A few months back, Apple released a commercial advertising the iPad Pro. In it, they position the iPad as a full-fledged computer, in other words, one that can replace a traditional laptop or desktop. Being such an Apple fan boy, it might surprise you that I laughed at this claim. Even Microsoft poked fun at Apple’s claim. In this post, I want to talk to you about the difference between a mobile device and a traditional computer.

Many of you will probably stop me and say, wait, an iPad is a computer. In the sense of the word, it is. However, Apple was stacking their tablet up against devices that ran desktop scale operating systems. I’m not trying to say the iPad is not a computer, but instead, am merely classifying it as a tablet for this post. Whenever I refer to a computer, I am referring to a traditional laptop/desktop. Also, in this post, I will be comparing the iPad to the Surface Pro as Microsoft did within their commercial.

In 2012, Microsoft released the Surface hybrid. This device could serve as a laptop and a tablet. This initiated the era of laptop hybrids. Apple, however, mocked Microsoft for creating such a “ridiculous” product. They sure changed their attitude when they introduced the iPad Pro a few years later.

Unlike the Surface, the iPad still operates on the mobile iOS operating system and it relies strictly on touch. While Apple had its so called hybrid, Microsoft pressed the boundaries of what a hybrid could do. The Surface ran a full desktop class operating system with Windows 8 and Windows 10. The device also had ports for a user to plug in external devices. However, probably what sets it apart from the iPad Pro the most would have to be the ability to interact with a trackpad.

Now that I have pointed out some of the differences, let me go into depth about how they can be applied to a user’s productivity. The operating system, which is the main interface a user interacts with, is the most unique. I’m not going to go in depth about which is better, but all I can say is that, with the full Windows operating system running on the machine, it becomes more of a powerful device. Don’t get me wrong, iOS is great, but functionality-wise, you are extremely limited. With Windows, you can run desktop programs, while on an iPad, you are reduced to running mobile applications which lack in functionality and usability as compared to a traditional computer.

Another major application of a traditional computer has to be the ability to plug in an external device, and use that device however you desire. For example, the computer I am typing on has four USBs, one HDMI, one Ethernet, one VGA, one headphone jack, one microphone jack, and an optical disk drive. When Microsoft made it possible to add external devices to their hybrids, the computer/tablet industry was revolutionized. Some of you might say, “You can still plug stuff into the iPad.” That’s true, but it requires extremely expensive dongles and the adapter would only work within a certain application. Because Windows is running on the Surface tablet lines, a user can add a device, and run it just like they would do on a traditional system.

Finally, what truly sets a computer and a tablet apart would have to be the way you interact with it. A traditional computer allows for you to use something like a trackpad or mouse to maneuver the user interface. A tablet, however, requires touch to interact with the user interface. “What’s wrong with touch?” Generally speaking, it tends to be more difficult to use when interacting with very precise content. With a mouse, you can navigate to a certain area easier, and without waiting for an option menu to appear when highlighting content, you can just right click to get all of the option you want.

To conclude, I think it is foolish of Apple to attempt to put their device up against a computer that runs a full scale operating system, and has the actual characteristics of a computer. To truly be a worthy competitor, Apple should consider making a hybrid version of MacOS for the iPad in order to have that full desktop experience. What do you think of Apple’s claims? As of now, can an iPad ever replace a computer? Is this post too critical of the iPad? I’d like to hear what you have to say.

*If you have any recommendations for future posts, please leave them in the comments.*