

The impact of the Wristwatch on the Self

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“We cannot hope to understand consumer behavior without first gaining some understanding of the meanings that consumers attach to possessions.”

- Russell Belk

*“Pedras no caminho?
Guardo todas, um dia vou construir um castelo...”*

- Fernando Pessoa

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Abstract

In a world where time is everywhere, how has the wristwatch survived this change and how has it adapted? What influences the choice of a given wristwatch brand and how far does it go?

The wristwatch has probably become the most influential and dominant accessory for both men and women to wear, in a society ruled by brands and image.

The following dissertation seeks to comprehend and delimit to what extent the wristwatch has an impact on the self, as well as comprehending which factors influence the choice of a given wristwatch brand, having its grounds on the area of Consumer Behavior, particularly The Self.

Once there is insufficient information available for a reliable interpretation and consequent answer formulation for the research questions, this study resourced to qualitative methods to elucidate on these topics.

This research centers its answers on in-depth interviews conducted to nineteen respondents and their respective analysis as well as on extensive education by means of secondary data.

It establishes that the wristwatch has a tremendous impact on the self, whether for specific symbolic meanings it might obtain or for conveying an exclusive social status.

It determines that the factors that influence the choice of a given wristwatch brand are intrinsically complex, and a product of various triggers such as the impact of social media and our education or the craving of membership and exclusivity. It also shows that the importance given to brands is very likely a growing trend.

Keywords: Self, Wristwatch, Brands, Symbology

Resumo

Num mundo em que o tempo está presente em todo o lado, como é que o relógio de pulso sobreviveu e se adaptou a esta mudança? O que influencia a escolha de uma dada marca de relógios e qual o impacto desta influência?

O relógio de pulso é talvez o acessório mais influente e dominante, tanto para homem como para mulher, numa sociedade governada por marcas e pela imagem.

A seguinte dissertação procura compreender e delimitar o impacto que o relógio de pulso tem no *Self*, tal como compreender que fatores influenciam a escolha de uma dada marca de relógio, tendo os seus alicerces na área de Comportamento do Consumidor, particularmente na subcategoria: The Self.

Uma vez que não existe informação suficiente para uma interpretação e formulação de respostas fiáveis às perguntas de pesquisa, este estudo recorreu a métodos qualitativos de forma a elucidar estes tópicos.

Esta pesquisa centra as suas respostas em entrevistas em profundidade, realizadas a dezanove entrevistados e na sua respetiva análise, bem como em instrução extensiva através de data secundária.

Estabelece que o relógio de pulso tem um impacto tremendo no Self, quer por significados simbólicos específicos que possa obter, quer por transmitir um status social exclusivo.

Determina que os factores que influenciam a escolha de uma determinada marca de relógios são intrinsecamente complexos, e um produto de vários factores desencadeadores tais como o impacto dos meios de comunicação social e a nossa educação ou o desejo de pertença e exclusividade. Demonstra também que a importância dada às marcas é muito provavelmente uma tendência crescente.

Palavras-chave: Self, Relógio de pulso, Marcas, Simbologia

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1 – Executive Summary

Modern Society is responsible for a raise in consumption awareness. *“Although it seems natural to think about each consumer as having a self, this concept is actually a relatively new way of regarding individuals and their relationship to society”*. (Solomon, 2004: 150).

Increasingly, consumers give more importance to what they buy and possess, since products may act like a social clutch, may help them build their personas and may allow them to associate themselves with the people they want.

The purpose of this dissertation is to study, in depth, **the impact of the wristwatch on the Self of modern society people**, being able to grasp the importance that some people give to accessories and to what extent it can affect their lives and become a part of them. The choice of accessory lies in the fact that the author considers the wristwatch to be timeless, transversal to all social classes and ages and being an historical accessory.

Moreover, **comprehending which factors influence the choice of a given wristwatch brand** will also be a substantial and important part of the study.

The first stage of this dissertation consisted in gathering secondary data by renowned authors in the field of Consumer Behavior. After an extensive analysis and consideration, a **Literature Review** was built upon that data, with the intent of providing the author with the required knowledge to answer its research questions and assisting the reader with a facilitated gateway to the further development and presentation of this work. The literature review’s two major topics are the Self and the history of the wristwatch.

In the **Methodology** section, a layout of the building process of the key part of this work can be found, providing how and what data was collected, its respective analysis and which techniques were used.

The following chapter of this dissertation is the **Results Discussion and Analysis**, which pairs the insights taken from the literature review and the ones taken from the conducted in-depth interviews. It is the section that provides the answers for the two research questions. Each question is complemented with a mind map, which is

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subsequently clarified in detail in order to provide comprehension for the study, resorting to quotations from the conducted interviews.

The following chapter is the **Implications** chapter, which provides insights and suggestions for marketing campaigns, marketing and management strategy planning, among others. This type of information might prove useful for management and marketing areas of not only companies associated with the wristwatch but also companies whose activities rely heavily in their brand and products.

Then, we have the **Limitations and Further Research Suggestions** chapter, which is divided into two topics. The first one approaches the potential limitations of this study and what may result of them, and the second one suggests practices and approaches for further research.

Trying to comprehend the impact that the wristwatch has on the self is extrinsically complex and dependent on several variables, each one impacting each person differently.

The **main conclusions** of this study regarding the first research question, is that the wristwatch is significantly impactful on the self. It has the power to transmit feelings to its user, it has a remarkably high symbolic value and it is also able to convey the social status and lifestyle (among other characteristics) of its user, whether being used for punctuality or purely as an accessory.

Regarding the second research question, resembling the first question, it is dependent on numerous variables, each one also impacting each individual in a different way.

What influences the choice of a wristwatch brand is an extremely interesting topic to approach, relying on different factors like aspiration to an elevated social image/perception, the value and perception associated with a given brand and societal norms and influences. It was also found that the importance given to brands is very likely to be a growing tendency in the future.

2 - Literature review

The following Literature Review is grounded on an exhausting analysis of previously developed work by numerous authors, mainly on the Consumer Behavior field.

It will aid as a solid foundation throughout the extent of this thesis. It allowed the author to obtain significant knowledge in what he commits to study while also providing the reader with a facilitated gateway to the rest of the work. With this particular literature review the author brushes the most important topics in Consumer Behavior for the sustainable development of this work while at the same time searching for the most recent studies in this field of research.

The intent of this thesis is to, above all, comprehend how we as consumers Act, Think and Feel in today's purchase decisions.

In addition, what revolves around and represents our Self, in particular, what relates with the possession and disposal of Wristwatches.

It also provides a brief history of the Wristwatch, the accessory that will establish the bridge between the Theoretical and the Practical aspects of the Thesis.

2.1 - Self- concept

The attitude that one has towards his own particular self is his self-concept. (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2004)

Our self-concept is a “mixture of beliefs (...) observations (...) and feelings (...)” (Solomon, Marshall, & Stuart, 2005: 149) about certain characteristics and traits that we possess or think we possess. A person’s self-concept can be assessed as being positive or negative. (Solomon et. al., 2005)

Solomon (2014: 272) gave another definition for self-concept, as referring “*to the beliefs a person holds about his own attributes, and how he evaluates the self on these qualities.*”

Our self-concept is closely related with interactions we cultivate early in our life, most likely with our parents and close family at first, and then other people or groups we reach out to in our developing stages. (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2004)

There are numerous theories that aim to explain the formation of the self-concept, being that social interaction is the foundation for most of these theories. (Loudon and Bitta, 1988)

We tend to give more importance to some parts of the global self, making it a “*very complex structure*” (Solomon, 2014: 272), however, despite being complex “it is well organized and works in a consistent way”. (Loudon and Bitta, 1988: 489)

People tend to distort their own global selves, “*especially with regard to their physical appearance.*” (Solomon, 2014: 272).

In the beginning it was believed that people had one consistent self-concept, however, with revitalized research, it is believed that we can have many Selves. (Solomon, 1983; Schiffman and Wisenblit, 2015).

The assessment we make of ourselves affects our brand choices, once one is more likely to buy brands which can potentially increase his own self-image and match his personality, being that this is truer to women than particularly men (Schiffman and Wisenblit, 2015; Loudon and Bitta, 1988)

The relationship between the notion of self-concept and possessions is a close one, with Wallendorf and Arnould (1988) arguing that once objects play such a crucial role in our lives, to an extent, our self-concept derives from them.

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2.1.1 - Self-Esteem

Self-esteem refers to the self-impression that we have of ourselves, i.e. how much we think we're worth.

People with low self-esteem are the ones with the least amount of self-respect and believe that they're not good enough to succeed and to perform, whereas people with high self-esteem hold themselves in high regard and believe they are able to be successful and are more prone to risk.

Self-esteem is a delicate topic of consumer behavior since most times we buy things in order to be/feel accepted, and approval by others is a big influencer of self-esteem. Being an easily manipulated topic, the main goal of self-esteem advertising is to create positive feelings about the consumer's self. (Solomon et. al., 2005).

Our self-esteem is a product of the existing gap we feel exists between our real self and our ideal or social selves. (Sirgy, 1982)

Millan and Reynolds (2014: 551) stated that self-esteem derives “mainly from one's ability to express self and validate internal attributes, as well as from the assessment of self-directed accomplishments”

2.1.2 – Vanity

Personal vanity is a simple topic, since all of us have already dealt with it, or have been a part of it, at least once, whether for looks or achievements. Vanity is “often associated with acting self-important, self-interested, or admiring one's own appearance or achievements”. (Schiffman and Wisenblit, 2015: 110).

