# Apple’s iPhone 17 camera bar sparks fresh Google Pixel design rivalry



# The Smartphone Design Wars: Apple and Google's Competing Camera Bar Concepts

In an era dominated by smartphones, even the slightest design alteration can spark intense debate among tech enthusiasts. The newly unveiled iPhone 17 Pro and iPhone 17 Pro Max are at the centre of this fervour, boasting a newly designed horizontal "camera bar" that features prominently across the back of the devices. While Apple enthusiasts may herald this as a groundbreaking innovation, fans of Google seem less impressed, alleging a less-than-original inspiration behind the redesign.

Google has swiftly seized the opportunity to critique Apple, launching a playful yet pointed ad as part of its ongoing Pixel versus iPhone campaign. In this latest commercial, the Pixel, personified as a playful character, reminds an iPhone counterpart of a series of features that Google claims Apple has copied from its own devices. The ad highlights examples like the evolution of the Night Sight feature into Night Mode, Google's Magic Eraser becoming Apple's Photo Cleanup, and widgets that Android users enjoyed long before their iOS counterparts.

While the Pixel already boasts a camera bar renowned for its integrated design, Apple's new aesthetic decisions have drawn scrutiny. Leaked information indicates that the iPhone 17 Pro will sport a rectangular camera bar with rounded edges, housing three rear cameras in a triangular formation. This marks a significant deviation from the traditional camera designs of previous iPhone models and aligns with Apple's historical trend of aesthetic innovation.

However, this so-called innovation has been characterised by critics as an imitation of the Google Pixel design, which has been established for several years now. The iPhone 17 Air is expected to adopt a similar camera bar as well, albeit with a single lens, while the standard iPhone 17 will reportedly stick to Apple's classic vertical or square camera layout. The distinct shift towards a bar design across the iPhone 17 lineup presents a cohesive and modern visual identity, even as it invites comparisons with older smartphone designs, notably those from Poco, rather than directly emulating Google’s Pixels.

The accusations of design copying, while fuelled by rivalry, may reflect a broader trend in smartphone evolution. As technology advances, certain design elements tend to proliferate across different brands, leading to a landscape where innovation is often intertwined with imitation. This complexity is further illustrated by commentary on Google's Pixel design philosophy. Jaeun Park, an industrial designer with Google, has noted that the Pixel camera bar is influenced by liquid metal aesthetics and the company's Material You design language, signifying a deliberate effort to create a unique and visually appealing structure.

Moreover, the significance of brand identity continues to grow in the smartphone market. The competition between Apple and Google extends beyond specifications and design, encompassing narratives that resonate with their respective fanbases. Apple's loyal followers may dismiss Google's playful jibes, while Android enthusiasts delight in the perceived underdog spirit of Google’s messaging.

