

# Apple 'aunties' greeted with cheers at Shanghai store opening

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Apple CEO Tim Cook attended the opening of his company's newest store in Shanghai, amid growing worries over the iPhone maker's market share in China.

Chinese Apple superfans jostled to enter the smartphone maker's newest store in Shanghai as it opened on Thursday night—but they were

upstaged by dozens of retirees eager to nab commemorative freebies.

Apple unveiled its new flagship location in the Chinese metropolis as worries mount over slumping sales in the world's second largest economy.

Hundreds gathered outside Apple's eighth store in Shanghai hours before its grand opening on Thursday, including younger fans brandishing smartwatches, phones, and even the brand's \$3,500 augmented reality goggles.

The vast majority arrived to find that they were too late to enter a cordoned-off queue that guaranteed first access to the store—that area was already filled with a sprinkling of die-hard fans and lines of older men and women armed with folding chairs and parasols.

"I came here at six in the morning today," said Kit Cheung, a 30-year-old Apple aficionado from Hong Kong who attended the store's opening wearing a headdress in the shape of the brand's fruit logo.

"But they were even earlier than me," he told AFP, referring to the retirees.

Middle-aged "aunties" and "uncles"—as they are affectionately dubbed in Chinese—are a common sight at promotional events across the country thanks in part to the low retirement age, willing to wait in line for hours for free groceries and discounted meals.

The United States' largest smartphone empire appears to have embraced the phenomenon, with staff clapping and cheering as women sporting perms and men clutching [plastic bags](#) and stools streamed into the Shanghai Jing'an Apple store minutes after CEO Tim Cook opened its doors.

"My girlfriends told me about this, they said I could come get stuff," one older woman told AFP excitedly, as she walked toward Apple employees handing out free limited edition tote bags and stickers.

"No rush, auntie," staff called out, as they ran to help one elderly visitor up the stairs.



Customers lined up sometimes for days outside of Shanghai's new Apple retail store before its grand opening.

## Slowing sales

Cook's appearance at the store's opening comes as worries grow around

Apple's market share in the world's second-largest economy.

Apple has 47 stores in mainland China.

A recent Counterpoint Research report said iPhone sales in China fell nearly a quarter year-on-year over the first six weeks of 2024.

But the sheer size of the Chinese market means Apple-obsessed consumers are still a powerful demographic.

Jason Wang, a 35-year-old from Chengdu, was the first customer to step inside the new Shanghai store on Thursday, after setting up camp outside its glass doors two days earlier.

"I've been using Apple for 16, 17 years," he said, listing the products in his collection.

The [civil servant](#), who has a second phone due to restrictions on government employees using Apple products, said he had prepared some dried food to eat during his wait and took turns for bathroom breaks with other diehard Apple fans.

Wearing an Apple headquarters souvenir t-shirt, he proudly showed AFP the book and Apple Watch box Cook autographed on Thursday after a brief conversation between the two men.

"I feel like it's my dream come true," Wang said of his close encounter with Cook.

Others trying to live the Apple dream are turning to second-hand resale sites, with scalpers advertising the new store's commemorative gift pack on used goods shopping app Xianyu hours before the opening.

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