Materialism and the use of accessories, such as wristwatches, are linked to personal vanity.

In today's society one's possessions and wealth is becoming a reference to one's self-worth (Noguti and Bokeyar, 2014). Furthermore, “materialistic people perceive the acquisition of material objects as an important achievement in life.” (Noguti and Bokeyar, 2014: 325) This social phenomenon is responsible both for an increase in materialistic behavior and for an increase in materialism associated behaviors' studies.

There are various academic definitions and causes for materialistic behavior, being that Shrum et.al (2014: 1860, citing Shrum et.al., 2013: 1180) define materialism when related to the symbolic motives of behavior as “the extent to which individuals

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attempt to engage in the construction and maintenance of the self through the acquisition and use of products, services, experiences, or relationships that are perceived to provide desirable symbolic value”.

Noguti and Bokeyar (2014: 323) state that “materialistic values have been seen as both a symptom of underlying insecurity and as a coping strategy to alleviate anxieties”; Reeves, Baker, & Truluck (2012: 675) add “High levels of materialism and compulsive buying tendencies have been related in many studies to a pattern of poor adjustment and well-being that fits the description of the empty self, such as low self-esteem, depression, anxiety, narcissism, and uncertainty and self-doubt, among other negative outcomes.”

Despite the fact that “Materialism has historically been viewed as a human deficiency” (Shrum et.al., 2014: 1871), this is not entirely accurate.

Shrum et.al. (2014) elaborate about the positive and negative aspects associated with materialism. Positive aspects of materialistic behavior can be, for example, in order to fight self-threats, engage in consumption behaviors in order to raise the feeling of belonging, self-esteem and developing a better self. On the other hand, various studies have shown a negative correlation between materialism and general well being, also materialistic behaviors may result in hostile behaviors and judgment by society. (Shrum et.al., 2014)

2.1.3 - Types of Self-Image

Many researchers have outlined four types of self-image: **actual/real self, ideal self, social self and ideal social self**. (Schiffman and Wisenblit, 2015).

These different types of self should not be seen as an alternative to each other, but as complementing each other in order to explain the totality of the self (Loudon and Bitta, 1988).

The real self is as the name implies, who we are, it is our more realistic self. It is our conception of our looks, how we think, how we feel, etc. Whereas the ideal self, represents who we wish we would be.

Culture affects both the ideal and the real self. These two notions also affect our behavior as consumers. Sometimes we buy something in order to fulfill our real self and sometimes we buy things that we perceive will help us achieve our ideal self (Solomon, 2014).

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Regarding the **social self**, it is the self that represents how we feel general society looks at us, their perception of us. It is related to attempts of integration, linked to feelings of connection, association, isolation and abandonment. This self emerges when there are strong feelings of attachment with possessions that remind the past or reflect the future (Schultz, Kleine, & Kernan, 1989). The ideal social self is how we would like to be perceived by others, the perfect image we wish we could convey to others (Schiffman and Wisenblit, 2015).

One can also extend this topic by introducing two other types of self-image, which can prove to be important: expected self and “ought-to” self.

The expected self is where the actual self and the ideal self meet, it's between these two images and represents how we would like to see ourselves in a certain point in the future (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2004).

Furthermore, the “ought-to” self, as stated by Schiffman and Kanuk (2004: 145) “consists of traits or characteristics that an individual believes it is his or her duty or obligation to possess.”

These last two self-images may prove to be more useful to marketers than the real and the ideal self, in order to more efficiently design and promote products, since they “provide consumers with a realistic opportunity to change the self” (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2004: 145).

2.2 - Multiple Selves

Initial research in this field proposed that consumers had one consistent and unique self-concept and their needs as consumers were based in that particular self. Further research on this particular subject, have been stating that consumers have, in fact, multiple selves (Schiffman and Wisenblit, 2015; Noguti and Bokeyar, 2014).

Each one of us, according to the social setting, possesses and represents different selves, which is why there is the perspective on consumer behavior that looks at consumers as “actors”, who “play different roles” (Solomon, 2014: 275; Schiffman and Wisenblit, 2015).

“The process of consumption is thus integrally related to the process of role-playing” (Solomon, 1983: 327).

Ahuvia (2005: 172) admits that “Today we have a great deal of choice about who we want to be and the kind of life we want to lead. Therefore discovering one's true

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preferences, navigating choice, and representing the self - both to oneself and to others - has become an overwhelming concern and a primary driving force in consumption.”

This is of extreme importance to marketers, once they have to strategically place their products when/where a consumer is in the particular self that best fits the product, or create different products that correspond to different selves (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2004).

Still Loudon and Bitta, (1988: 476) argued that “although a person’s behavior changes somewhat to deal with many different circumstances, there is a tendency to **behave in a consistent manner throughout various situations.**”

Regarding the relationship between possessions and multiple selves, Thompson and Loveland (2015: 238) stated, “the connection between possessions and self is not direct but rather mediated through the identities that the possessions are purchased to enact. In turn, the purchase of both mundane and prized possessions is influenced by identity considerations.”

While the previous theory argued that the items that we buy and our self are mediated through different identities, another theory defends that while consumers possess various identities, their purchase decisions may influence or be influenced by one or more specific identities, which can ultimately “ overlap or create crosscutting loyalties” (Thompson and Loveland, 2015: 238).

2.3 - Symbolic Interactionism

The previous concept talks about the fact that each person can perform different roles at different times. How and when do we choose to activate and play a different role then?

Our self and the way we act around others are continuously evolving over time, since we adopt different selves around different people and in different situations (Solomon, 2014; Schiffman and Wisenblit, 2015; Sheth and Solomon, 2014).

Sirgy (1982) states that the choice of self (what role we decide to play) is correlated to the characteristics of the situation in which we find ourselves, and once we decide which self to use we instantly start to think of ways to express the chosen self.

“(…) symbolic interactionism stresses that relationships with other people play a large part to form the self” (Solomon, 2014: 275).

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Moreover, people aren't the only ones who influence our choice of behavior, once products do it as well (Sirgy, 1982; Solomon, 1983; Schultz, Kleine, & Kernan, 1989).

Schiffman and Kanuk (2004) stated that there is “research evidence to suggest that **self-monitoring may serve as a moderating variable** when it comes to how well a person is guided by situational cues regarding social appropriateness.”

The people that constitute higher interest for the study of symbolic interactionism are those that tend to high-monitor themselves, since they are more likely to act differently in different situations and around different people; whereas low self-monitors are “typically guided by inner feelings” (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2004: 147) and are not prone to “play the game” of the symbolic interactionism.

While Symbolic Interactionism is mainly known for an “active, creative self” (Gecas and Schwalbe, 1983: 86), Cooley's theory of the looking glass self offers a more passive interpretation of the individual (Gecas and Schwalbe, 1983).

Cooley's **theory of the looking glass self, related to the notion of symbolic interactionism, argues that people's self-concepts and ways of interaction with others are affected - in a greater sense by general interactions within the society** (Rousseau, 2002), being that “(...) we see ourselves as we imagine others see us” (Gecas and Schwalbe, 1983: 86)

“Cooley states that society and individuals do not denote separable phenomena, but are simply collective and distributive aspects of the same thing” (Rousseau, 2002: 1).

Another great argument that adds to the looking glass self metaphor is that “Our thought is never isolated, but always some sort of a response to the influences around us so that we can hardly have thoughts that are not in some way aroused by communication” (Rousseau, 2002: 2).

Cooley did not look at the evaluations of others as being the foundation for self-concept formation, but as being one of the processes of self-concept formation. He viewed the self-concept largely dependent on the evaluations and opinions of others as being “weak and incomplete” (Gecas and Schwalbe, 1983: 78).

“The self is a result of the social process whereby we learn to see ourselves as others see us” (Yeung and Martin, 2003: 843).

Cooley argued that we as individuals would more likely define our self-concept in accordance to another person's assessment of ourselves, if we considered that person to be important or to be in a higher position (Yeung and Martin, 2003).

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The looking glass self metaphor would, according to Cooley, apply in a greater way to women, once women are more socially influenced than men (Yeung and Martin, 2003).

Cooley's view of society placed the individual as a free being, but not entirely, as he must always help and work with others, he could not be entirely independent and apart from society (Rousseau, 2002).

2.4 - Extended Self

The "external objects that we consider a part of us constitute the extended self". (Solomon, 2014: 276).

Wattanasuwan (2005: 181) argues that "We acquire, create, sustain, and present a sense of existential self by observing our possessions", which just comes to **show the importance of what we possess in building our self and our identity. Hence, the self is symbolically extended into possessions**, through all the effort that we put into the acquisition of our belongings (Millan and Reynolds, 2014; Schultz, Kleine, & Kernan, 1989).

"The extended self entails various life projects that introduce a dynamically changing evolving self" (Tian and Belk, 2005: 298).

Despite what one might think, possessions are very important not only to those considered to be materialists but for others as well, even those who do not fit the materialist type (Holt, 1995).

Culture plays an important role when it comes to self and possessions, being that different consumers from different cultures do not share the same interpretations when it comes to these concepts (Wong, Hogg & Vanharanta, 2012; Schultz, Kleine, & Kernan, 1989).

Furthermore, by acquiring or disposing a certain object we are choosing to alter the story of our self, which once more proves the impact of products in the self. (Wattanasuwan, 2005)

Objects are so relevant in regards to our individuality, that loved objects can be part of what makes a consumer's identity (Ahuvia, 2005).

