

The Tic Talk of the iWatch – Caryl Dolinko

I've always loved watches and technology, so naturally, I bought the iWatch. Apple was launching their newest product and it was perfect timing for a cultural studies research project I would conduct. I wanted to explore the implications of this technology and needed to wear an iWatch and experience it, and really understand its effects. Wearable technology and smartwatches are on the rise and some estimates state that by 2018, it will be a forty billion dollar industry. Apple anticipates selling nineteen million iWatches this inaugural year alone; it Is Apple, and the iWatch Isn't just a watch.

I ordered my iWatch online and it arrived in Apple's uniquely branded packaging, I love that. They paid attention to detail when creating the iWatch and the consumer is rewarded with a sleek style and smooth design. The iWatch definitely blurred the lines between jewellery worn for adornment, and technology used for functionality. It synchs with the iPhone, and after my first night exploring the functions and setting up apps, I'd exhausted the battery and exceeded my data plan! But, I was now ready to begin my research. Instead of wearing my regular wrist watch, I wore the iWatch for two weeks and incorporated it into my daily routine.

Wearing the iWatch was cool. It has a 'Dick Tracey' futuristic kind of cache because it's so new, and because it's Apple. People noticed it, and people asked about it and it was a conversation starter. I talked to a multitude of people about the iWatch and explained the functions and the effects it was having on my life wearing it. There was a curiosity and intrigue and everybody seemed to have an opinion. A lot of conversations became ideological dialogues concerning potential implications, benefits and concerns.

People were quite curious about the ownership of data and how it would be used. A deeper question arose if somebody is able to generate data on an iWatch, are they of greater value to society? A class distinction clearly became apparent between 'haves' and the 'have-nots'. There was debate around loss of the natural human experience of exploring your environment and following your curiosity rather than depending on your GPS and apps to determine your route. Some people didn't like the idea of

dependency on data and wearing it on your body rather than having in your pocket or purse. People mentioned that they already use their smartphones excessively and worried they would be further ingratiated with data and never being able to disengage. Some though it would potentially change the way the brain engages and we'd have less ability to concentrate and focus.

A group of teens joked about using the iWatch to cheat on tests, which led to questions about truth, virtue and morality. Seniors that I talked to were astounded by the power in the iWatch but some consider computers 'enough to manage', whereas tech-savvy folks imagined subsequent versions of the device offering much greater functionality and purpose. Brand loyalty was also a big conversation and non-Apple users wouldn't consider switching to use the iWatch. Most people had the idea that the iWatch could do much more than it actually does. The conversations offered stimulation and consideration yet the mystique about the iWatch itself would fade a bit once people engaged with the utilitarian functionality, (still better than a Star Trek Star Fleet Wrist Communicator...!)

The iWatch did provide greater speed, convenience and access to my data but I was constantly distracted which interrupted my thought process and workflow. I discovered that need to be more present in my environment, and less focused on data right now, and besides, it is summer. After two weeks wearing the iWatch, my research was done I knew I had gained some insights. I'd had fun wearing the iWatch, but I wasn't quite ready to commit. I returned it last weekend and went back to winding my wristwatch once more.

~ Caryl Dolinko