A study on "Sustainable Pricing Strategies and Market Positioning with reference to Apple Inc"

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Abstract

In the dynamic technology sector, characterized by intense competition, rapid innovation, and fluctuating consumer preferences, effective pricing strategies are crucial for establishing market position. It is significant not only for establishing a company's market position but also ensures sustainability and long-term viability in this ever-changing environment. Beyond mere profitability, sustainable pricing fosters consumer loyalty, brand value, and competitive differentiation.

Apple has been the world's most valuable company according to companies' market capitalization as of February 2025. According to Brand Finance's 2025 Global 500 research, Apple with brand value of 574.5 bn\$ is the most valuable brands in the world of technology brands. In this context it is pertinent to mention that Apple has consistently and continuously maintained its market leadership through the ecosystem-driven approaches, value-based strategies and premium pricing. These strategies, combined with psychological pricing and price skimming, allow Apple to capitalize on its brand equity and loyal customer base. New products are introduced at high prices to target early adopters and gradually lowered over time to appeal to broader segments. This paper investigates the pricing strategies employed by leading technology firms, with a focus on Apple Inc., to understand how they navigate this complex landscape, balance profitability with customer retention, and sustain competitive advantage in the rapidly evolving tech industry.

The study also examines how Apple balances exclusivity and accessibility to sustain revenue streams without compromising brand equity. It analyses the company's ability to leverage innovation, superior design, and a strong brand identity to justify higher price points. Furthermore, the research assesses Apple's strategies for product lifecycle management, regional pricing variations, and dynamic pricing adjustments.

By comparing Apple's pricing structure with industry trends, this article aims to provide valuable insights into how technology firms can achieve sustainable pricing while maintaining a competitive edge. The findings will enhance our understanding of strategic market positioning in the rapidly evolving technology sector, offering lessons applicable to a wide range of companies seeking to thrive in this challenging environment. **Key words:** Apple Inc, sustainable pricing, technology and ,market positioning.

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I. Introduction

Pricing strategy is the foundation of a company's market identity and long-term viability in today's fiercely competitive technology industry. It is much more than just a straightforward economic calculation. Few businesses better embody this idea than Apple Inc., whose incredible rise to the top of the global market capitalization rankings as of February 2025 is evidence of the effectiveness of strategic pricing.

Fundamentally, sustainable pricing adopts a comprehensive strategy that fosters customer relationships, brand perception, and competitive differentiation, going beyond the traditional goal of profit maximization. In the technology sector, where product lifecycles are getting shorter, innovation is happening faster, and consumer preferences are changing at a rate never seen before, this delicate balance between value creation and extraction has become more and more important.

Apple's pricing strategy, which is distinguished by psychological price points, premium positioning, and strategic price skimming, provides an engaging example of long-term market leadership. Through a rigorously built ecosystem approach, Apple has bucked conventional industry belief that technology must inevitably become commoditized and price-sensitive. Instead, according to Brand Finance's 2025 Global 500 analysis, the company has developed an exceptional brand value of \$574.5 billion, which allows it to continue offering premium prices while also reaching a wider audience.

This essay examines how Apple has skillfully managed the conflict between accessibility and exclusivity, using design brilliance, innovation, and ecosystem integration to support high price points. We look at how the company's pricing tactics change over the course of product lifecycles, adjust to local market conditions, and react quickly to pressure from competitors, all while preserving the aspirational quality that defines the Apple brand experience.

By comparing Apple's pricing blueprint against broader industry trends, this research intends to extract actionable insights for technology companies attempting to develop sustainable pricing strategies in turbulent market situations. In an industry characterized by constant change and upheaval, the results show how price affects not only short-term income streams but also long-term competitive advantage, customer loyalty, and brand reputation.

1.2 Review of Literature

Richard K and Dr. Yaaseen Masvood (2024 examines how pricing methods, marketing positioning, and sustainable clothing relate to one another in the Indian market, with a particular emphasis on how these factors affect consumers' perceptions of value. It highlights how crucial it is to match prices to the alleged advantages of sustainable features like ethical production and environmentally friendly materials.