The extended self, despite what one may think, is influenced not only on an individual level but on a group level as well (Belk, 1988). The way that "things or people

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become a part of our extended self (...)” is if “(...) we hold a sense that we have created, controlled or known them” (Wattanasuwan, 2005: 181).

There are four levels to the extended self (Solomon, 2014; Ahuvia, 2005 – referencing Belk, 1988; Sheth and Solomon, 2014), which are:

- Individual level – level in which personal items contribute to the establishment of the self. (Wristwatches, houses, suits, etc.)
- Family level – this corresponds to the home of the individual, since it represents a “central aspect of who we are” (Solomon, 2014: 278).
- Community level – the city or neighborhood from which the consumer is from and that in a way helps him define his self.
- Group level - every aspect of the self that is influenced or transformed by social groups (teams, organizations, etc.)

The main focus of this thesis regarding the extended self will be at the individual level, studying the effects of the wristwatch in the self.

According to Schiffman and Wisenblit (2015), **the Self can be extended by products in four different ways: actually, symbolically, conferring status or rank, granting feelings of immortality.**

A possession actually extends the self when allows “the person to do things that otherwise would be very difficult or impossible to accomplish” (Schiffman and Wisenblit, 2015: 110). The Self is symbolically extended by a possession when confers feelings of achievement, transmits good feelings to the owner (Ahuvia, 2005). A possession confers a status or rank when it’s rarity, importance or cost, allow it to. When people leave valuable possessions for others to inherit, feelings of immortality are conferred to these possessions, since they are the materialistic representation of that particular person; this can ultimately extend the Self of the inheritor, as well (Schiffman and Wisenblit ,2015; Ekerdt, Addington & Hayter, 2011).

According to Wong et al (2012), consumers who offer possessions as gifts, often feel these possessions as being an extension of their selves, even though they only represent a gift to another party and stop being theirs (if they ever were).

Tian and Belk (2005) refer to the act of decorating an office whilst including some personal items as a way to claim that professional space as our own, while at the same time being a tool to extend our self, enabling us to feel more comfortable and safe in that space.

2.5 - The Self and The Internet

As a consequence of the colossal increase in Internet usage in the past decades, a new type of self is born – the virtual self.

The virtual self is a particularly interesting type of Self. This particular Self allows the user to adopt any kind of persona he wishes, at that exact moment. This is a consequence of the impersonal, pc-to-pc Internet communication. This so called alternatives to the real Self may ultimately affect the consumer's purchase behavior.

An upside to this new way of interacting is that marketers may face new opportunities to target various virtual personalities (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2004; Solomon, 2014).

In Sheth and Solomon's work (2014) it is discussed how much the self as changed since the arrival of the Internet and the presence of digital platforms. Nowadays, the concept of self is much different and broader than the one Belk (1988) discussed in his early work. Also with the fast paced evolution of technology and society's ways of interaction, it is expected for the self to continue evolving (Sheth and Solomon, 2014).

2.6 - Why do we buy?

It's near impossible to provide an exact explanation to the reason we as human beings buy things. Sometimes those purchases are thought through, sometimes they are just purely irrational, sometimes they are emotional and sometimes they are impulsive, among other types of reasons as to why we choose to buy.

Neuromarketing studies have proven that around 90% of our consumption habits are unconscious and ultimately the majority of what we buy is an attempt to fulfill our most intimate secrets, desires and dreams (Lindström, 2008).

Consumers buy as a result of different stages they go through, which ultimately lead to the final purchase. Customers do not buy only what they purely need, i.e. consumers often buy items that fulfill higher needs than the ones of survival or even buy things just for the pure rush of buying them, having minimum or no use for them whatsoever.

“If we went into stores only when we needed to buy something, and if once there we bought only what we needed, the economy would collapse, boom” (Underhill, 1999: 31).

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The act of buying can be seen as a hobby for some people, nowadays, contrarily to what happened decades ago when people did not have access to so many offers and were not being constantly bombarded with information and new products and brands. Research shows that the buyer is prone to buying more the more time he spends at a shopping facility, and the time that he spends there is closely correlated with how comfortable he feels at that particular store (Underhill, 1999), which is why “stores, banks, restaurants and other such spaces must be friendly to the specifications of the human animal” (Underhill, 1999: 43).

“Shopping, for all we know about it, remains a mystery” (Underhill, 1999: 157). Consumers buy because they find something they want, “but there’s no easy explanation for why and how that happened” (Underhill, 1999: 157).

Our senses play a central role in all our purchase decisions; they are responsible for triggering our primal instincts and influencing our choices. Research shows that despite what one may think, vision is an overrated sense; being that smell and sound are more likely to influence the consumers in the way marketers wish them to be influenced (Lindström, 2008).

Underhill (1999: 162) states that “We buy things today more than ever based on trial and touch”, which just comes to show the importance of our senses in our buying activity, since “We are beasts like any other, and despite all our powers of imagination and conceptualization and intellectualization and cerebration and visualization, we physical creatures experience the world only via our five senses” Underhill (1999: 167).

Martin Lindström, in his 2008 work, explains that every purchase decision that we make, even if we do not realize it, is deeply interconnected with past memories, facts and emotions that are ultimately responsible for even the fastest, more insignificant decisions.

These shortcuts in our brains, responsible for a fast and efficient response are called somatic markers, and they are the foundation to every purchase decision. Somatic markers are useful in connecting past experiences or emotions to certain responses/decisions the consumer has to make (Lindström, 2008).

2.7 - We are what we buy

In modern society, people are often judged and perceived by what they have and how they present themselves, contributing to the notion that we are what we have/buy. The things we have and buy, help us and others determine our place in general society (Noguti and Bokeyar, 2014).

The reason why marketers try so much and spend the amount of time they do trying to create brand personalities is related with the fact that, it makes sense to state that to some level, the consumer is the product he decides to purchase, i.e. the consumer sees the product he/she buys as an extension of his own personality. This relates to the fact that each and every consumer is different, so a need to appeal to different types of consumers is created (Solomon et. al. 2005).

Object significance throughout all aspects of our life is increasingly bigger, and in order to understand this, one must first understand why? According to Millan and Reynolds (2014:552) “Objects as signifiers of our identities perform three functions: first, they reflect and create our sense of self; second, they are signs of individual power and status; and third, they can stand for social integration and individual differentiation.”

Sirgy (1982: 287, in reference to Tucker, 1957: 139), elucidates furthermore this topic with the following quotation “There has long been an implicit concept that consumers can be defined in terms of either the products they acquire or use, or in terms of the meanings products have for them or their attitudes towards products.” Millan and Reynolds (2014: 551) add “(...) people are often judged by others on the basis of their appearance and their attire in particular”

The way consumers try to categorize themselves, through possessions, relatively to others, is called consuming as classification. “ Classifying practices serve both to build affiliation and to enhance distinction.” (Holt, 1995: 10).

Consumers can either classify through objects or through actions. Classification through objects occurs when consumers use the object’s connotation to classify themselves or others. On the other hand, with action classification, the object’s meaning is no longer important; what is important is how one chooses to interact with the object (Holt, 1995).

A simple object can help us build and maintain our perceived self, to the extent that we feel we have lost our identity if we dispose of that particular object (Belk, 1988).

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“Because the individual’s self-concept has value to him, he will act to define, protect and further it” (Loudon and Bitta, 1988: 493).

When we experience loss of our products, being that they define us and our identity, we may experience feelings of grief similar to if we lost a loved one or feelings of being violated; this help us understand the importance one can give to products (clothes, furniture, cars, etc.) (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2004; Belk, 1988; Wallendorf and Arnould, 1988).

While going trough certain phases where our self is undefined, we often turn to products to fill that gap, since certain products may “act as a “social crutch” during a period of uncertainty about their new identity” (Solomon, 2014: 299; Schiffman and Kanuk, 2004).

Schultz, Kleine, & Kernan (1989) point to the fact that strong attachment possessions are linked to positive feelings, and will be more likely kept and handled with care.

Belk (1988: 160) found evidence that supports “the general premise that possessions contribute to sense of self (...), including reactions to the loss of possessions, treatment of grave goods, self-perception, and theories of property rights.”

We often buy and consume in order to define our self or to complement our perceived-self. The products that we choose to buy are often linked to some value that we have present in our self, being that there’s a strong correlation between what we buy and who we feel we are (Solomon, 2014; Loudon and Bitta, 1988; Schultz, Kleine, & Kernan, 1989).

There are studies that defend that consumers tend, in a way, to see themselves in the products they buy. An early study found that car owner’s self-perception matched the perception they had about their own cars (Solomon, 2014).

As the ideal self represents what we wished we could be, we turn to it when choosing products with a high level of social expression, whereas we base our day-to-day purchases in our real self (Solomon, 2014; Schiffman and Wisenblit, 2015).

Yet, “we cannot blithely assume that consumers will always buy products whose characteristics match their own” (Solomon, 2014: 298).

We will tend to look, however, for our perceived characteristics, in products that are more complex and that contribute more to our social expression and status, more than we will for everyday products (Solomon, 2014).

The importance given to material possessions decreases with age, as we rely on them to pursue happiness. They also have the power to remind us of the past and excite us

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about the future. It is even possible that they contribute to a certain sense of immortality (Belk, 1988).

Accessories, such as the wristwatch, allow consumers to change their look, and consequently modify their selves. **When using a self-altering product like the wristwatch, the consumer is usually attempting one of three different things: to create a new self, to maintain his existing self or to extend his self** (Schiffman and Wisenblit, 2015).

