

Is this VR's "iPhone moment?"

The Apple Vision Pro seems poised to shake up the virtual reality space—but how big of a splash will it really make? With the Vision Pro's positioning as a premium offering that will expand virtual and mixed reality to more use cases and experiences, some are wondering if the Vision Pro marks an inflection point in the virtual reality market—is this VR's "iPhone moment"?

Since the first rumblings of Apple's entry into the virtual reality space back in May 2023, we've been keeping a pulse on the market. NRG conducted quick pulse surveys just before (May 2023) and after (June 2023) the official announcement of the Vision Pro and again after its release (February 2024).

VR headset brand consideration

● ● ● ● among VR intenders



SONY PLAYSTATION VR



APPLE VISION PRO



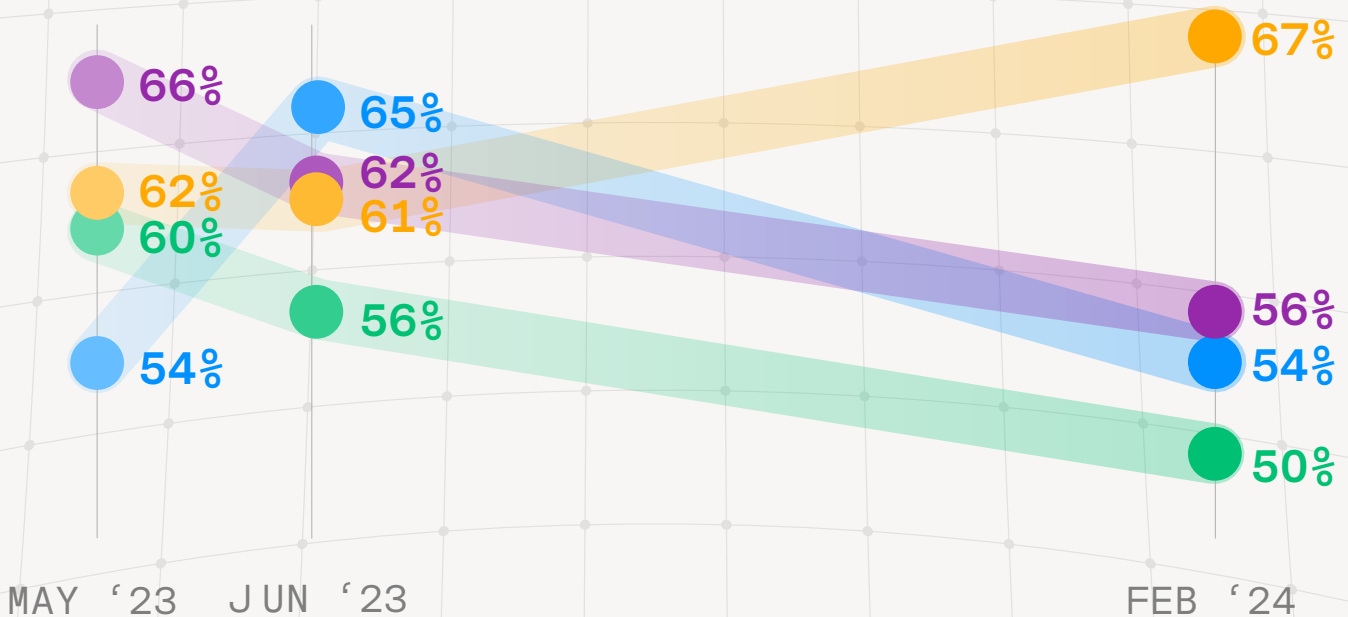
META QUEST 3



SAMSUNG GEAR VR

Meta and Sony hold the existing VR market, as Apple consideration softens

Consumers actively engaged in the virtual reality category still hold high consideration for Meta (67%) and Sony (56%) after the release of the Apple Vision Pro. While 54% of those intending to purchase a VR headset in the next six months do consider Apple, this has softened since the initial announcement in June 2023, likely due to price point and initial reviews of the device.



The Vision Pro costs *how* much?!

The jaw-dropping starting price of \$3,500 is unquestionably a sticking point, especially when compared to the more affordable Meta or Sony headsets. In June 2023, only 11% of VR intenders said they would consider purchasing a headset over \$2,000 and an earlier study from March 2022 found that 46% of consumers felt that VR devices were too expensive. The Vision Pro is no exception.