As the smartphone landscape continues to evolve, the rivalry between Apple and Google serves as a compelling narrative, showcasing how features, designs, and marketing strategies intertwine to shape public perception. The upcoming releases of the iPhone 17 series and the latest Google Pixel devices are not merely product launches but are emblematic of a larger cultural battle for supremacy in the ever-competitive tech industry. Ultimately, it is not only about who innovates first, but who can craft the most compelling story to win over consumers.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.techtimes.com/articles/310245/20250507/google-trolls-apple-over-iphone-17s-new-camera-bar-copycat-claims-fly-latest-pixel-ad.htm), [[7]](https://www.imaging-resource.com/news/2024/12/13/new-iphone-17-leak-reveals-a-horizontal-camera-bar-similar-to-googles-pixel)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.techtimes.com/articles/310245/20250507/google-trolls-apple-over-iphone-17s-new-camera-bar-copycat-claims-fly-latest-pixel-ad.htm), [[2]](https://www.macrumors.com/2025/02/13/iphone-17-pro-camera-design-leak/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[2]](https://www.macrumors.com/2025/02/13/iphone-17-pro-camera-design-leak/), [[3]](https://www.macrumors.com/2025/03/19/first-iphone-17-air-case-camera-bar-cutout/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.techtimes.com/articles/310245/20250507/google-trolls-apple-over-iphone-17s-new-camera-bar-copycat-claims-fly-latest-pixel-ad.htm), [[4]](https://www.androidcentral.com/phones/google-explains-inspiration-behind-pixel-camera-bar)
* Paragraph 5 – [[5]](https://www.theverge.com/23067931/google-pixel-7-6-a-pro-design-camera-bar-brand), [[6]](https://www.androidpolice.com/google-developed-and-evolved-pixel-camera-bar/)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.techtimes.com/articles/310245/20250507/google-trolls-apple-over-iphone-17s-new-camera-bar-copycat-claims-fly-latest-pixel-ad.htm)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.techtimes.com/articles/310245/20250507/google-trolls-apple-over-iphone-17s-new-camera-bar-copycat-claims-fly-latest-pixel-ad.htm> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.macrumors.com/2025/02/13/iphone-17-pro-camera-design-leak/> - A leak reveals that the iPhone 17 Pro will feature a new rectangular camera bar with rounded corners, housing three rear cameras in a triangular layout. The design includes a two-tone finish, with the camera bar appearing darker than the rest of the rear shell. This change marks a significant departure from previous iPhone camera designs, aligning with Apple's trend of introducing innovative aesthetics. The leak suggests that the iPhone 17 Pro will be announced in September, with the new design potentially extending to other models in the iPhone 17 lineup.
3. <https://www.macrumors.com/2025/03/19/first-iphone-17-air-case-camera-bar-cutout/> - An image of a third-party case for the iPhone 17 Air has surfaced, showcasing a horizontal 'camera bar' design reminiscent of Google's Pixel series. The case features cutouts for a single rear camera lens, flash, MagSafe, an Action button, and a Camera Control button. This design indicates that the iPhone 17 Air will adopt a sleek, minimalist aesthetic with a protruding camera module, aligning with Apple's trend of introducing innovative aesthetics. The iPhone 17 Air is expected to be announced in September, with the new design potentially extending to other models in the iPhone 17 lineup.
4. <https://www.androidcentral.com/phones/google-explains-inspiration-behind-pixel-camera-bar> - Google's industrial designer Jaeun Park discusses the evolution of the Pixel camera bar, explaining that the design was inspired by liquid metal surfaces and Google's Material You design language. The goal was to create a seamless and cohesive look that integrates the camera bar with the metal frame of the phone. This design approach emphasizes the camera system while maintaining a sleek and modern aesthetic. The Pixel 7 and Pixel 7 Pro introduced this integrated camera bar design, marking a significant shift in Google's smartphone design philosophy.
5. <https://www.theverge.com/23067931/google-pixel-7-6-a-pro-design-camera-bar-brand> - The Verge discusses the divisive nature of Google's Pixel camera bar design, noting that it has become an iconic feature that sets the Pixel series apart from other smartphones. The design has evolved over time, with the Pixel 7 and 7 Pro integrating the camera bar more seamlessly into the metal frame, taking inspiration from liquid metal surfaces and Google's Material You design language. This design approach has been polarizing but has contributed to the Pixel's unique identity in the smartphone market.
6. <https://www.androidpolice.com/google-developed-and-evolved-pixel-camera-bar/> - An in-depth look at how Google developed and evolved the Pixel camera bar, highlighting the design process and inspirations behind it. The article discusses the challenges of integrating larger lenses without increasing the phone's size and how the camera bar design addresses these challenges. It also covers the evolution of the design from the Pixel 6 to the Pixel 7 and Pixel 7 Pro, emphasizing the integration of the camera bar with the metal frame and the influence of Google's Material You design language.
7. <https://www.imaging-resource.com/news/2024/12/13/new-iphone-17-leak-reveals-a-horizontal-camera-bar-similar-to-googles-pixel> - A leak suggests that the iPhone 17 will feature a horizontal camera bar design similar to Google's Pixel series. The design aims to improve ergonomics and reduce fingerprint smudges by placing an ultra-wide camera between other lenses. This change marks a significant shift for Apple, potentially making the iPhone 17 instantly recognizable and preventing wobble on flat surfaces. However, the similarity to Google's Pixel devices raises questions about originality, and Apple may refine the final design to avoid confusion with competitors.