2.8 - Symbolic Consumption

Millan and Reynolds (2014: 551) defined Symbolic Consumption as “the acquisition of products and brands not for their functional benefits but for the culturally shared and idiosyncratic meanings they convey to others and the society.” Thus, our consumption choices are no longer influenced only by the sheer usefulness of products but also from their symbolism, i.e. what they represent. “Apart from their functional benefits, possessions can be valued for symbolic reasons. Valuing objects because they symbolize success appears to be a defining characteristic of modern societies (...) Material objects represent more than their own value because they represent the owner’s value as well.” (Noguti and Bokeyar, 2014: 323).

Symbolically objects can act as “symbols of security, as expressions of self-concept, and as signs of one's connection to or differentiation from other members of society” (Wallendorf and Arnould, 1988: 532).

One main example of an object that is symbolically bigger than its utilitarian attributes is the baby blanket. “The familiar blanket provides a psychological feeling of comfort quite apart from its utilitarian warmth-giving properties.” (Wallendorf and Arnould, 1988: 532).

Current information suggests that possessions associated with high-status are the ones that often contribute the most for building the individual’s identity (Ahuvia, 2005).

Consumption is intrinsically connected to our attempts to create and achieve the ideal self, while at the same time being a tool that allows us to find a place in society (Wattanasuwan, 2005; Ahuvia, 2005).

“Symbolically, we exploit these meanings (product meanings) to create cultural notions of the self, to acquire and sustain lifestyles, to demonstrate social connections

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and to promote or accommodate changes in both the self and society” (Wattanasuwan, 2005: 180).

Hence, the human being looks at consumption as a way to achieve and fulfill his wildest dreams and as a way to bridge the gap between his real self and ideal self. **Consumption is therefore not an act of buying products but an act of creating and maintaining identity** (Wattanasuwan, 2005; Wong et al, 2012; Millan and Reynolds, 2014).

In Ahuvia’s work (2005), his research indicated that loved possessions, owe much of the feelings consumers have for them due to their assistance in resolving consumer’s identity battles. One of the main reasons people store and save possessions is because they symbolize something (Ekerdt, Addington & Hayter, 2011).

Consumption can also be a tool used to outdo other people in our social setting, being that we often consume in order to compete with someone, trying to prove that we are better to a certain extent, and in an attempt to surpass them we may buy certain things (Ahuvia, 2005; Millan and Reynolds, 2014).

In addition to this, we may also build or have a relationship with another person involving or based on a certain product, as it happens when we decide to collect what our grandfather collected, for instance; which comes to prove that most relationships with possessions are person-object-person and not person-object as it was believed (Ahuvia, 2005, referencing Belk, 1988).

Nevertheless, there are some severe risks to consumption as a way of creating and bettering the self. If we let our self depend solely or heavily on our consumption patterns we may become imprisoned by them, in a sense that since what we have can be lost, this may ultimately lead to a loss of identity or sense of being (Wattanasuwan, 2005).

Also, when we rely on consumption as a way to build our selves, we often do not do or buy what we wish we would, since the objects rejected by consumers are usually the ones that say the most about the consumer’s desired self (Ahuvia, 2005).

2.9 - Hedonic Consumption

Hirschman and Holbrook (1982: 92) defined hedonic consumption as the “facets of consumer behavior that relate to the multisensory, fantasy and emotive aspects of one's experience with products.”

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Hedonic Consumption focus on viewing products not for what they are but for what they represent, as it happens with symbolic consumption. Also the emotional reaction from the consumer is a key topic (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982).

Despite what is thought, hedonic purchases are not only based on impulsive decisions but on reasoning processes as well, because consumers need to convince themselves and come up with logical reasons as to why they should buy that product, in order to stop feeling guilty (Huberts, Evers, & Ridder, 2014).

While traditional research looks at products mainly in an economic sense - their economic value and maximization - hedonic consumption chooses to add to this perspective the way consumers use and feel their possessions through their “several sensory channels” (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982: 94). While doing this, hedonic consumption covers consumers’ choice of products in a larger sense, being that sometimes “**emotional desires dominate utilitarian motives in the choice of products.**” (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982, citing Maslow, 1968).

As it happens with symbolic consumption, **hedonic consumption also fulfills our deepest fantasies and helps conveying our identity to others.** Products like the wristwatch are primarily hedonic, which makes it harder to justify their purchase, since the majority of the benefits of their consumption are intangible (Baek and Choo, 2015).

Acts of hedonic consumption are not usually entirely rational, since consumers do not act according to reality, but to what they wish was the reality. This can be the explanation for choosing an obviously inferior brand regarding to specifications but with a higher status connotation (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982).

Hedonic possessions are welcomed as gifts, even in situations when the consumer would not buy the respective gift for himself, mainly because he does not have to feel guilty about spending money on that particular gift (Baek and Choo, 2015).

Contrarily to traditional consumer research, which typically focuses on basic consumer goods (such as detergent, appliances, among others) hedonic consumption shifts its focuses to consumer engaging activities such as shows of any nature or photography, building its focus mainly in the arts section. Hedonic consumption chooses to focus on these particular activities due to their specific emotional involvement with the consumer (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982).

“ One objective of hedonic consumption research is to monitor and, if possible, to predict emotional reactions and fantasy imagery during product usage.” (Hirschman

and Holbrook, 1982: 97).

“Hedonic products tend to invoke conflict in most people: appealing to our indulgent inclinations while simultaneously signaling a breach of our long-term goals” (Huberts, Evers, & Ridder, 2014: 1). This applies to some very discussed “goals” in today’s society, such as choosing that slice of pie over that six-pack or that high-end stereo system over financial stability.

Millan and Reynolds (2014) clarify that the hedonic connotation of possessions, in general, wears out with time; i.e. the more the consumers use their possessions, the less pleasure they will obtain from them.

2.10 - Brief history of the Wristwatch

Nowadays Wristwatches play an important role in people’s lives, whether for its fashion sense, practical sense or for the simple fact that it is engrained in our day-to-day and it is almost a habit to put a watch on our wrist, to the extent we do not feel complete without it. But it was not always like this; the wristwatch is somewhat recent when it comes to time telling.

In the medieval times, church bells told people the time and the concept of carrying around their own watches did not exist. It was not until the 19th century that pocket watches became affordable and as such personal use became possible (Thompson, 2014).

Personal watches started being a symbol of distinctiveness, since “Every time you pulled out your watch, conspicuously and in public, you signaled others that you were reliable.” (Thompson, 2014).

The first wristwatches emerged as an alternative to the lack of practicability found in pocket watches. People would tie pocket watches around their wrists (wristlets) in order to be able to tell the time without having to reach into their pockets, whether when horse back riding, in the battlefield, riding bicycles among other activities (Thompson, 2014).

Women then started to wear the first actual wristwatches, or wristlets, which were seen as a fashion trend that would eventually go away and were not taken seriously either by watch manufacturers or by men (Brozek, 2004; Thompson, 2014; Rosen, 2015).

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This conception towards wristwatches changed during and after WWI, when soldiers started using pocket watches wrapped around their wrists “secured to the arm by khaki or cotton webbing, cowhide, or pigskin straps” (Rosen, 2015: 56). These trench watches, as they would become known, provided them with the advantage of having their hands free for combat and it was easier to coordinate combat times, eliminating the need to reach into their coats in order to tell the time (Brozek, 2004; Rosen, 2015). In addition, Thompson (2014) argues that combat coordination “required precise timing, and officers fumbling around in the dark for a pocket watch wouldn't do.”

This was the turning point for wristwatches to start being seen as manly and worthy of being used by men, since even after the war soldiers could be seen wearing wristwatches (Thompson, 2014; Brozek, 2004).

By the 1930's, the production of wristwatches was greater than the production of pocket watches, making them outdated by WWII (Friedman, 2015) and in the 1980s Professor Douglas Freake believed that the wristwatch had become “perhaps the most important cybernetic device in contemporary industrialized societies.” (Thompson, 2014).

Nevertheless, nowadays, wristwatches have been losing significance to mobile phones, microwaves, ovens, computers; once people do not have to resort only to wristwatches anymore in order to tell the time in a practical manner as they used to.

The new trend of smart watches will be responsible, if everything goes accordingly, for a resurface of the wristwatch (Friedman, 2015).

3 - Methodology

The objective of this chapter is to describe and illustrate all the methods and techniques of data collection and respective analysis found in this dissertation thesis. Combined with the Literature Review present in this work, which provided significant knowledge to the author on the topics he sought to study, in-depth interviews were conducted in order to answer the research questions of this dissertation.

The main objectives of this dissertation thesis were to help the author and others better understand the impact that the wristwatch, as an accessory, has on the Self and also understand what influences the choice of a given wristwatch brand.

3.1 – Data Collection

The process of data collection itself may assume the form of either Secondary Data or Primary Data. The author resourced to both primary data and secondary data. (Figure 3.1)

Secondary Data is usually the first type of data gathered and analyzed by the author, and it consists on already existing data presented by several sources and authors. Primary Data is the type of data collected by the author, and the process is usually undertaken after secondary data is collected, i.e. after the author has gained significant insight and knowledge about the topics he wishes to study, using already existing data.

Secondary Data

The gathering of secondary data was conducted with caution and only the most reliable sources were used. The author used qualitative data to support the secondary data present in this thesis. The majority of secondary data used were scientific articles, being that the author also resourced to books, magazines and websites.

Primary Data

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The primary data used on this dissertation consists of semi-structured in-depth interviews.