The high price point, with some calling it over-priced

“ The Apple Vision Pro will probably be too expensive for people on-the-fence about VR to try it. People who are interested in VR will have tried it already, and those who are not interested in VR won't try it regardless.” - **Female, 41**



Concerns about discomfort, impracticality, and disconnectedness from real life

“ It's a bit heavy, cumbersome, and it doesn't have enough content. It's still a new technology, so there's a lot of bugs to work out too.” - **Male, 61**

When we asked consumers about their initial reactions to the Vision Pro, top themes included:



High quality device standards

“ It has great motion tracking and resolution. Its hand and eye tracking are a huge leap forward.” - **Male, 63**



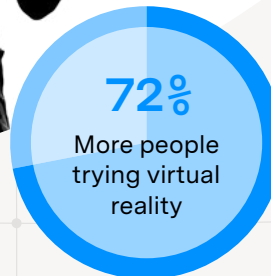
Compatibility outside of the Apple ecosystem

“ Too many Android and other operating systems are out there that aren't compatible with Apple products. I worry this won't reach those other systems.” - **Female, 42**

So, despite the hype and interest, the high price point remains a prominent barrier: though half of total consumers say they would consider an Apple Vision Pro, only 12% say they have already or are definitely planning on purchasing a Vision Pro—a very modest 2pt increase from June 2023.

How much of an impact will the Apple Vision Pro have on...

Somewhat + a great deal of impact



Strength of Apple's ecosystem

The Vision Pro seamlessly fits in with other Apple devices, and many consumers feel that this simple integration will appeal to active Apple users. Aside from devices, some mention Apple's strong software development ecosystem and how key the developer side of the Vision Pro will be.

“ If Apple incorporates user-friendly design, seamless integration with existing Apple products and services, it could indeed play a significant role in popularizing VR among mainstream consumers.” – **Male, 20**

Reaching the mainstream

The first generation of any new tech product however, is always priced at a premium: in 2007, when Apple released the first iPhone, the 8GB edition sold for \$599, nearly twice the price of the BlackBerry. Despite the price meaning the Vision Pro is out of reach for many consumers, many still believe the Vision Pro has the potential to propel virtual and mixed reality forward:

Seven in ten consumers feel the Vision Pro will get more people trying virtual reality (72%) and get excited about virtual reality (70%).

Two-thirds (66%) feel the Vision Pro will help bring virtual reality mainstream, highlighting use cases outside of gaming, with which virtual reality is still strongly associated.

When asked why consumers felt the Vision Pro would help bring virtual reality to the mainstream, they highlighted a few key themes:

Trust in Apple

While they may not yet fully understand virtual reality, Apple's large existing customer base is ready to try a new device from them as they expect it will continue to meet their standards.

“ Apple is a trusted brand and is widely used for mainstream purposes like Apple CarPlay, Apple Pay, and Apple Card. Apple devices are also used in both business and schools. It will definitely help make VR mainstream.” – **Male, 41**

Trend-setting and hype

Outside of product quality and software capabilities, consumers have seen how much excitement new Apple products generate. Apple's ability to appeal to the masses through trends and marketing will bring new attention to the device that consumers believe will create new virtual reality users.

“ When Apple comes out with something new, a lot of people will want to use it more no matter what the product is. As long as it's Apple, everything goes together with other Apple products and makes it easier.” – **Female, 28**



Meta Quest 3 is seen as better value, while the Vision Pro is recognized for design, specs, and experience

While some may debate the differences in quality and capability between the Vision Pro and its more accessible competitors, Mark Zuckerberg himself has made a case for the Quest 3. In his deep dive Quest 3 vs. Vision Pro comparison, he states that before trying the Vision Pro, he felt the Quest 3 would still be the better value product. After trying the Vision Pro, he goes on to say the “Quest is the better product, period.” While the devices are designed with different uses in mind, he believes the Quest’s capabilities and features are “better for the vast majority of things people use mixed reality for.”

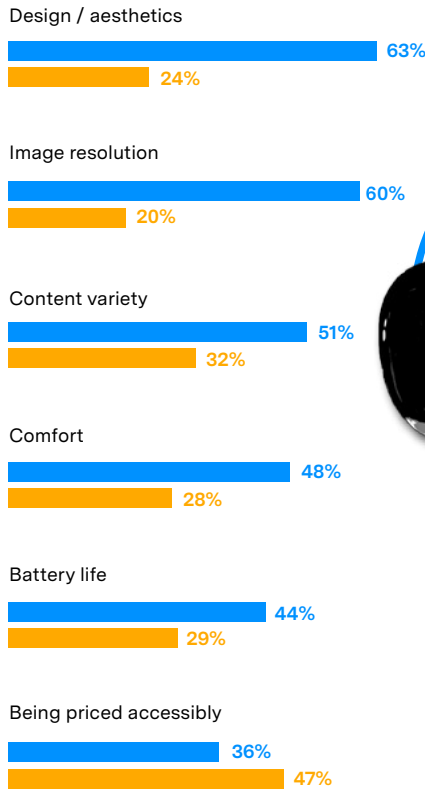
Consumers, though, have a different take. Even though few have hands-on experience with the Vision Pro, Apple’s marketing and brand halo give Apple an edge on how the device is perceived. Among those who know at least a moderate amount about each device, consumers overwhelmingly think device attributes, like design/aesthetics, image resolution, battery life, and comfort, are better on the Vision Pro.

