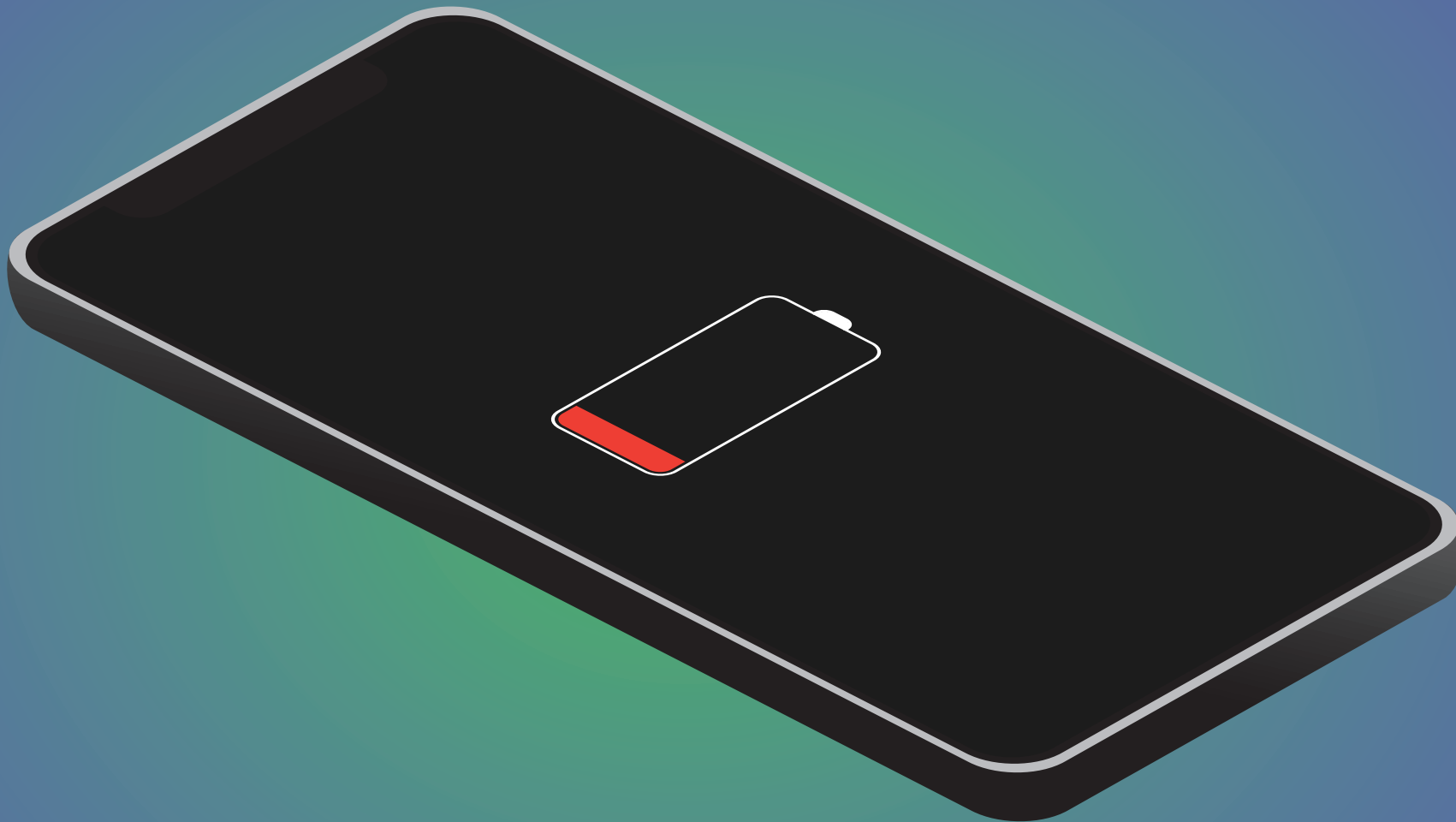


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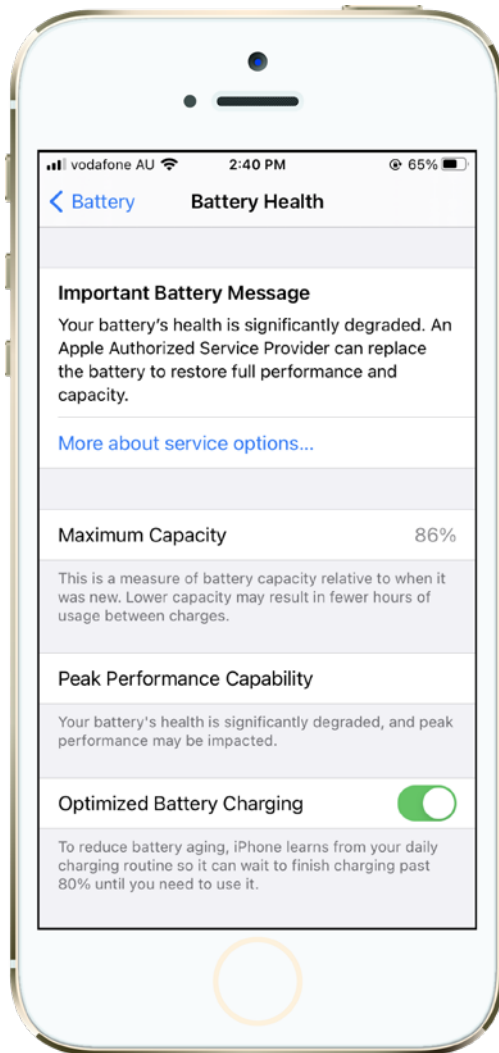
Planning to Fail