In-depth Interviews

The author chose to use in-depth interviews as the foundation of his primary data, which are part of qualitative research methods. Qualitative research methods, namely in-depth interviews were the surest and most reliable way for the author to find the answers he sought. This allowed the author to on a semi-structured form, comprehend the intentions and the feelings of consumers towards the wristwatch and towards wristwatch brands, in a more personal manner.

The script for the interviews was semi-structured, since the author had the liberty to go off script if he thought that would give him some additional insights on a particular situation. The script for the interview was built using questions the author believed would allow him to answer his research questions, with the assistance of the book - Handbook of Marketing Scales (1993).

The interviews were aimed at people who wear wristwatches, since it was crucial that the respondents wore wristwatches. The author interviewed nineteen people, during the month of June, from the ages of 22 years old to 63 years old, being that nine were men and ten were women. Out of the nineteen interviews, twelve were conducted face-to-face, while the remaining ones were done via telephone. The interviews had a mean length of 17 minutes.

The interview script (annexes 8.1 and 8.2) is divided into two parts, each one corresponding to a particular research question.

The questions regarding the first research question were intended to deeply understand the relationship and the impact the wristwatch may have on our self, and as such, targeted the wristwatch and what may be related to it, in regards to feelings, memories and opinions.

Moreover, the questions related to the second research question were intended to comprehend which factors were associated with the choice of a wristwatch brand.

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The conducted interviews were intended to help comprehend and to answer the two research questions of this dissertation thesis:

- “To what extent does the wristwatch impacts our Extended Self?”

This first research question aims to get a deep knowledge on the impact that the wristwatch may have on our Self. The author’s main purpose in understanding to what extent an accessory may affect our Self and the way we act and feel when wearing it.

- “What influences the choice of a given wristwatch brand?”

Here, the author aims to comprehend what factors may trigger the choice of a given wristwatch brand.

3.2 – Data Analysis

Secondary Data

The collected secondary data was responsible for enabling the author to gain the necessary knowledge in order to proceed with his research and decide on which methods to use and how to structure his interviews’ script, and better understand the most important topics to grasp.

It allowed the author to gain relevant knowledge on the area of consumer behavior “The Self”, and on the history of the Wristwatch.

Primary Data

The In-depth interviews data was so significant, that its analysis and consequent results had to undergo various stages.

In order to facilitate the interviews’ data interpretation, knowledge on topics such as: Mind Mapping, Coding and Categorization and Content Analysis had to be obtained.

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Mind mapping is a tool used to facilitate and layout the flow of ideas one might have about a particular topic. When analyzing large amounts of data as it happened on this particular situation, it eases the sketch and following comprehension of the topics. The main contribute of the mind mapping to the research questions analysis was a facilitated view on everything that impacted and influenced the topics the author was investigating.

In regards to Coding and Categorization, by gathering all the data in its respective categories, it facilitated the process of the individual analysis of each question.

Content Analysis knowledge, as the name states, supports and facilitates the analysis of great amounts of content.

Once the author comprehended the topics above, it continued to search for a Qualitative data analysis software. The chosen software was the NVivo, version 10.2.2.

Already using the software, the author proceeded to arrange the interviews in nodes and sub-nodes, which is similar to organizing the interviews in categories, in order to ease their interpretation.

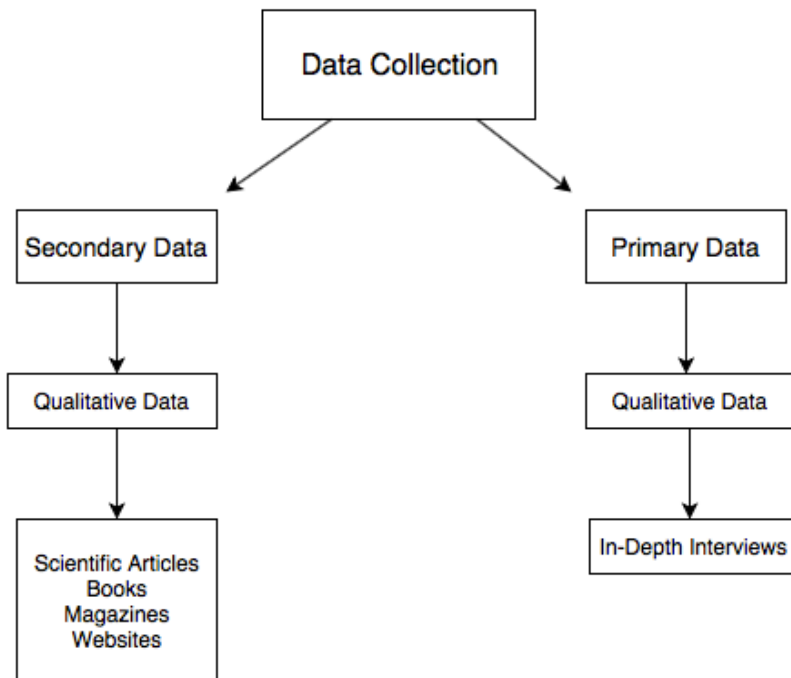
With all of the interviews in their respective nodes, the author, using his knowledge in mind mapping, designed one mind map to facilitate the answer of each research question, as it is shown in the following chapter of this dissertation.

3.3 - Approach

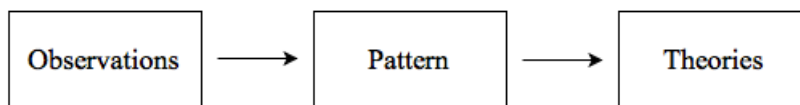
Based on the primary data, an inductive approach was performed (figure 3.2). The author searched for specific patterns regarding the relationship between the wristwatch and the extended self and also regarding the opinion from consumers about their choice of brands. The answers were built on this approach method.

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(Figure 3.1 - Data Collection breakdown)



(Figure 3.2 - Inductive Approach method)



4 - Results Discussion and Analysis

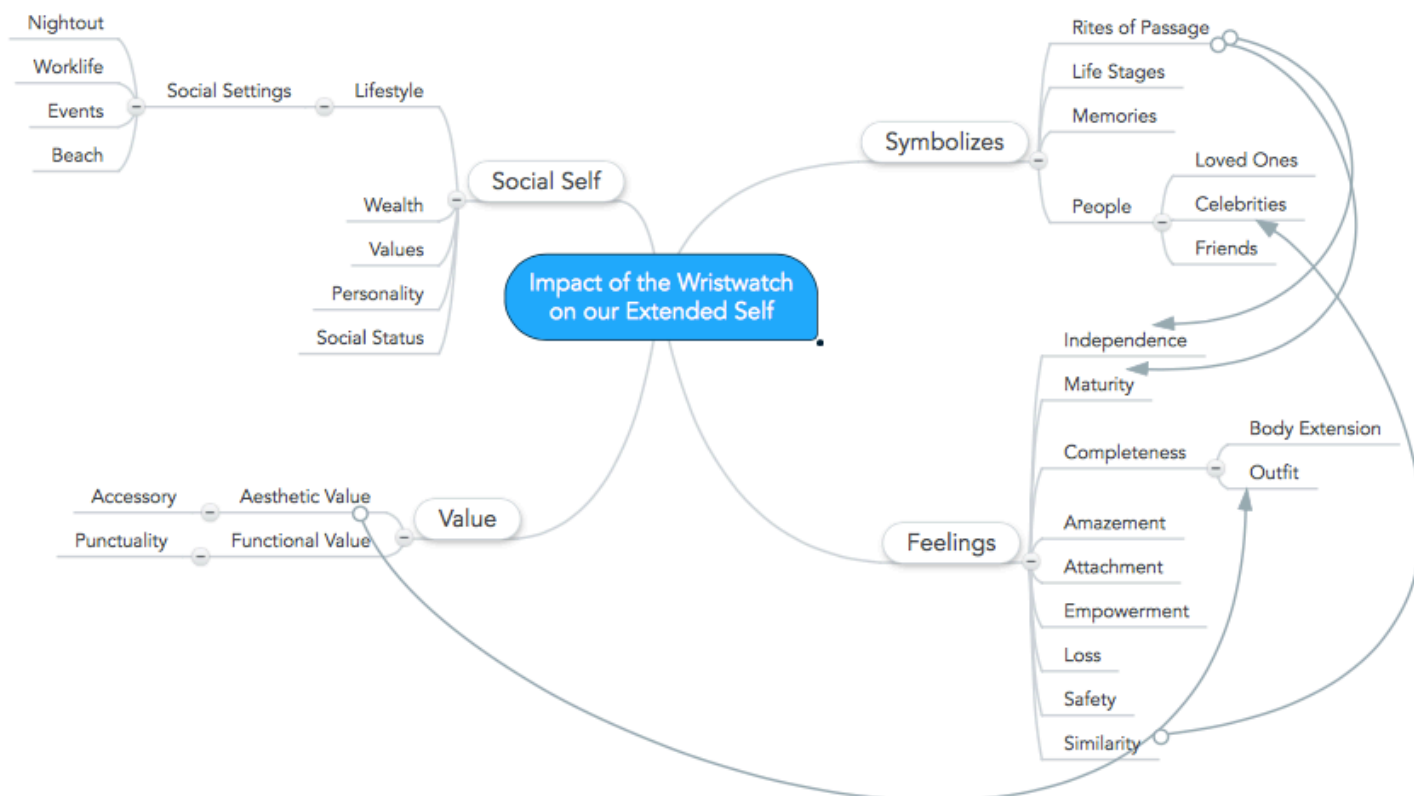
In order to answer the two research questions of this dissertation thesis, in-depth interviews were conducted, which provided the author with precious insights.