Saima Jalal and Charumitra Chauhan (2024): emphasizes the need to move toward value-based pricing structures, in which perceived sustainability benefits are linked to consumer willingness to pay and effectively bridges the gap between financial viability and environmental responsibility, advocating for a holistic approach to pricing.

Idrissa Diop (2024): addresses the common problem of striking a balance between environmental responsibility and market viability by providing helpful advice on how to price sustainable products competitively. It goes beyond abstract debates and offers practical business methods. To lower production costs, the article promotes cost-effective strategies, such as improving packaging and streamlining supply networks.

DigitalMaven (2023): explores the psychological foundations of Apple's pricing strategies, emphasizing how customer willingness to pay a premium is influenced by perceived value and brand loyalty. To defend its higher costs, the piece highlights Apple's skill at projecting an air of exclusivity and superior quality. It emphasizes how Apple commands a higher price by utilizing its creative device design, smooth user experience, and strong brand recognition.

Dr. Ravetti Chiara Ruberti Giorgio (2023): offers a thorough examination of sustainability in Apple's global supply chain, including the obstacles, tactical plans, and efficiency enhancements. It explores the intricacies of Apple's complicated network and emphasizes the company's initiatives to reduce its environmental effect. The thesis looks at Apple's efforts to reduce waste, source materials responsibly, and use renewable energy

Ishaan Nigam (2023): analyses Apple's marketing approach and identifies the main components that have contributed to its ongoing market dominance. It highlights Apple's emphasis on developing a compelling brand story that is based on creativity, ease of use, and a strong emotional bond with customers. Apple's skill at product debuts is highlighted in the article, which uses well planned events to create anticipation and enthusiasm.

1.3 Research Gap-Problem statement

There are still a lot of unanswered questions about how sustainable pricing mechanisms support long-term market positioning, especially in premium categories, despite a wealth of study on pricing strategies in the technology sector. Although earlier research has looked at different pricing models separately, there aren't many thorough frameworks that combine pricing tactics with ecosystem dynamics, consumer psychology, and brand value generation in technology marketplaces.

How technology companies can create pricing frameworks that concurrently accomplish several, frequently conflicting goals—maximizing profitability, bolstering premium brand positioning, accommodating product lifecycle dynamics, and preserving customer loyalty across various international markets—is the main issue this study attempts to address. This study aims to find transferable concepts for sustainable pricing that may be used throughout the technology industry by analysing Apple's response to these issues.

1.4 Objectives of the study

- i. To explore the key elements of pricing strategies.
- ii. To discuss Apple's application of brand, design and innovation in pricing framework.
- iii. To assess product lifecycle management and variations in regions.

1.5 Research Methodology

A mixed-methods research methodology is used in this study to thoroughly analyse Apple Inc.'s pricing strategies and how they relate to market positioning. To give both breadth and depth of insight, the methodology combines qualitative evaluation of strategic positioning with quantitative study of pricing data.

a) Research Design

With Apple Inc. as the focus, the study employs a case study design. It is supplemented by comparison assessments with specific technology competitors. This method allows for the identification of distinguishing characteristics through cross-company comparison and permits a thorough investigation of pricing systems in their actual context.

b) Secondary Data

• Financial statements and annual reports for 2020–2025 from Apple Inc.

• The study is review based and basically from secondary sources of data, books, journals, articles, research papers and internet

1.6 Concept of Value-Based Pricing and Brand Equity

In the technology industry, Apple Inc. is a shining example of value-based pricing strategy, using a manner that goes beyond traditional cost-plus or competition-based approaches. Apple sets its pricing points mostly on the perceived value that its goods provide to customers, rather than tying them to production costs or rival comparisons. The multifaceted value proposition that supports Apple's price strategy and its complex link to the company's exceptional brand equity are examined in this section.

Apple's brand equity is a key component of price, with a 2025 valuation of \$574.5 billion. The business uses several methods to transform this intangible asset into observable price premiums. Pricing that presents goods as both aspirational and reachable is known as aspirational positioning. Signalling status value in the range of prices at which goods might serve as status symbols premium trust creates price increases that demonstrate customers' faith in longevity and dependability value obtained from a dependable and consistent brand experience is known as the "brand consistency premium."

