

Apple's Vision Pro shakes up AR/VR sector

Zhu Shenshen

Connecting the digital and physical worlds and achieving sci-fi action in films is a long and laborious process. Apple's new entry gives the market fresh optimism as Meta (Facebook) and HTC struggle to sell headsets to average consumers.

Apple's long-awaited augmented-reality headset, the company's first significant new product in a decade, is anticipated to fire up the AR/VR market and metaverse development, as well as bring the digital virtual world early to the general public, according to industry representatives.

However, Chinese researchers and netizens have highlighted the disadvantages of Apple's new Vision Pro device, including its high price (US\$3499), battery capacity, and limited content and applications.

During a developer conference conducted at its headquarters in California, Apple introduced the Vision Pro, which allows users to interact with digital content and applications using their hands, eyes and voices. Users can experience films, TV programs and video games in a more immersive manner.

It is Apple's latest "One More Thing" after the Apple Watch and a significant new product category with the potential to alter billions of people's lives.

Tim Cook, Apple's chief executive, stated in the keynote speech that blending digital content with the real world can unleash experiences like "nothing we've ever seen."

However, the device will not be available until early next year and that too in the United States, Apple said.

Taking into account Apple's financial and ecosystem resources, the new headset is viewed as a savior for the struggling VR/AR market, despite the presence of major players such as HTC, Meta and ByteDance's Pico.

According to market researcher International Data Corp, or IDC, the AR/VR market in China experienced a 37.6 percent decline in first-quarter sales compared to the same period last year.

Analyst Zhao Siquan of IDC stated that Apple's new Vision Pro, which is aimed at the high-end market, will not stimulate the domestic market anytime soon.

The conference and Vision Pro quickly became trending topics on Weibo, with netizens discussing its characteristics, cost-to-performance ratio, and even its impact on familial relationships.

A majority of netizens complained about the high price, which only favors "wealthy and tech-savvy" users.

Additionally, they were dissatisfied with the Vision Pro battery, which only lasts for two hours.

The cost of Vision Pro will begin at US\$3,499, which is more than three times the price of the most expensive headsets from Meta and Pico. In China, consumers can buy various gadgets with that kind of money, including a smartphone, a laptop, a television and even a third-party AR/VR headset.

Apple-related shares also



Above: People take photos of the new Apple Vision Pro headset during the Apple Worldwide Developers Conference in Cupertino, California, on Monday.



Right: Apple's new Vision Pro virtual reality headset on display. — AFP

took a hit on the stock market, with investors clearly indifferent to the latest gadget.

Analysts say Apple's entry into the sector, which represents future human interaction with the world, will bring a breath of fresh air, new players and capital.

Its official entry will speed up the transition of AR/VR devices from "entertainment

tools" to "productivity tools" in terms of product hardware, content ecology and industry chain development.

IDC's Zhao stated that it would be difficult for Apple to transform the entire market with a new iteration of products.

According to industry insiders, many Chinese brands, including headset

manufacturers and smartphone vendors, will release new products by the end of this year or early next year to compete and introduce new ideas in the market.

It is still a first-generation "spatial computing" device that requires time to evolve and discover "killer applications" like the Apple Watch for the body-fitting group.