4.1 - 1st Research Question

To what extent does the wristwatch have an impact on our Extended Self?

To answer the first research question, the interviews were organized in categories and sub-categories, facilitating the creation of the following mind map. This mind map is the result of extensive research work, and it is the foundation to all of the following answers regarding this research question, so it will serve as a guide and it will also facilitate the comprehension of the following insights.

(Figure 4.1 - Mind map – Impact of the wristwatch on our Extended Self)



The impact of the wristwatch on the Self

4.1.1 – Value

Before discussing the impact that the wristwatch is capable of having on our Extended Self, one must first comprehend the two different **Values** the wristwatch is able to assume.

The first reason to wear a wristwatch is the simplest of reasons, which is for the sheer utility of the wristwatch, for **punctuality** purposes, its functional value. This is a decreasing tendency, once most people start looking at the wristwatch as something else – an accessory - and not as a guide to tell the time, mainly due to the arrival of technologies such as the cellphone and other items that are able to tell the time.

“ (...) It’s rare for me to use a wristwatch to tell the time. I have my cellphone and it’s nothing but an accessory for me” - Woman, 24 years old

*“However, that use for the wristwatch is being overtaken, since we have our cellphone with us at all times, so we always tell the time using our cellphone”
– Woman, 23 years old*

Nonetheless, there are still people that rely on the wristwatch to tell the time, whether for habit or for preference.

“ Curiously, I’m still able to tell the time faster in my wristwatch than in my cellphone” - Man, 46 years old

“(…) Because sticking with schedules was always an essential matter to me and the wristwatch serves as an useful guide for me to meet my appointments on time” – Man, 63 years old

The second reason – as an **accessory** - seems to be **the only reason why the wristwatch hasn’t become obsolete in today’s world** and has in fact gained a tremendous influence. A lot of people use the wristwatch for its **aesthetics** value and to complement an outfit and feeling complete when doing so. Trying to explain the impact that the wristwatch has as an accessory is tremendously complex. There are certain levels to this impact and certain reasons associated with this form of use, as

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well. Nevertheless, the fact that the wristwatch is one of the most important accessories, if not the most important one, is undeniable.

“I can’t see myself not wearing a wristwatch (...) I can’t picture myself without the object in my wrist, because I already got used to it and when I’m not wearing it I feel “naked”” Man, 50 years old

“ For me, placing the wristwatch on my wrist is almost mechanical, without it I feel “naked” - Woman, 22 years old

4.1.2 - Feelings

The wristwatch as an accessory is able to transmit numerous feelings to its’ users, being the most impactful ones, the feeling of Completeness, Similarity, Independence, Maturity and Loss, not forgetting strong feelings as Amazement, Attachment and Safety. These findings are in accordance with Belk’s (1988) work, possessions do have the power to make us feel different.

The feeling of **Completeness** is perhaps the most important one for this study in particular. It is connected with the **impact that the wristwatch is capable of having on our Extended Self**. There were a number of interviewees that explicitly stated that they see the wristwatch as being a part of themselves and an **extension of their body**. Belk (1988), amongst numerous authors, studied this phenomenon, stating that we may experience this feeling of extension with certain products that are precious to us, being that **it is possible for our Self to be Symbolically extended into our most prized possessions**. In regards to the role of the wristwatch as an accessory, certain respondents stated that they feel **“naked”** without it on their wrist, and this perfectly illustrates this point.

“Interviewee - The Wristwatch is practically a part of my body.

Interviewer – Would you say that the wristwatch might become an extension of your body?

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Interviewee – Yes, yes.

Interviewer – Why do you feel that happens?

Interviewee – Because it's an accessory that when used frequently (...) I see it as a part of my body. (...) As it is always with me on a daily basis, it ends up being a part of me” – Woman, 23 years old

“Interviewer – Do you see the wristwatch as an extension of yourself?

Interviewee – Absolutely. (...) By not having it on, I feel like something is missing” – Woman, 22 years old

Based on the previous answers, the wristwatch as an accessory has the power to be an integral part of our personas and it is able to make us feel completely different when wearing one.

“Interviewer – Can a wristwatch make you feel different when wearing one?

Interviewee – Yes, more grown up (...) Yes, I agree that a wristwatch can change the way I'm feeling, as other accessories do, it is a part of your look and changes your image and the way people look at you and how you feel.” - Woman, 23 years old

“Interviewer – Can a wristwatch make you feel different when wearing one?

Interviewee – Absolutely, I think that the wristwatch says everything or almost everything about what a person is.” – Man, 24 years old

Still regarding the feeling of Completeness when wearing a wristwatch, it also happens regarding the accessory angle of it. It is very important to comprehend the part that the wristwatch may have as a complement of a person's **style and outfit** on a daily basis, being that it's probably main reason for wearing one nowadays. With the previous comments, one is able to grasp the importance of the wristwatch as an accessory to complement our style nowadays.

Another important feeling linked to the wristwatch is the feeling of **Loss**. As stated on the Literature Review, by authors such as Schiffman and Kanuk (2004), Belk (1988) & Wallendorf and Arnouldthat (1988) **,losing a prized possession may result in**

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harsh feelings, such as grief and feeling violated. This was possible to confirm during the interviews' phase of this work.

“ Our material goods are hard to pay for. When we love them and we see them being taken away from us (...) it's like losing a loved one” – Man, 40 years old

Another crucial feeling when using the wristwatch and the one responsible for infinite marketing efforts by watch companies is the feeling of **similarity** and closeness that one may feel when wearing a certain wristwatch. Being that certain wristwatches may have a certain symbology associated with them, which it will be discussed later on in this work, people often wear certain wristwatches in order to **feel closer or similar to celebrities or public personalities** that are seen wearing or sponsoring the same watches, or to feel closer to a lifestyle that is not theirs.

“It is not usual to see a single watch in advertising, wristwatches are always associated with a certain lifestyle that you want to obtain and the brand makes you believe that with that wristwatch you belong to that group when in reality that does not happen” – Man, 52 years old

“ It is simple. One just have to go to an actors and models filled party (...) Pictures in magazines, always trying to pull you in to a certain brand” - Man, 40 years old

Linked with the symbology that the wristwatch may attain, namely in rites of passage, there are the feelings of Independence and Maturity, which will be discussed later on.

4.1.3 - Symbolic meaning

As it happens with other possessions, the wristwatch is able to gain symbolic meaning, despite its utility value. One can start associating various connotations to the wristwatch, and this is possibly the reason why it is possible for it to gain so much importance for certain people.

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Firstly, the wristwatch may be associated with certain **rites of passage** and **life stages**, being that it is not unusual for people to be gifted with wristwatches in certain life events, as such, the wristwatch starts being associated with that moment and becomes something more, conveying **feelings of independence and maturity** at certain times.

“Grandparents would offer their grandsons, when they finished 4th grade, a wristwatch as evidence of attaining some maturity and stop being a “baby” (...) it was an important achievement, to have our own wristwatch (...) it was like a rite of passage (...) That was the wristwatch that marked me the most in my life.” – Man, 50 years old

“That first wristwatch had a different impact, because I felt that by being offered the wristwatch it was like I was being accepted and was no longer a child, starting to be considered a grown up (...) like the wristwatch made me grow up, like wearing the wristwatch, was almost like I was wearing high heels” – Woman, 55 years old

The wristwatch may also be associated with **people**, whether our loved ones, long lost or current friends or even heartbreaks from the past.

It has the power as an accessory to remind us of **the ones we love** the most. This is why certain people get so attached to their possessions, namely the wristwatch, due to this feeling of seeing the person they love when wearing one.

“I have a very special Wristwatch, which was offered to my mother by my grandmother when she turned 20 and which she also gave me when I turned 20. I do not use it often, because I am afraid I might loose it, I keep it at home and usually only wear it on a special occasion” – Woman, 22 years old

“Yes, I would say the wristwatch that my father gave me, which was his when he was younger. It’s my favourite watch and is extremely meaningful to me, because it was his and I do not even lend it to anyone. (...) Despite being a possession I feel attached to it” - Woman, 23 years old

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Still in regards to people, it can also serve as a fantasy clutch for regular people to feel closer to **celebrities or the ones they admire**.

“Yes, for instance, when I was young and I started sailing, as I previously mentioned the wristwatch is an essential piece during championships, and in a way we looked up to the older guys and the ones we idolized and I remember that my idols wore a wristwatch brand called Suunto. I remember asking my parents for one and it was one of the biggest joys, when in my birthday they offered me one.” – Man, 24 years old

4.1.4 – Social Self

Nowadays the wristwatch is responsible for conveying a person’s identity, lifestyle, social status, amongst other important factors that help us determine our place in general society. **It is arguably the most impactful accessory that a man is able to wear**, and is responsible for conveying that man’s image and aspirations. In regards to women, it is equally important, and when in compliance with other accessories it might help a woman feel secure, fierce and beautiful; as it happens with men.

Regarding the wristwatch as an instrument to transmit a person’s **lifestyle**, it is commonly recognized that it might have this power, once there are so many types of wristwatches for so many types of lifestyles.

People usually choose their wristwatch with accordance to the **social setting** that they might face that day as well. This is perhaps the most important factor for the choice of a particular wristwatch for the day; the kind of situation the person is expected to find herself in.

“I relate a classical watch to my work life. A more colourful watch, light, that has a sportier look to it, I associate it more with the weekend. A wristwatch that I use to play sports has to have another set of characteristics and that makes me realize that the wristwatches are adaptable. There are different wristwatches for different occasions. I do not wear an athletic watch to a gala dinner, nor wear a classic watch when I go for a run” – Man, 50 years old

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“Interviewer – Do you adapt the wristwatch to the respective situation and your outfit that day?”