1.6.1 Perceived Value Components

Apple bases its value-based pricing strategy on a number of unique but related value elements:

Functional Value: When compared to alternatives, Apple products are designed to provide better performance, dependability, and durability. Customers appreciate and are willing to pay higher costs for the smooth functionality created by the company's vertical integration of hardware and software. For example, Apple's software is optimized for particular hardware configurations, resulting in great battery life and operating stability, and the Aseries processors in iPhones routinely outperform rivals in benchmark testing.

Experiential Value: Apple products' user experiences, which are distinguished by their user-friendly interfaces, unified design aesthetic, and meticulous attention to detail, generate significant experiential value that supports their high price points. Precision engineering, careful interaction design, and the tactile nature of materials all work together to create an emotional bond with users that goes beyond practical evaluation.

Ecosystem Value: Apple's integrated ecosystem is arguably its most notable feature, as it has fostered strong network effects. Because of its smooth integration with other Apple products and services, every Apple product increases in value over time. Customers must pay more to transition between products as a result of this ecosystem integration, which also allows Apple to charge more for all of its products. With every new Apple product purchased, the value gained from ecosystem synergies (such as Handoff, Universal Clipboard, and Continuity) rises, supporting premium price across all categories.

Symbolic Value: A major part of Apple's value proposition is the status and identity benefits that their goods offer. Apple products become positional goods whose worth is partly derived from their social signalling function due to their iconic design language and cultural prestige. Even in cases when functional advantages may be less obvious, Apple is able to retain premium pricing due to this symbolic dimension.

1.6.2 Brand Equity as the Basis for Pricing

Apple's value-based pricing strategy is predicated on its brand equity, which is estimated to be worth \$574.5 billion in 2025. A thorough analysis of this reciprocal interaction is warranted.

Perception of Quality: Apple has consistently been linked to high-end quality, which raises the bar for excellence. By redefining high prices as appropriate representations of greater quality rather than as expenses to be reduced, this quality perception acts as a heuristic to lessen price sensitivity.

Innovation Leadership: By continuously establishing itself as a leader in innovation, Apple develops a value proposition for the future that goes beyond the features of its present products. With the hope that their investment will result in ongoing advancement through software and hardware upgrades throughout the product lifecycle, consumers pay premium rates in part to gain access to Apple's innovation trajectory.

Design Excellence: Apple's dedication to human-cantered, minimalist design has produced a unique visual identity that drives up prices. Simple, high-quality materials, and painstaking attention to detail define the company's design language, which transforms its goods from functional tools into desirable items that go beyond standard price-value calculations.

1.6.3 Empirical Proof of the Value-Premium Connection

Apple's value-based pricing model is effective, according to quantitative evidence:

Profit Share vs. Market Share: Apple routinely receives 75–80% of global smartphone profits, indicating the exceptional value premium the brand commands, even though it hardly ever surpasses 20% of the global smartphone market.

Price Resilience: Despite intense competition and macroeconomic volatility, Apple's premium posture has remained remarkably stable, according to historical pricing data from 2020–2025. During this time, the average selling price (ASP) of iPhones has remained 42–68% higher than the industry average.

Cross-Elasticity Patterns: According to econometric analysis, there is significantly less cross-price elasticity between Apple products and rivals than there is between rival Android manufacturers. This suggests that Apple has been successful in creating a unique value category that is largely immune to price competition.

1.7 Apple's Pricing Strategies

Apple Inc. uses a complex, multi-layered pricing structure that integrates well-known pricing techniques into a unified strategy. This section looks at the various price strategies Apple uses for its product line and evaluates how well they work to support the company's goals for market positioning.

1.7.1 Premium Pricing Strategy

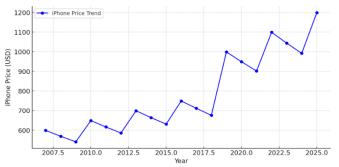
Core Implementation: Apple's persistent dedication to premium pricing is their most identifiable pricing strategy. Apple places its products at the top of every market area it enters, rather than competing on price. All the company's products exhibit this premium positioning:

1.7.1 Table - Premium to Apple compared to Industry

Product Category	Apple's Premium Position (Average Price Premium vs. Industry Average)
Smartphones	+63%
Tablets	+52%
Laptops	+74%
Smartwatches	+89%

1.7.2 Price Skimming Strategy

Price skimming is a tactic Apple consistently uses when launching new goods and technology. First Premium Launch of their products as new goods are introduced to the market at much higher prices. Gradual Price Reduction over the course of a product's existence, prices are strategically reduced. Market Capture by Segmentation by targeting early adopters who are price agnostic first, then branching out into more price-sensitive markets.



