apple Pay systems. Image: Apple

Apple also added a mobile wallet, which Cook said would replace an antiquated payment process "with a new system that allows consumers to touch their phones to retail terminals to pay.

The new payment system will be built into the new iPhones and the upgraded Apple's operating system called iOS 8. Cook introduced Apple iWatch with the "one more thing" introduction that was a trademark of iconic Apple co-founder Steve Jobs.

Payment systems

"It is the next chapter in Apple's story," Cook said of the company's first new product category since the death of Jobs in 2011.

"We invented intimate ways to connect and communicate directly from your wrist; it works seamlessly with iPhone and it is also a comprehensive health and fitness device."

According to Cook the Apple watch will start at \$349 when it is released early next year. The smartwatch will work with iPhone 5 and newer models.

But some analysts said the delayed roll-out could be a problem for Apple. With no Apple iWatch on shelves for the Christmas shopping season, people hankering for a smartwatches may turn to those offered by Samsung, Motorola or other Apple rivals, reasoned analyst Rob Enderle of Enderle Group in Silicon Valley.

"Once Apple announces something, people want it; and there lies the danger," Enderle said. "People don't leave IOUs under the tree for Christmas."

Consumers typically have less cash to spend on accessories like Apple iWatch. While the iWatch has touch-screen capabilities, many controls were designed into a "digital crown" button so fingers do not block screens.

Sensors can detect a wearer's pulse, and the device synchronises with location-sensing features in iPhones to provide a comprehensive picture of activity and help work toward fitness goals.

Applications for the watch include map software that guides the wearer to destinations with gentle "taps" on the wrist. Apple showed off programs for checking into American Airlines flights, unlocking Starwood hotel room doors, and even controlling home lighting or temperature.

Forrester analyst Frank Gillett believed Apple appeared poised to revitalise wearable computing but that it could take longer to catch on than the iPhone or the iPad.

"Because so many others have hit this so hard, it is not going to be the runaway like the iPhone or the iPad," Gillett said.

Source: AFP via I-Net Bridge