

The Apple Watch heralds a brave new world of digital living

May 14 2015, by Katina Michael And Mg Michael



It's a lot more than just a timepiece. Credit: Apple

"The Watch is here" touts Apple's slogan for its wearable computer, implying that the one and only time-piece that really matters has arrived. So much for the [Rolex Cosmograph](#) and [Seiko Astron](#) when you can buy a stylish digital Apple Watch Sport, or even Apple Watch Edition crafted with [18-karat gold](#).

If we believe the hype, [one in four](#) Australians plan to buy a wearable

device by the end of the year.

Of its many [features and functions](#), the Apple Watch is a music player, fitness tracker, communications device, payment token and digital key. And it also tells the time. We were surprised that no one claimed that it will also help look after our kids. But not for long. There's [an app for that](#). So is there [anything](#) this device cannot do?

Who would have thought that the power of an internet-enabled laptop computer, mobile phone, iPod, [fitness tracker](#), bank card and set of keys could be neatly packaged and strapped around your wrist?

And unlike other futuristic visions of [hand-held communicators](#), the Apple Watch won't leave you stranded in perilous situations because it's dropped, stolen or falls out of range because it's literally always connected to you.

Invisible ubiquity

This raises a key question: how will we change our behaviour based on the fact that we are walking around with a fully-fledged computer – one that sits in contact with our bodies and communicates wirelessly with machines around us without us being explicitly aware of it?

According to the marketing spiel, we'll have a lot more convenience at our fingertips. But, in actuality, we may find ourselves reaching for the mute button, longing to be disconnected, and fed up with all the notifications interrupting us. That's when the [novelty effect](#) wears off.

We have probably witnessed people who cannot resist the urge of pulling out their [mobile phone](#) to interact with it at the most inopportune times or who pass their idle time simply [looking down](#) at a screen.

Most do not realise they are even interacting with their personal computer devices for hours each day. The repetitive behaviour has almost become a type of tic disorder which is neurobehavioural.

We get a message, it makes us feel important. We reply and get a buzz the very next time it happens again. It's kind of like digital ping pong. And the game can get tangible fast. The main reason this [repetitive behaviour](#) remains hidden is that the majority of smartphone users suffer from this, so it looks [normal](#).

You can see people in public spaces [immersed in virtual places](#). These Wi-Fi-enabled mobile contraptions can also trigger a host of [internet-related addictions](#), whether used for gaming, answering mail, web surfing, online transactions, social media, we-chatting, or taking a tonne of photographs.

According to experts, internet addiction disorder ([IAD](#)) can ruin lives by causing neurological complications, psychological disturbances and social problems. This is not to mention the potential for accidents when people are not looking where they are going or not paying attention to what they should be doing. In short, our need to be always online and connected has become a kind of cybernarcotic drug.

Little device, big data

Very few of us are immune to this yearning for "feedback loops", so telecommunications operators and service providers pounce on this response. Information is money. And while we are busy interacting with our device, the companies are busy pocketing big money using our [big data](#).

We are fast becoming a piece of digital information ourselves, sold to the highest bidder. And while we are busy rating ourselves and one

another, the technology companies are not only using our ratings to learn more about our preferences and sentiments, but [rating](#) us as humans. In sociological terms it's called [social sorting](#), and in policing terms it's called [proactive profiling](#).

In days gone by, [mobile communications](#) could tell data collectors about our identity, location, even our condition. This is not new. But the real-time access and precision of this level of granularity of data gathered is something we should be all aware of as potentially impinging on our fundamental human rights.

Because they interface directly with the human body, watches have the capacity to tell a third party much more about you than just where you've been and where you are likely to be going. They can:

- Detect physiological characteristics like your pulse rate, heart rate, temperature which can say a lot about your home/work/life habits
- Determine time, distance, speed and altitude information derived from onboard sensors
- Identify which apps you are using and how and why you are using them, minute by minute
- Oversee the kinds of questions you are asking via search engines and text-based messages you are sending via [social media](#).

Apple watcher

These watches will become integral to the fulfilment of the Internet of Things phenomenon: the ability to be connected to [everyone and everything](#).