1.7.1 Graph: Apple's price skimming pattern for the iPhone from 2007-2025

Price skimming benefits Apple in several ways like Optimized Income as Apple gathers desire to pay from various customer groups. Monet recovery in R&D Recovery quickens as the return on expenditures made in research and development. Being exclusive perception in the people creates brand desirability and is increased by exclusivity creating initial high prices. Supply chain management assists in handling scale-up difficulties and initial production limitations.

1.7.3 Versioning Strategy

Apple uses product-line pricing, often known as versioning, to cater to various market niches while preserving its premium positioning. Important versioning strategies consist of Storage-Oriented Pricing which is the Memory prices. upgrades come with disproportionately high Tiering with Performance the models price differences versus standard models as Pro Size Differentiation according creating variations in price on physical measurements

Material Differences is using of more expensive premium materials (such as stainless steel versus aluminium versus Titanium).

1.7.2 Table - If none to pricing strategy				
iPhone Model	Base Price	Storage Premium	Feature Premium	Total Price Range
iPhone SE	\$429	+\$50-\$100	N/A	\$429-\$529
iPhone 16	\$799	+\$100-\$300	N/A	\$799-\$1,099
iPhone 16 Pro	\$999	+\$100-\$400	+\$200 (Pro)	\$999-\$1,399
iPhone 16 Max	\$1,099	+\$100-\$400	+\$300 (ProMax)	\$1,099-\$1,499

172 Table - iPhone 16 pricing strategy

1.7.4 Psychological Pricing Strategy-Selection of Price Points

Using price points that are slightly below round figures, such as \$999 instead of \$1,000, is known as just-below pricing. Reference Pricing is creating price anchors, where pricier models are presented first. Presenting Apple Care and services as little extra expenses in comparison to hardware is known as bundle framing. Creating monthly equivalency as stressing monthly instalments (\$41.62/month) as opposed to the entire expenses (\$999). Value Narrative is created which is rather than focusing on cost, prices are displayed within a narrative that highlights value. Feature Attribution is created to support higher charges, certain premium characteristics are emphasized. Lifecycle Value is when presenting prices as investments by highlighting lifespan and durability.

1.7.5 Geographical Pricing Strategy

Regional Price Differentials- Apple maintains significant price variations across geographic markets, as illustrated in the following comparison of iPhone 16 (base model) prices in 2025:

Country/Region	Local Price	USD Equivalent	% Premium vs. US
United States	\$799	\$799	Baseline
European Union	€899	\$958	+19.9%
United Kingdom	£779	\$981	+22.8%
India	□79,900	\$1,023	+28.0%
Brazil	R\$7,499	\$1,279	+60.1%

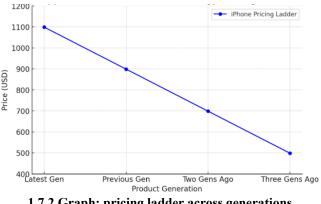
1.7.3 Table: Apple products price variation in various geographics

Tax Structures as there are differences in Import Duties, GST, and VAT. Currency hedging is the defence against changes in currency rates. Market positioning is to conformity to regional purchasing power and market dynamics. Distribution Costs are the differences in operational and logistical costs. Market Strategy is a strategic placement decision in established versus growing markets

Lifecycle Pricing Management Strategy 1.7.6

Strategy for Product Generation

Apple continues to use a tiered generational strategy, keeping older devices at lower price points. Thus, a pricing ladder is created:



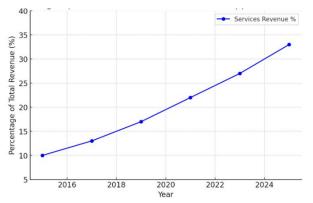
1.7.2 Graph: pricing ladder across generations

Market Penetration is reaching more budget-conscious consumers without weakening the brand. Upgrading Pipeline is to providing current clients with clear upgrading pathways. Inventory management is effectively handling component obsolescence and product transitions. Limiting rival opportunities by occupying various price points is known as competitive insulation.

