

Gacoba Salloum

Wired Up

Apple's vision for a portless future



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The Vision

Jony Ive, Apple Chief Design Officer, has long stated that he has a vision of a portless buttonless future, for the iPhone to appear as if it was a single sheet of glass. To accomplish this is a tall order as it requires a lot of existing elements to be removed which can be tough when the industry standard is to have 2 ports, the charging port and the headphone jack. With the limitation of current day battery technology the best step forward is to combine the ports and focus on bluetooth. If we take a step back and take a look at this port we start to realise the method behind the madness. The 3.5mm headphone jack is a single use port that has for the most part remained unchanged since 1878. It is a standard that has lived past its expiry ports like the Lightning port on Apple and USB-C on everything else can charge the phone as well as transfer data including sound on top of which sounds superior to the ancient AUX cord that we use today. In 2016 with the release of the iPhone 7 Apple took a leap of faith and removed the headphone jack from their latest installment labeling it "courageous."

"The reason to move on: courage. The courage to move on and do something new that betters all of us,"

Phil Schiller

Apple Marketing Chief



Courage

With the elimination of the headphone jack Apple had to introduce 3 alternatives to listening to music. The first option being their new lightning cable earpods where instead of the 3.5mm jack connection it has a Lightning cord connection at the end of the wire. The second option being a free dongle which is provided in each box which allows you to adapt your own earphone to be compatible with the newer iPhones. Finally there is a third option, the AirPods, which are Apple's take on bluetooth earphones and are the preferred choice to best experience and embrace the portless future Apple is planning. These wireless earphones are extremely well integrated into the Apple ecosystem and have decent battery life allowing up to 5-hours listening time and up to 24-hours when paired with the charging case. This push to a wireless future is proving to be the right move on Apple's part with Amazon's top 10 best selling headphones in 2018 being mostly wireless with 6/10 being bluetooth, 3/10 with and aux connection and then the Apple lightning connector EarPods sitting at 6th. Apple's courageous move is further

cemented with the it being reported by the NPD's Retail tracking service that AirPods account for 85% of the total wireless headphone dollar sales in the U.S. From these statistics alone it is clear that bluetooth technology is the future of the iPhone.

Industry Standard

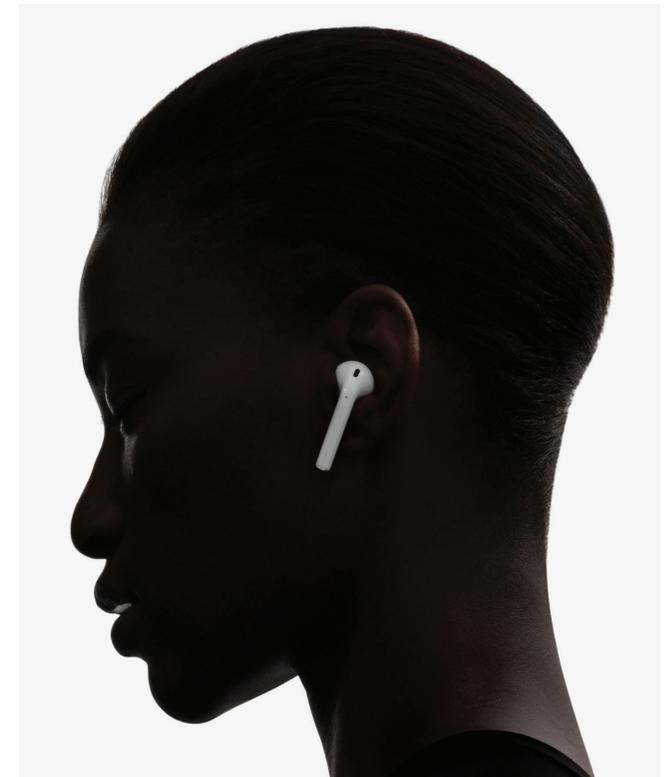
The headphone jack and charging port combo has been industry standard within smartphones since apple themselves pioneered the smartphones back in 2008 and as with a lot of industries the tech industry is fiercely competitive with clone after clone appearing taking elements from the big players such as Apple and Samsung, and following their lead. This can be seen with the removal of the headphone jack in phones. In 2016, the year the iPhone 7 was released, a total of 58 phones were released to the public only 2 of which were aux-less, the iPhone 7 and surprisingly the Moto Z which was released 2 months prior to the iPhone. While Apple certainly didn't do it first they certainly started the trend with the next year seeing an increase of aux-less phones. What was initially only 3.5% of the

phones released in 2016, grew to 20.7% in 2017 and then grew again to 30.5% in the first half of 2018.

Convenient?