META QUEST 3

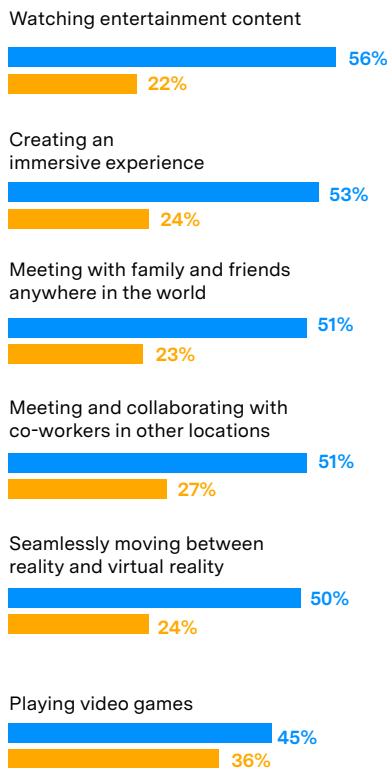


Which device is better at...

ATTRIBUTES



EXPERIENCES



Among those who know a moderate amount to a lot about both devices (n=467)

- Vision Pro is better
- Quest 3 is better



The Quest 3 prevails on one attribute: being priced accessibly.

Zuckerberg addressed this point in his comparison, describing Meta's device as "really good and seven times less expensive".

Focusing on experience-related features between the two devices, consumers still say they prefer the Vision Pro. When it comes to creating immersive experiences, meeting and collaborating with co-workers or meeting with family in different locations, watching entertainment content, or seamlessly moving between reality and virtual reality, consumers already believe Apple holds the edge. While Quest edges closest to being better for playing video games, the Vision Pro still pulls ahead. In our post-release study in June 2023, we saw that while playing video games was the top intended use case of Vision Pro (61%), Vision Pro's spatial computing raised interest in more immersive experiences and further entertainment consumption.

Thought starters & implications

Predictions

01

Apple's brand halo could help encourage more consumers to experiment with virtual reality, but it will likely still take several iterations before VR headsets truly reach the mainstream.

In addition to the high price point, consumers still express concern over issues that have plagued headsets: comfort, heaviness, battery life, and a clear understanding of benefits. Though consumers feel the Vision Pro is making strides in these areas, there's still a need for improvement—and a price drop—before virtual reality can truly go mainstream.

02

We may see competitor devices begin to focus on more niche aspects of virtual and mixed reality or begin to emphasize the further use cases their devices may also be used for. Vision Pro is focused on showing consumers new use cases for virtual reality, a category currently tied heavily with gaming. Competitors may either lean into niche use cases, or expand their demonstrated capabilities to better compete with Vision Pro.

03

A focus on spatial computing vs. strictly virtual reality could help the Vision Pro overshadow category competitors, particularly as features continue to roll out. Beyond demonstrating new use cases, the Vision Pro is looking to step ahead of competition with its premier spatial computing capabilities. As many consumers are exposed to this for the first time, spatial computing may begin to move the category forward in a fresh way.

Recommendations

01

Highlight everyday use cases and benefits in product development and marketing. Virtual reality has had a challenging time breaking into the mainstream because consumers often dismiss it as an “unnecessary” technology. While entertainment, fun, and novelty can be an important draw to the virtual reality space, the mainstream audience will need to understand the true value add. The more time spent developing and building stronger use cases for virtual and mixed reality, the more the value in the space rises.

02

Prioritize affordability. With the majority of VR intenders unwilling to pay above \$699, the latest technological breakthroughs won't be able to make an impact until they're packaged in an affordable device. The Vision Pro may represent forward movement on a lot of key attributes, but to cross the chasm and achieve product market fit, the technology needs to be accessible to more than just wealthy tech enthusiasts.

03

Leverage the hype. The splash that Apple is making is raising awareness and curiosity for virtual reality. Competitors should seize the opportunity to highlight new capabilities and get the VR-curious into the space while they still have a strong price advantage.



Methodology

We conducted three 8-minute mobile-optimized online surveys at different points in the Apple Vision Pro's launch to measure interest and reactions as the product rolled out. All surveys were among 18–64-year-old consumers in the US who must own a smartphone, balanced by age, gender, race, and region.

PRE - LAUNCH :

Fieldwork conducted
May 29, 2023; n=1,002

POST - LAUNCH :

Fieldwork conducted
June 20-22, 2023; n=1,000

POST - RELEASE :

Fieldwork conducted
February 26-28, 2024; n=1,066

We also included data from NRG's [Beyond Reality](#) research—a study of 2,500 US consumers ages 18–64 conducted in March 2022, balanced by age, gender, race, region, and income level.