All in all, private corporations can glean what you are thinking, the problems you are facing, and they know your [personal context](#). What is

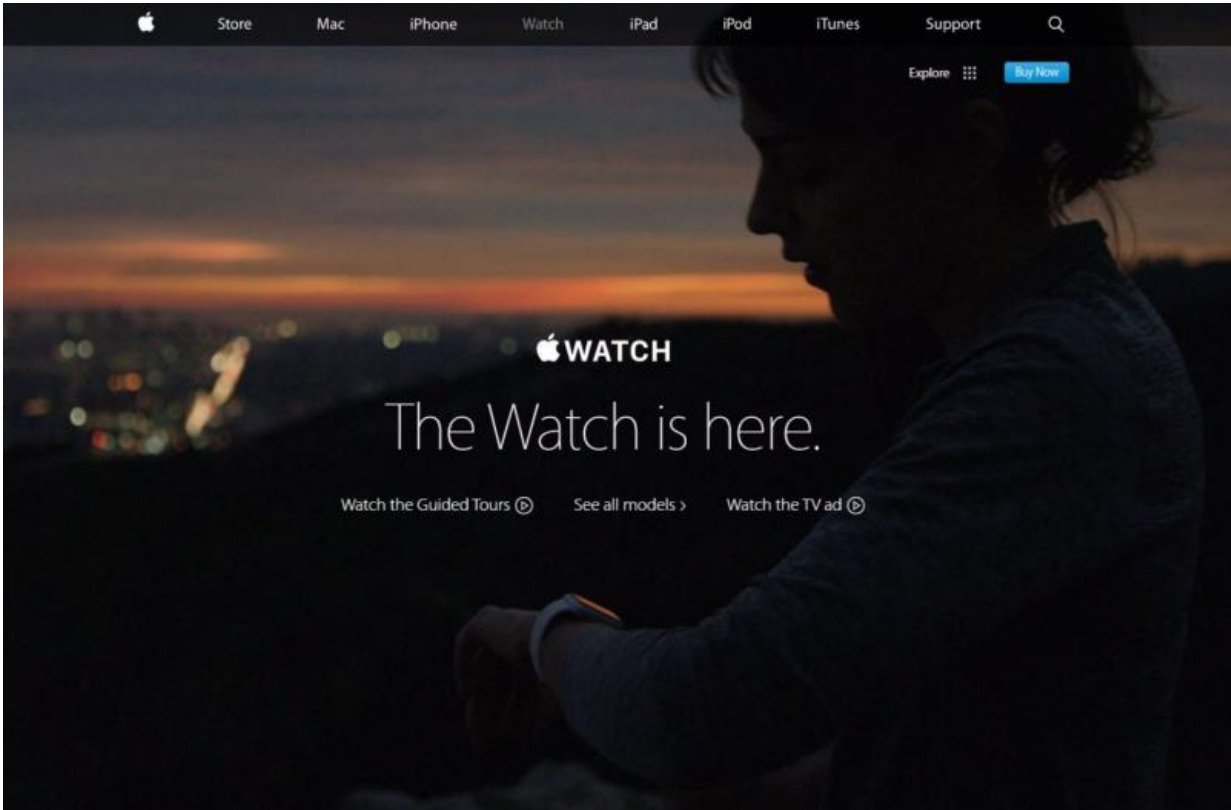
disturbing is that they can divulge some of your innermost personal thoughts, intentions and actions, and have evidence for the reasons we do things.

Many people immersed in the virtual world are too busy to be thinking about the very act of inputting information onto the internet. People value a life of convenience over privacy too much to be genuinely concerned what information is being logged by a company and [shared](#) with hundreds of other potential partners and affiliates.

And consumers are often oblivious to the fact that, even if they are doing nothing at all, the smart device they are carrying or wearing is creating a type of digital DNA about their uniqueness.

Today, we are asking to be monitored and are partying in the [panopticon](#). We have fallen in love with the idea of being told about ourselves and don't discern that we have become like prison inmates who are being tracked with [electronic bracelets](#).

By the time we wake up to this [technological trajectory](#), it may be all too late. Our health insurance provider might be [Samsung](#), our telecoms provider may be [Google](#), and our unique lifetime identifier could come from [Apple](#). At present, these are the archetypal tech providers. But tomorrow, who knows?



It has arrived! Credit: Apple

And by that time, we will likely be heralding in the age of [uberveillance](#) where we posit that cellphones and wristwatches are not enough, that the [human-computer interface](#) should go deeper, penetrating the skin and into the body.

The new slogan might read "The [Mark](#) is Here", herald the [iPlant](#), that which gives birth to life, the one and only passport to access your forever services.

"You can't live without it", may soon no longer be just figurative, but a reality.

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