

Useful Features of Smartwatches for the Travelers

According to Engadget, about 3.6 million smartwatches may have been sold by Apple in the second quarter of 2015. This would place them in the second position in the wearables class after Fitbit. It is expected that this new market would expand more during 2015 holiday shopping season. However, the question that looms large is whether people would actually use the smartwatches. Experts are of the opinion that some people would, whereas some people would not.



What Is Useful for Travelers

Apple's smartwatch does a great job when it comes to notifications and activity tracking. People who use the watch for these purposes would definitely find it very helpful. Furthermore, the app Apple Maps would guide people who are on foot and are sure about the route to their destinations. Users are guided with buzzes which tell them which way they should turn. The watch also provides information as the number of steps to the destination, distance and incline. Health conscious people would also enjoy the reminder to get up and move on an hourly basis.

Apple Pay would be a better way to pay for the products that users buy online at Panera, Walgreens, Trader Joes or anywhere else than using their credit or debit card. However, the only condition to be ensured is that the merchant supports Apple Pay.

The Downsides

On the watch, Siri, the personal assistant program, is not very impressive. It does not talk back, but it will listen to what you say and get back to you with information. Generally, it works only 50 percent of the time.

Finding out third-party apps, for example Uber, from the big cluster of icons on the watch can be a slightly challenging task because of their size. In general, apps designed for providing information such as news, weather and travel and transport (eTTek Dash) work better on watches than third-party apps meant for doing things. This is because they provide bite-sized information as and when you need them with minimum amount of interaction. Hopefully, the new version of the watch OS will bring about a

change.



Apple's smartwatch is not very intuitive. It is difficult to determine as to whether the digital crown, screen or any other button is to be pushed. For example, Apple has introduced Force Touch. This feature allows users to put a little bit of pressure. The smartwatch makes a little thud and lets users know that they are doing it right. If there are a number of notifications, users can clear them all through Force Touch. Many users could figure it out only after many weeks. The Force Touch feature is being incorporated into iPhone, iPad and Macintosh.

What Are the Travelers Saying?

As of now, it is quite possible to live without an Apple smartwatch. The watch does not offer anything special that a smartphone cannot offer. Of course, users can get a quick update on weather, flight information, breaking news or sports news without reaching for their phones and at times it does come in handy.

Here is what some users have to say about the usefulness of smartwatches in general and with respect to travel.

Penny Watermeier, VP corporate sales and marketing, said that she used the Apple's smartwatch for three weeks when preparing for GBTA 2015. Specifically, she liked the apps eTTek Dash and Delta. She added that the app Delta notified her whenever the gate was changed and when it was time to board the aircraft. She also said that she has even boarded flights with the boarding pass on her watch.



Tim Arnold, Director Technology Solutions, opined that his Pebble Watch which works well with both Android and Apple operating systems has a battery life of 10 days. According to him, the downside is non-availability of apps. He has used only Uber on his smartwatch.

Finally, the distinct advantage of using Android Wear over Apple Watch is the availability of the robust Google Now system. It makes use of context for delivering the right notifications at the right times. Apple

says their upcoming iOS 9 and watch OS 2 would deliver the same experience through Siri. However, it becomes clear only when they are released. Till then, Android Wear would be a better choice. There are many manufacturers of Android watches and users can enjoy various options.

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