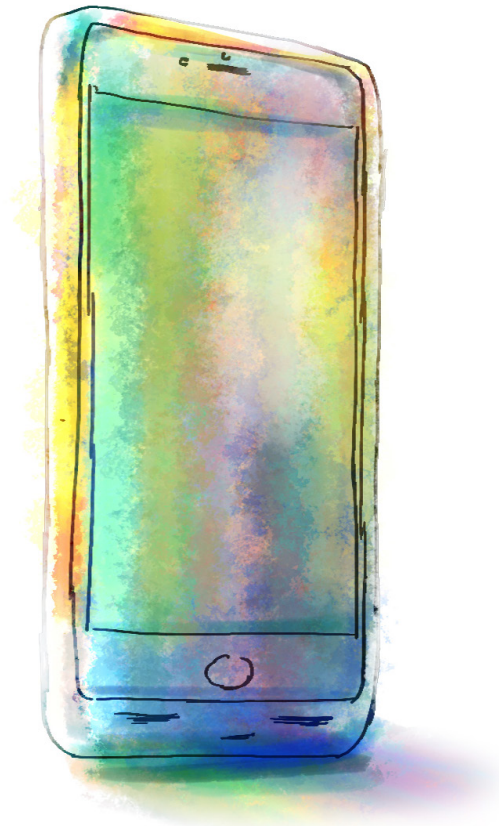Lloyd Kelly

Apple Skins

Dissecting the popularity of Apple iPhone models and colours

Apple Skins

Lloyd Kelly

The Apple iPhone is a popular global mobile device, available in a variety of models and colours over the 10 year of its existence. But which of these is the most popular? Which colour? Which model? What factors contribute to the Iphone's popularity? And how did Apple rise to become the market giant it is today?

The success of the widely popular Apple iPhone can be attributed to a few factors. According to West & Mace (2010), Apple successfully created a niche for its flagship product debut into an already dominated mobile device market by altering the landscape of the then current mobile internet scene, and increasing the functionality of mobile devices overall.
In a 2007 interview Steve Jobs is quoted saying "people want the REAL internet on their phone. We are going to deliver that. We're going to take advantage of some of these investments in bandwidth." (Block, 2016). This altered landscape created a more competitive and lucrative industry as there were more services to provide and

monetise. These systems included content ecosystems like iTunes, the App Store and pc similar internet browsing services.

Apple bringing these experiences and services to the handheld mobile phone device propelled the Western market desire and expectation for true web browsing experiences. This in turn drove consumption of personal computers and other handheld and mobile devices and platforms. West & Mace (2010). It was these avant garde changes, in a period where internet accessibility in mobile devices was relatively limited, that led to Apple's high customer loyalty and strong market share.

The physical design of the iPhone was also integral to its global success. In a study by Kumar & Noble (2016) break the design values of a product into 4 categories: "Esthetic, Functional, Social and Altruistic" (Kumar & Noble, 2016) Esthetic value is defined as the visual

appeal and attractiveness of the product. Functional value is defined as the behaviour or use of the product and how well it it achieves its applied purpose, ie. effectiveness, reliability, safety etc.

Social value is measured by how the product can improve the individual's social standing, status and self-esteem

Altruistic value is a self-reflective value, characterised by the consumers ability to use the product to help others and what that ability says about their self-ídentity. Ie, sustainability.

The same study found links between the esthetic and altruistic values with consumers placing higher value on minimalistic products -"some consumers dislike waste and perceive simple and more natural forms to communicate this sense of frugality" (Kumar & Noble, 2016)

It is these values that underpin the Apple iPhones product design appeal.

Taking these factors into consideration, we devised two graphs, using sales data, to get an understanding of: the most popular models, and the most popular colours. However the results are only estimative as Apple only releases the data for it's yearly sales quarters for each product line and this data isn't broken into individual model or colour sales. The comparison doesn't include the iPhone 8, 8+ or X nor the PRODUCT RED iPhone 7 special edition as there is not current sales data for these products.

