

## Tech Post #1: 'In Contemporary Society'- Digital Watch

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### Digital Watch

Digital watches have revolutionized the way people tell time. The switch from analog time to digital time has re-contextualized how people view the time of day in fractions (quarter to eight) to a precise numerical value. Starting from the 1970s the watch screen, lit up by LEDs, was to be read from left to right (Stephens, 2002). The left contains the numerical value representing the hour, followed by a colon, and on the right side is the amount of minutes in an hour that has already passed. A digital watch's sole function was to help people keep track of the absolute time every where they went and at any time of the day, because it is to be worn on the wrist. Today watches are not only a time keeping device, but a personal technology that is an extension of our brain. They enhance our ability to plan and efficiently go about our day. However, the future of digital watches is becoming smart watches, multi-functional and diverse in the information they can display. With functions such as organizers, cell phone, MP3 player, and wireless internet connection, we are becoming more dependant on the digital watch. Though in recent years people have been using their cell phone to tell time, digital watches are once again on the rise due to the merger of the two devices into a cell phone wrist watch.



Figure 1. *Touch screen cell phone watch (2007, December 17)*. Here's a wrist-watch phone that goes an extra mile. This tri-band GSM watch-phone has a 1.3 inch touch-screen with a small stylus to enable full PDA functionality. You can communicate using the built-in speaker-phone or via a wired/wireless headset.

## **The Multi-functional Digital Watch**

In the Associated Content article by Roberto Sedycias he describes the latest innovation of the cell phone wrist watch. The device is said to be a “fully featured powerhouse” consisting of GSM SIM for two way communication, Bluetooth, MP3 player, Wi-Fi, camera and personal organizer (Sedycias, 2009, para. 4). He predicts that the cell phone wrist watch will become a commodity to those who own a PDA, but do not have GSM connectivity.

## **The Effects of the Digital Watch: Smart Watches**

With all these functions on one’s wrist, it shows that our social demographic is demanding for devices to be all encompassing. However, with great power on the wrist, the device can consume all of us and our time. For example, as Davis reports from *The Height* (2008), Boston College newspaper, the usage of ipod limits communication with others because it provides a mean for people to tune out their surroundings when they are listening to their personal playlists. As for the multi-functional wrist watch, like the ipod we will be using it to listen to music, check emails, and surf the internet practically anywhere we go causing us to have less personal interactions with others. The smart watch is like a portal that will suck our attention into the device. Consequentially, we will turn a blind eye towards the changing environment around us. It brings upon a negative social affect on us. We will be less helpful members of society as we become less concerned about others and more self-centred. McLuhan has termed this the numbing effect because “we are benumbed by any new technology” and the only environment we remember is the past (McLuhan, 1969, p. 7). As digital watches become more multi-functional, they reverse and obstruct our ability to keep track of the changing, natural environment around us. Moreover, with many functions such as appointment reminders, phonebook, and GPS navigators, wrist watch not only track the time of

day, but can tell the user if they are not engaged in any other activities (Sedycias, 2009). Today, we are constantly multi-tasking, with our days overflowing with things to do. Digital watch and its precision, has made us reliant on its capability to remember our daily schedules and provide various alarms for a broad range of activities. As digital technology continues to evolve, our daily activities may one day be done on personal devices like the digital watch. However, we know for sure that the high-tech watch industry needs to adapt and keep up with the advancing digital technology in order to attract the tech-savvy consumers. The industry will keep on inventing; as a result, the consumers are stressed to keep up with the latest gadget. Contrary, the economy will benefit from this positive effect as sales remain continuous. In conclusion, the smart watch are geared towards personal usage causing us to become enclosed and away from our environment. The watch industry will create watches with more personalized applications which in turn affects the consumers to constantly search for the latest smart watch.

### **Digital Watches may be overcome by...**

With all these utilities, one has to wonder how everything is going to fit on the limited space of one's wrist. The digital watch industry is struck with a challenge of a "[function] and form battle in the laboratories for real estate on the wrist" (Pescovitz, 1998, para. 10). The cellphone wrist watch like the one in Figure 1 looks big and chunky, undesirable to wear. Historically, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, watches were worn as fashion pieces constantly changing with the evolving styles (Stephens, 2002). For example, today's society as seen from the cell phone market, consumers are more drawn to sleek and fashionable cell phones. I believe the digital wrist watch, unless form wins over in the industry, will be overcome by society's growing desire for more aesthetically pleasing products with all the functionalities hidden. The watch industry

also need to consider that these high-tech technology are also a form of accessory. This can be seen by how the trendsetters, Hollywood stars, use their cellphone and personal technology as fashion statements. Though the digital watch is influenced by our changing social trends, it has significantly affected the way we live and carry out our days.

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