Is your iPhone really built to last?



Planning to Fail

Caitlin Sheridan



In the rapidly changing landscape of technology, obsolescence is inevitable. However, as companies rapidly develop new, more advanced products, consumers can find themselves with outdated devices within only one or two years after their release.

Apple is a company with a focus for innovation, which results in constant upgrades and new products. Whilst this business model can be praised for their constant desire for improving the quality of their products, many have voiced suspicions regarding whether Apple products are truly built to last.

In late 2017, Apple faced significant criticism as patterns emerged of iPhone 6 & 6s models, upgraded past the newly released iOS 10.2.1, began experiencing severe performance issues such as sudden shutdowns and slow touch-responses. These trends were again found in iPhone 7 models upgrading to iOS 11.2. This event, dubbed 'Battery Gate' by several online communities, reignited a conversation amongst technology critics and developers as to whether Apple was intentionally part-taking in planned obsolescence in order to boost sales of their newer iPhone models, as many update-related

performance issues coincided with recent iPhone releases. Apple strongly denied these allegations, expressing "we have never – and would never – do anything to intentionally shorten the life of any Apple product" in their response letter (2017, as cited in Lipton & Balakrishnan).

Apple somewhat contradicted their statement when they revealed they were, in fact, slowing down older iPhone models with the recent iOS updates. They claimed this was to adapt to the older Li-ion batteries that could no longer accommodate the heavier processes of the new iOS.

However, it should be noted that the oldest iPhone 6 model was only 3 years old, the 6s was 2 years old and the iPhone 7 was just over 1 year old. All three models saw battery performance issues within the first year of their release. Data analyst Horace Dediu (2018) found that the average expected lifespan for all Apple devices, as of 2017, was just over 4 years and the trends suggest this number will continue to increase in the future. How will customers maintain their iPhone if they are seeing severe battery degradation a year into it's lifetime?

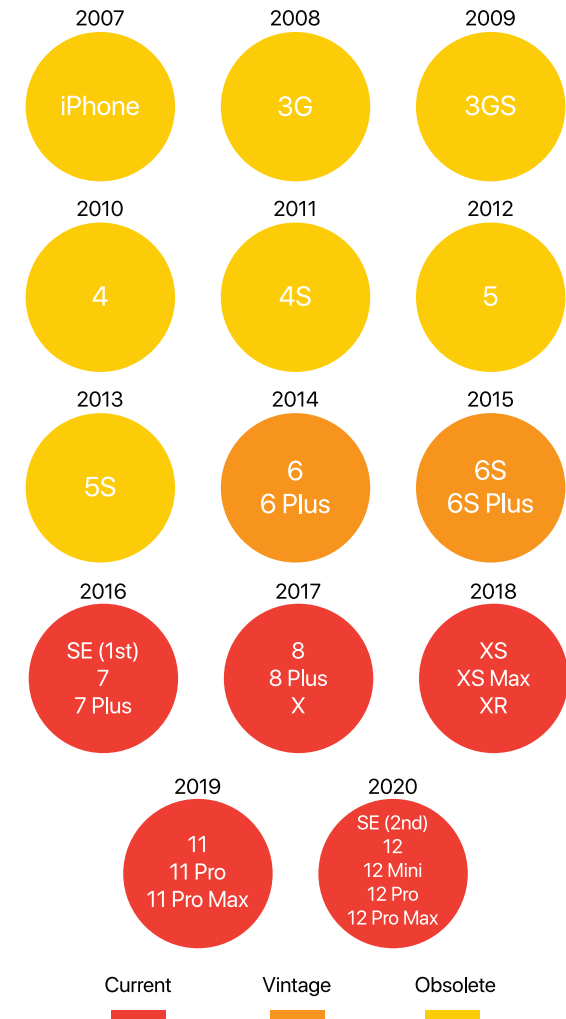
Apple has been criticised for implementing business models that make it more difficult for customer's to extend the life of their iPhone. For example, battery replacement services through Apple can cost between AU\$79-109 (excluding any postal fees) depending on the model. They also dissuade customers from seeking third-party replacements by voiding the warranty if their iPhone is tampered with as well as using irregular screw types such as Pentalobe and Tri-Point screws to create difficulty for individuals at home. This system gives Apple full control of the condition of your iPhone's internal hardware.