From these data graphs (pictured below), it is possible to draw correlation between the more popular models and colours with a higher value on simple and more natural forms. The iPhones' forms have been consistently minimalistic and are becoming increasingly simplified. The popular colours are those that are more natural, neutral or muted tones.
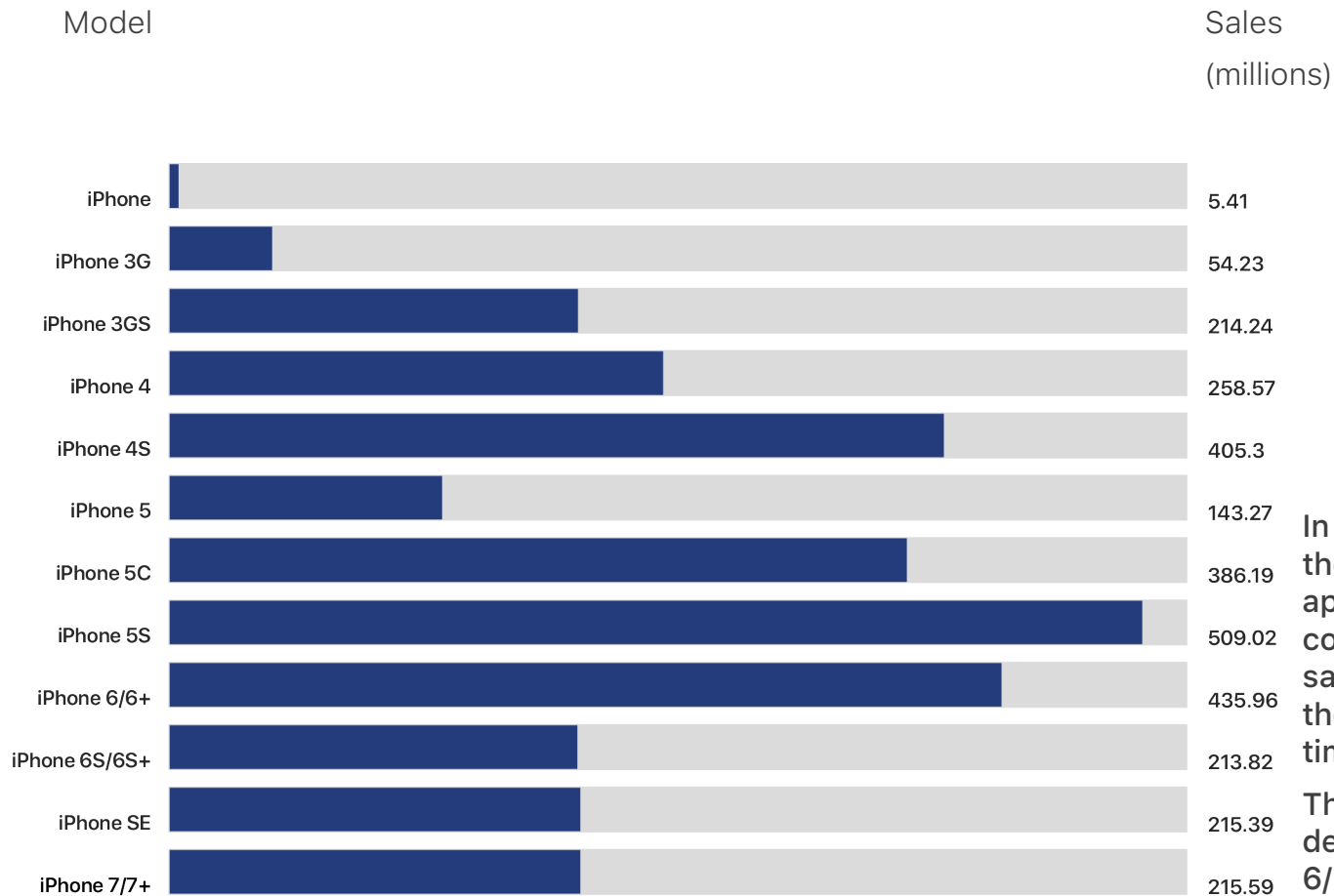
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Model

Sales (millions)

Model	Sales (millions)
iPhone	5.41
iPhone 3G	54.23
iPhone 3GS	214.24
iPhone 4	258.57
iPhone 4S	405.3
iPhone 5	143.27
iPhone 5C	386.19
iPhone 5S	509.02
iPhone 6/6+	435.96
iPhone 6S/6S+	213.82
iPhone SE	215.39
iPhone 7/7+	215.59

In the first graph what we've looked at are the individual models' release and (where applicable) discontinue dates. We then compared those dates against the Iphone sales quarters, and from there calculated the total iPhone sales for all models in that time period.

The resulting most popular models are, in descending order: the iPhone 5S, the iPhone 6/6S+ and the iPhone 4S.

In the second graph we looked at the individual colours, which models carry which colours, and the sales data corresponding to those models. The resulting colour popularity is, in descending order: white, space grey/silver/gold, and black, rose gold, blue/pink/green, jet black and the black-silver.

Sales (millions)

Model Colours

1500

1200

900

600

300

0

Black/Silver · Black · White · Blue · Pink · Green · Yellow · Space Grey · Silver · Gold · Rose Gold · Jet Black