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Apple already owns half of smartwatch market: Research

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Matt Clinch | @mattclinch81
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Cupertino-based **Apple** has already cornered the market for smartwatches, according to new research on Tuesday, but analysts still have doubts over the long-term outlook for the nascent sector.

The Apple Watch was deemed as one way the technology giant could move forward from a saturated smartphone market when it released an array of devices in April 2015. It was also tapping into a space that **Samsung** had already laid some groundwork in with its first generation products being released in 2013.

But despite being late to the party, Apple claimed 52 percent of global smartwatch shipments in 2015, according to a new report by research firm Juniper.

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"Its popularity far eclipsed that of rival vendors, with (Samsung) Android Wear shipments comprising less than 10 percent of sales for the year," the research said. "Most other smartwatch sales are currently coming from cheaper, simpler devices from a range of smaller players, such as Martian, X and Razer, the latter with the recently-announced Nabu Watch."

The user case for the smartwatch was one of the big questions in tech last year with many unconvinced that consumers would splash out for a device that had similar features to a smartphone or a wearable fitness band. In Tuesday's report, Juniper said that the market for smartwatches had thus far been driven by lower priced devices with more basic functionality.

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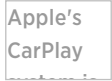
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It argued that there had been no "great leaps forward" that had revolutionized the category and suggested it was currently a sector "waiting for a market."

"Newer devices have offered more polished looks and subtly different functions, but no large changes in device capabilities or usage. With smartwatch functions established, it is now up to consumers to decide if they want them, rather than technology companies providing more reasons," James Moar, a research analyst with Juniper, said in Tuesday's press release.



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Market intelligence firm IDC has similar findings on market share, suggesting Apple has over 50 percent of sales with the Pebble smartwatch in second place with just 8 percent. Francisco Jeronimo, research director for European mobile devices at IDC, told CNBC by phone that Apple's promotional push meant that it was hardly surprising that it was dominating.

"The others haven't done enough to promote what users can do with their smartwatches," he said.

Jeronimo, like other analysts, is still unsure on a sector that he says is yet to define what its real value proposition is. However, over the longer term he believes services like Apple Pay could garner more interest for the devices and offer a genuine reason to buy a smartwatch.



Matt Clinch
Deputy Digital News Editor, CNBC.com

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