While this move from Apple was no doubt innovative and courageous what cost did it have on the consumers? With the headphone jack being such an open industry standard it will take time for consumer to adjust to this sudden change. If consumers were not ready or willing to pay a couple hundred dollars for bluetooth headphones the remaining options are somewhat limiting. The biggest flaw with a single port is that it makes it impossible to listen to music and charge at the same time straight out of the box. A way around this is the use of dongles which not only require the consumer to spend more money but also increase the chance of breakage and malfunction. So not only does the consumer need a dongle to use their own earphones they would need a separate dongle in order to listen to music and charge at the same time. This has caused some strife with consumers and critics alike. In a twitter poll created by co-founder of OnePlus (phone

manufacturer) 85% of the 9,500 votes in 2017 and 88% of 19,300 votes would still prefer the headphone jack. While it may cause some dismay to consumers today as technologies improve Apple will be closer to achieving their portless future.



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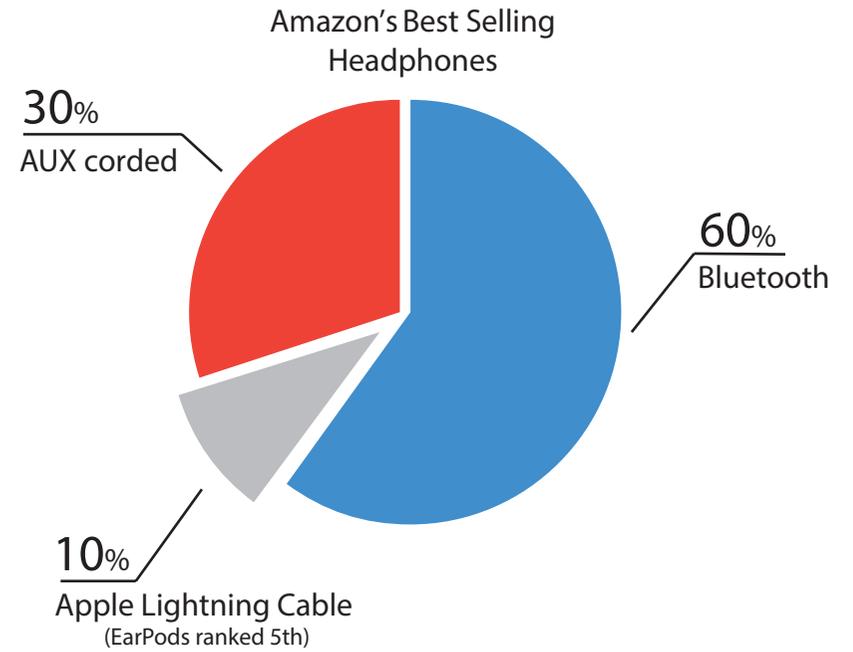
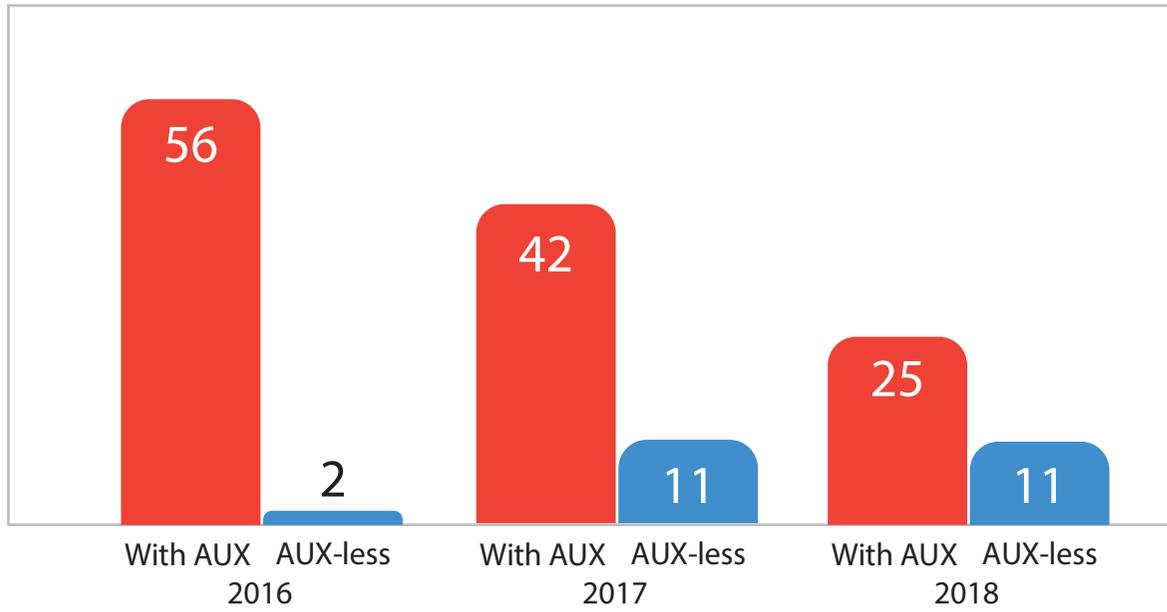
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The terms
 "No headphone jack" vs "bluetooth headphones"