Interviewee – Exactly. To the situation itself and to my outfit. Those are the decision factors when I place the wristwatch on my wrist. What I am going to be doing today and what I am wearing. I always place the wristwatch after I’m dressed.” – Woman, 23 years old

Regarding the notion of **wealth** and **social status** that the wristwatch is capable of transmitting, this notion is simple to grasp. **As a tremendously visible accessory, it is usually able to convey its owner’s sense of wealth and social status.** Firstly, wealthy people tend to purchase expensive possessions and not so wealthy people are restricted by their financial power and often have to stick to the lower-end offers, secondly, by looking at a wristwatch one is usually able to get a sense of that person’s social status, depending on the type of watch they are wearing.

“I think the wristwatch is one of those items that is easily seen. When we shake someone’s hand, the wristwatch stands out and gives us an idea about job position, lifestyle and wealth. In a way I think that influences things, despite not being everything. I am not saying that there’s not people that are wealthy and own cheap watches, but in a way when you reach a certain status, wristwatches and their respective choices tend to keep up with that status” – Man, 24 years old

“Because people that wear a set of wristwatches of certain brands are seen as being successful and respected and as such have a very big aspirational sense. People aspire to have that object on their wrist (...) because that is identified by other people as having a certain status and wristwatches are one of the biggest status objects” – Man, 50 years old

The wristwatch is therefore a crucial accessory for our day-to-day routine, whether for its function or to make us feel more secure of ourselves and complement our outfit as an accessory.

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Its power exceeds everything we may have thought about a mere possession, being able to make us feel different, whether more complete or more mature. It has a wide range of symbologies associated with it, from making us think of a loved one to determine when a certain life stage has ended and another one has begun. It is a highly expressive social status symbol, and is even looked at to face certain events or situations, from job interviews to a night out. Its power does not stop here, it is also able to convey the place of someone in general society and his or her lifestyle and identity.

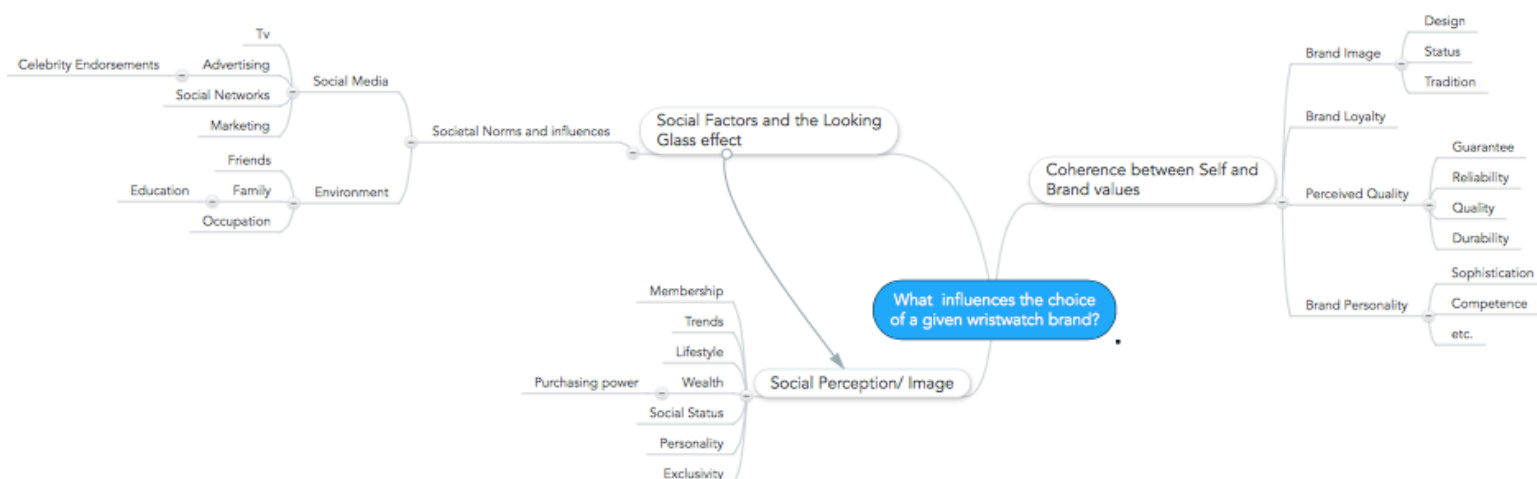
Throughout the interview phase of this thesis, the author was very fortunate to get an insight and comprehend just how much a wristwatch is able to impact the Extended Self. **That impact can be referred to as being meaningful and surprising,** due to everything that has been stated throughout the previous findings and conclusions.

4.2 - 2nd Research Question

What influences the choice of a given wristwatch brand?

Based on the same interviews, a similar process was conducted, allowing the author to answer the second research question of this dissertation thesis. A second mind map was designed in order to illustrate and facilitate the presentation of the respective findings.

(Figure 4.2 - Mind map – What influences the choice of a given wristwatch brand?)



Having determined in the previous research question that the wristwatch is a highly expressive social product and has a tremendous impact on our Self, it is only normal for consumers to search for a wristwatch brand that meets their ambitions the best.

From a sociological perspective, what influences the choice of a wristwatch brand might be explained through **Social Factors and the Looking Glass effect** and aspirations of **Social Perception/Image**. On a business/marketing perspective, it may be explained by analyzing the **Coherence between Self and Brand values**.

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4.2.1 – Coherence between Self and Brand values

Consumers' choice of brands may be the result of a given coherence between their Self-concept and the Brand's values.

Regarding **Brand Image**, general perception consumers have about a particular brand, the three aspects that were most talked about were **Design, Status and Tradition/Heritage**. Throughout the conducted interviews, Design and Aesthetics, **were mentioned the most** and were the **decisive purchase factor for wristwatches**, for the majority of people. These aspects are commonly mentioned when thinking of what differentiates a brand from another. **People tend to choose certain brands due to the fact that they associate general traits in those brands that are appealing to them, whether it is design or the brand's name/ tradition.**

“It is evident that there are reputable brands easier for us to pay attention to them, and that in a way offer more guarantees in terms of “survival” than an unknown brand.” – Man, 63 years old

“Because there are brands more well known than others. There are brands that sell themselves and nowadays we sort of follow those trends. It is for status, if the brand makes us feel better or not and also for the design (...)” – Woman, 32 years old

“Interviewer – Would you say you relate the brand to particular characteristics of quality or reliability?”

Interviewee – Yes, of course. There are particular brands, that for their general quality, for the aesthetics they transmit (...)” – Man, 27 years old

When it comes to **Brand Loyalty**, there are consumers that are drawn to specific wristwatch brands due to the fact that they have already had positive experiences with them so they do not feel the need to change. These types of customers are the ones that sometimes follow the brand in a “blind” manner and the easiest for the brand to sell to, once they are already “sold”, but also the ones that might be more sensitive to failure.

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“Once I acquire an object of a certain brand and it satisfies me entirely, I tend to stay loyal to it. But I must say that I am really demanding and I do not tolerate failure, therefore when it starts to fail I become unfaithful and open to other options that do the same” - Man, 63 years old

“If there is a brand that I like, I will go directly looking for it and usually I am highly loyal to brands. Like I previously mentioned, Nixon and Timberland, I am really loyal to these brands and I like the essence of the brands and are the brands that I will purchase” – Man, 38 years old

Perceived quality is another important variable when choosing a certain wristwatch brand, once, the majority of people stated that they often choose a brand for its **guarantees, reliability, and durability**, among others. Beyond the brand name and Aesthetics, perceived quality is perhaps the most important category for wristwatch aficionados and buyers in general, once wristwatches are sometimes expensive prized possessions and people usually look for the ones that are reliable and durable.

“Cost, reliability and aesthetics comes in second or third place. Resistance is very important to me” – Man, 63 years old

“Price, quality, status, color, durability” – Woman, 32 years old

“The materials, quality, practical effect, utility and brand. I value the brand a lot” Woman, 22 years old

The cornerstone of the second research question is the finding that **people tend to choose brands, which they relate their self-concepts to. It is not unusual for people to seek brands that match their self-perceptions as individuals**, whether they think the brand reflects their lifestyle, values or ideals. **Brand Personality** is responsible for playing this role, once it represents the brand’s characteristics that we might find in people (genuine, successful, elegant, etc.)

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“Yes, of course, always. I am not going to choose a brand with which I do not identify myself at all. I am talking design and quality, not even price. (...) The things you wear and do on your day-to-day life are related to what you identify yourself with. I am not going to choose a classic brand if I am everything but classic. In terms of personality, for instance, Swatch is a fun brand, I like it a lot, I think is all about the image the brand is able to create”
– Woman, 23 years old

“Yes. I do not buy anything that I do not like or I do not feel comfortable with and for that to happen I have to identify myself with the product or the brand. Usually we identify ourselves with things that are similar to us or with whom we find commonalities” - Man, 50 years old

“There are certain brands that have a design with which I identify myself more, it meets my social and personal tastes. When I choose a wristwatch, despite its design, I am also influenced by the brand that I think I identify myself the most with” – Woman, 32 years old

Despite the majority of people stating that they are influenced by brands with which they identify themselves with, some exceptions stated that they do not tend to look for brands that convey their values or lifestyle, because they not see a brand as a way of doing so.