1.7.7 Ecosystems Pricing Strategy

Apple is using ecosystem-based pricing more and more, in which the cost of each product is determined by how it fits into the larger Apple ecosystem. Products that act as entry points into an ecosystem and are strategically priced include the Apple Watch and AirPods. Key Products being the flagship gadgets that serve as the ecosystem's fulcrum (iPhone, MacBook). Complementary Products which are the high-profit accessories and peripherals (adapters, cases). Service Integration includes subscription services (iCloud+, Apple One) that increase the value of hardware.

The following chart illustrates the increasing importance of services revenue in Apple's overall revenue mix, supporting this ecosystem approach:



1.7.3 Graph: services revenue in Apple's overall revenue mix

Throughout Apple's ecosystem, analysis shows pricing interdependencies: Cross-Product subsidization is to setting some products at strategic prices to encourage the use of others. Switching cost reinforcement is using ecosystem integration and premium pricing together improves client retention. Optimization of lifetime value creates customer lifetime value is becoming a more important consideration in pricing strategies than individual product profits.

1.8 Pricing strategy key metrics

The effectiveness of Apple's pricing strategies can be assessed through several key metrics:

Metric	Performance (Industry Average)	Apple Performance	Differential
Gross Margin	38%	43%	+5%
ASP Stability	-8% YoY	-3% YoY	+5%
Price Premium Sustainability	3.2 years	6.7 years	+3.5 years
Revenue per Customer	\$287	\$823	+\$536
Customer Retention	71%	93%	+22%

1.8.1 Table: Key financial metrics in concern with pricing strategy

When compared to its main rivals, Apple's pricing strategy exhibits a number of unique features like prioritizing margin as Apple continuously puts profitability ahead of market share. Price constancy is throughout product lifecycles, Apple maintains a higher level of price constancy. Focus only on premium, Apple completely stays away from low-end market categories. Vertical consistency as Apple consistently positions itself as a premium brand in every product category. Apple is placing more emphasis on ecosystem integration value when setting prices.

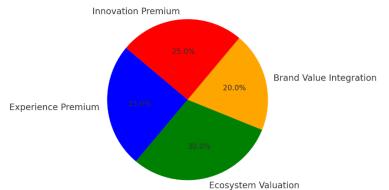
1.9 Challenges in Apple's pricing strategy

Apple's pricing tactics must contend with several new issues as premium segment saturation causing to growth constraints in premium segments that have already been penetrated. Increasing replacement cycles creates longer device ownership by consumers impacts upgrading revenue. Consumer fatigue due to the proliferation of subscription services is known as subscription resistance. Adaptation by region pressures because of growing demand for pricing methods tailored to certain markets. Adaptability valuation by using environmental sustainability as a factor to support premium pricing. In conclusion, Apple is using one of the most advanced pricing strategies in the tech sector. Apple has developed a pricing strategy that maximizes profitability, upholds

brand equity, and maintains competitive advantage by skilfully combining premium positioning, psychological pricing strategies, product versioning, and ecosystem valuation.

1.10 Apple's Strategic Pricing Framework

Apple's pricing strategy is a complex framework composed of several interrelated components that work together to support the company's goals and market position. The essential elements that characterize Apple's pricing strategy are shown in the following pie diagram :



1.10.1 Graph: Apple's value-based pricing foundation

The biggest component, Ecosystem Valuation (30%), represents Apple's networked ecosystem of goods and services. Experience Premium (25%): Prices are determined not just by technical specs but also by the total user experience. Apple charges a premium for ongoing technical breakthroughs, which is known as the Innovation premium (25%). Brand value integration (20%): Products are seen to have a significant increase in perceived value due to the Apple brand.

Apple uses complex psychological pricing strategies for all its products. Establishment of reference prices to create reference points, more expensive models are displayed first. Price bundling to spread perceived expenses, hardware and service pricing are combined. Framing monthly payments to prioritizing instalment amounts over the entire cost. Comparative value messaging: Expressing the cost in relation to the amount of time used ("less than \$1 per day").