Whether or not Apple is guilty of intentional planned obsolescence, their frequent new releases and constant upgrades can encourage customers to forgo their perfectly functional phone for a shiny new one. Apple have been steadily increasing the number of new models released each year and 2020 has reached a new high of five new models including the 2nd Generation iPhone SE and the four iPhone 12 variants. With each new release, current customers' iPhones are becoming more and more outdated.

However, Apple does seem to be making some strides in maintaining their older iPhone

models going forward, at least from a software perspective. The number of years an iPhone can update to the latest iOS has increased over the years, with over half of all iPhone models (including iPhone 12 variants) currently compatible with iOS 14 update.

Apple appears to be open and responsive to criticism, as seen with their response to 'Battery gate' and several community posts they have published on their website throughout the years. Whilst they may still be upholding business practices that encourage the purchase of new products over the maintenance of old products, they do appear to be actively working to improve the quality of said new products in the hopes of creating a longer lasting product for the future.

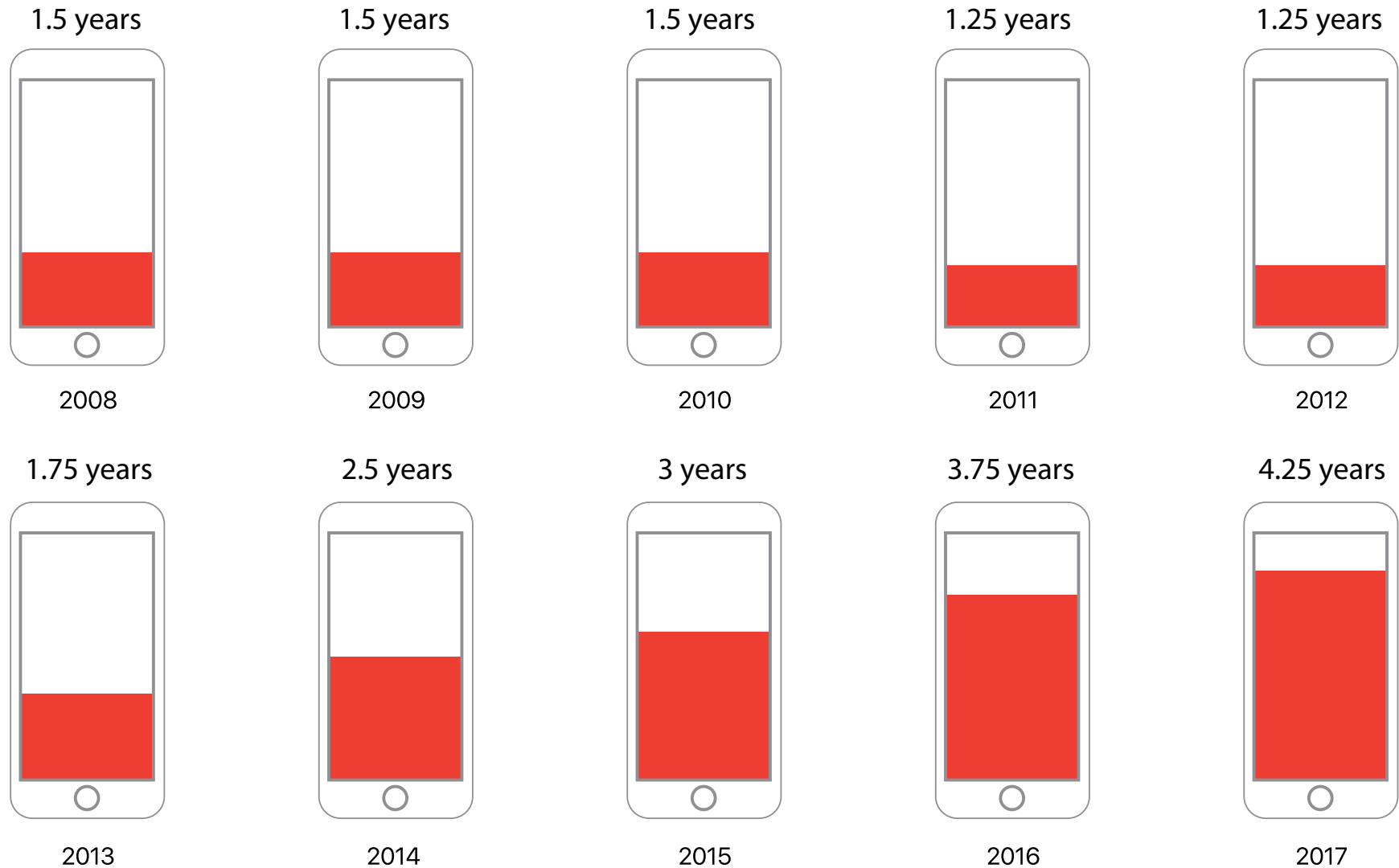


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Estimated lifespan of Apple products



When do Apple customers upgrade their iPhones?