Apple carefully balances pricing and value perception to keep customers loyal. Emphasizing product longevity and support longevity to defend high prices. Presenting each product generation as offering enough innovation to justify upgrades is known as incremental innovation communication. Teaching clients about less evident value components (privacy, security, sustainability) is known as "hidden value articulation." Stressing high resale values as a counterbalance to initial premium prices is known as "resale value messaging."

1.10.1 Leveraging Innovation, Design, and Brand in Pricing Strategy

Apple's commitment to innovation, design quality, and brand management are inextricably tied to its capacity to maintain premium pricing. This section looks at the price method used to commercialize these components.

Apple employs a sophisticated framework for translating innovation into price premiums

1.10.2 Pricing strategy framework

The following table shows Apple's approach in their different innovations

Innovation Type	Pricing Approach	Implementation Example
Breakthrough Innovation	Premium launch pricing + gradual reduction	Face ID, Apple Silicon
Incremental Innovation	Maintained pricing with enhanced value	Annual camera improvements
Ecosystem Innovation	Cross-product premium pricing	Handoff, Continuity features

Design excellence is positioned by Apple as a crucial element of pricing justification in a unique way. Premium material which are expensive materials like sapphire, ceramic, and titanium demand clear price rises. Reduction in size assessment causes higher pricing are supported by smaller form factors and engineering density. Beauty maintaining continuity which is an identifiable premium visual identity is produced by using a consistent design language. Quality of tactile which is premium price is reinforced by the quality of physical Apple's product lineup makes it evident how design investment and price premium are related:

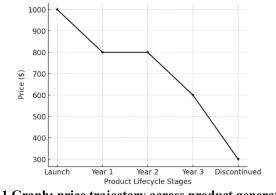
1.11 Product Lifecycle Management

Apple uses advanced strategies for global differentiation, product lifecycle pricing, and dynamic market changes. These components allow the business to adjust to various market conditions and optimize revenue across product lifecycles.

Apple implements a structured approach to product pricing across lifecycle stages:

1.11.1 Table: Pricing strategy with strategic objectives

Lifecycle Stage	Pricing Strategy	Strategic Objectives
Introduction	Premium skimming	Early adopter capture, R&D recovery
Growth	Maintained premium	Mainstream adoption, brand reinforcement
Maturity	Slight price reduction	Competitive response, market share protection
Decline	Significant reduction or discontinuation	Inventory clearance, upselling to newer models
Legacy	Selective availability at mid-tier pricing	Market coverage, ecosystem entry point



1.11.1 Graph: price trajectory across product generations

1.12 Geographical locations

Apple as technological company with presence all over the world, they have to keep changing their pricing margins according their offering geographics. Apple implements significant pricing variations across geographic markets based on multiple factors:

Region	Relative Price Level	Primary Pricing Factors
North America	Baseline	Home market, competitive benchmark
Europe	+10-25%	VAT, currency hedging, market positioning
Asia-Pacific (Developed)	+5-15%	Import duties, distribution costs, brand positioning
Asia-Pacific (Emerging)	+15-30%	Import duties, smaller market scale, premium positioning
Latin America	+25-60%	Import tariffs, currency volatility, luxury positioning
Middle East	+10-20%	Import costs, affluent demographic targeting

1.12.1 Table: significant variations across geographic markets

Apple uses several methods to dynamically modify prices in response to market conditions. Selective pricing changes made in reaction to competitive threats are known as competitor response adjustments. Price adjustments based on observable demand elasticity are known as demand elasticity adaptation. Pricing for Inventory Management using strategic discounting to control stock levels. Changes in Currency Reaction causes modifications to prices to account for notable currency fluctuations. Planned promotional pricing during peak shopping seasons is a seasonal promotion strategy.

1.13 Conclusion

It can be concluded that despite growing competition and technical convergence, Apple has been able to sustain significant price premium. Apple has been successful in developing a business strategy by methodically tying price premiums to innovation, design prowess, and brand renown. Through ecosystem integration, experience monetization, and lifetime value optimization, the company strikes a balance between profitability and client loyalty, providing a model for sustainable pricing in changing marketplaces.

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