“I do not think that we will define people according to the brands they use. I think the person defines itself, creates its own style, it is different. I think it is exactly the opposite, one thing is to have style, but perhaps I have style and do not have values. So, I do not think that the brands transmit our values and our culture, for instance... I do not feel that there is a connection, in my opinion.”
– Woman, 23 years old

“I do not identify myself with brands. If I like it, I buy it.” – Man, 40 years old

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4.2.2 - Social Factors and the Looking Glass effect

Regarding **Social Factors and the Looking Glass effect** as a way to explain the choice of wristwatch brands, these are comprised of a set of familiar factors, part of our **Societal Norms and Influences**, such as **Education, Social Media and Environment**.

Throughout the research phase it was proven to be unanimous, with eventual exceptions, that **people find that all of these factors influence and can act as triggers to the choice of brands**. People look at the purchase decision of a given brand as being a direct influence of the previously mentioned factors, among others.

It was unanimous that the influence of Societal Norms and Influences is crucial for the choice of brands, once we are a product of our own **environment**. This contributes to Cooley's theory of the **Looking Glass Self**, addressed in the Literature Review chapter. If we are around people that give a lot of importance to brands, we may be affected and changed by it. On the contrary, if we are part of a community, which does not give importance to brands, we will likely not give as much importance to brands.

“It is above all the environment in which the person is inserted. A person that works by the countryside does not feel the need to own a wristwatch of a noticeable brand, because in her environment the importance given to brands will not be very relevant, because people do not have the financial power to buy wristwatches of expensive brands (...) it comes from what you have and not from what you are, that is our present society, the wristwatch is just a small piece of that puzzle (...)” – Man, 52 years old

“The pressure of society... we live in society, that conditions and shapes us. So I would say that external factors of society play a big role” – Man, 50 years old

“If you are part of a family that makes you feel important for what you are, that values you as a human being, evidently you will not feel the need to reach

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to external possessions to find the importance that you already have. (...) I feel that people that grow financially, have a bigger need to show-off their possessions, than people that have always had a good and secure life, so do not have the need to show that they are now part of a new social class” – Woman, 55 years old

Education was widely mentioned as well, as playing an important role.

“Education is very important to know if you give importance to brands or not, I see education as a key factor.” – Woman, 26 years old

“I think it is all about your education, first off.” – Woman, 23 years old

Lastly, it should come as no surprise that the influence of **Social Media** in our brand awareness and choice is one of the strongest ones. Nowadays it is practically impossible to run from it, and throughout the interviews’ stage, a lot of interviewees blamed the media for the relationship we have with brands, and the influence we allow them to have upon us. **Celebrity endorsement** is also a crucial part of social media, once we often wear certain brands in order to feel closer to our ideal self or our idols.

“At this point, social networks, movies, tv shows, social media, TV is already a part of you, they are no longer external factors. Fifteen or twenty percent of you it is already what society wishes you to be, it is already what plays on TV and on the Internet.” – Woman, 26 years old

“More and more, social media is getting bigger, the external factors that influence us are bigger, we are getting more bombarded with advertising in various ways, due to that I feel that worrying about how one looks is a growing tendency” – Man, 24 years old

“If James Bond wears a certain watch or if Bill Gates wears another watch or if Julie Andrews has worn another wristwatch... There is a set of reasons that

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make people associate those objects and those brands to status and social position.” – Man, 50 years old

4.2.3 – Social Perception/Image

The remaining factor that is responsible for the choice of a given wristwatch brand is related with the notion that if we have certain brands, that **will project us to another Social Layer**, which consequently will positively impact our **Social Perception/Image**, and who does not want to be seen as successful by others? **The wristwatch’s social value is considered to be highly expressive**, so as Solomon (2014) and Schiffman and Wisenblit (2015) stated, people tend to choose premium wristwatch brands when pursuing this item.

We have the idea that certain brands help us build our social image, whether it is transmitting a sense of **Exclusivity** or **Membership**, and this is naturally planted in us, due to the previously discussed factors.

Regarding the sense of **Exclusivity** and **Membership**, these were considered to be one of the most important reasons people tend to choose certain wristwatch brands nowadays.

“To feel exclusive, the feeling of exclusivity” – Woman, 23 years old

“Not only for a matter of membership in a group, peers, people do not want to be left behind” – Woman, 55 years old

“Even if it is not us giving that importance to brands, we unconsciously know that we will be better accepted, more integrated in the social group to which we wish to belong.” – Man, 24 years old

Using brands to convey a certain **social status** or level of **wealth** to others is not uncommon and is another reason people use wristwatch brands as a social clutch. This can ultimately reach preoccupant levels, when people get “blind” by their intention of conveying a certain status and start taking it to the extreme. Once we **live in a world**

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ruled by image and brands, people look at it as, if I wear a certain wristwatch brand, people will place me in the social layer that that brand caters to, and this is then a snowball effect. It is relatively new and fascinating, this concept of us being living walking billboards.

“I know people capable of getting in debt just to buy a certain wristwatch that they might feel will give them social projection. I have no doubt that brands are able to project you to a world that is not yours.” – Man, 52 years old

“Yes, absolutely. Despite many times feeling that is an overrated in our society, I think that wearing or owning certain objects of certain brands is a symbol of having reached a certain level.” – Man, 27 years old

4.2.4 – Growing trend?

Not included in the mind maps, but significant enough to be included in the findings section, are the opinions regarding the growing importance people give to brands. Relatively to the importance people give to brands and how people let brands affect and influence their lives and the power brands have in our society nowadays, the majority of people, **had no doubt that this was a growing tendency**, whereas others were not able to tell, due to **generation discrepancies**. Throughout the interview phase of this work, most people stated that they only imagine this as gaining traction, and stated their concern as well.

“Yes, even more with social networks. (...) This tendency evolves even more, because the social network’s world is evolving as well, new brands arise, people want to continue to please, surpass expectations, whether for family, friends or professional setting and are still buying the illusion of what they want to be and look like aesthetically through those brands” – Woman, 22 years old

“Yes, I believe that that is increasingly important and therefore there will always be people that wish social projection, there will always be people that

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want to climb a certain social scale and what those people do is utilize high value objects to demonstrate others they have that brand which for them gives them social projection.” – Man, 52 years old

“More and more. I believe our tendency is to be a consumption being” – Man, 38 years old

The extensive research conducted regarding this research question provided the author with the previous insights. What influences the choice of a given wristwatch brand is a combination of all the described factors, **each one impacting each individual in a different manner**. Our society is without a doubt a society with its **foundations on brands, image and status** and one can only expect this to grow even more.

5 Implications

The findings in this work may provide practical insights and implications, especially, for both the Marketing and Management departments of wristwatch manufacturers and wristwatch sellers and representatives. Nonetheless, the second part of this chapter may be useful for brands in general.

These findings might be important especially for the heads of both Marketing and Management departments in these types of companies, due to the fact that it might assist them when undergoing operational and managerial decisions regarding their products and company.

By comprehending to what extent the wristwatch might affect our self and what influences the choice of a wristwatch brand, it will allow companies to design their managerial and marketing strategies and campaigns accordingly.

One of the results implies that the majority of people use the wristwatch for its accessory purpose. This might be an indication that marketing efforts should be placed into campaigns trying to convey the wristwatch as a way to complement the outfit.

Probably the most powerful and persuading feeling that marketing campaigns try to transmit nowadays is the feeling of likeness and resemblance to celebrities or public figures. This study found that the feeling of connection to loved ones would most likely be as impactful or even more than the ones previously mentioned. Marketing campaigns might be designed around family relationships (like father and son, for instance).

The symbolic meanings attached to the wristwatch are vast and complex. The wristwatch is commonly associated with rites of passage, whether graduations or adulthood. Marketing efforts would also benefit if focusing on this particular events, like associating a wristwatch targeted to young men with a high school graduation for instance.

This study found that people associate a certain type of wristwatch to a particular lifestyle or social setting, so a sporty wristwatch may be associated with surf and skateboarding, or even with a sunset event surrounded by friends.

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In regards to the handling of the brand itself, various insights might also be of service to these particular areas.

Design was the most talked aspect of purchase intention and decision. It was mentioned by some respondents that they are usually drawn to a particular brand, due to the linkage they make between that brand and the design it usually offers. As such, brand officials, should handle closely and carefully their design process, in order for it to be consistent and reliable, keeping customers happy and loyal.

Another very important aspect of choosing a certain wristwatch brand over another is the brand name, if it conveys tradition or heritage, or if it is not known at all. Consumers stated that they are most likely to choose a brand if they are already aware of that particular brand and if they feel that brand might differentiate them in the eyes of society. As such, marketing executives should handle their campaigns carefully, in order not to damage the brand name in any way possible, and avoid scandals at all costs.

The respondents stated that they are drawn to wristwatch brands, which they identify themselves with, whether for lifestyle or for brand personality. It was usual for interviewees to comment they see certain brands targeting a specific audience, and that being important because that way people knew what to expect when choosing that brand. Consequently, executives should make an effort for their brands to be consistent and true to their image in order to convey only certain aspects that target a specific audience and not try to be wide and target a large audience, since that can sometimes cause misperception and consumers prefer to know what to expect of a specific brand.

These are the main implications for marketing and management areas. This may be used as a guide when taking decisions about which direction the brand or the product should take. The previously stated insights and their respective actions are considered to be truthful and significant, whether for marketing campaigns or for managerial decisions.

6 – Limitations and Further Research Suggestions

6.1 – Limitations

The main objective of this dissertation thesis is to comprehend to what extent the wristwatch has an impact on our Self, while at the same time grasping what factors influence the choice of a wristwatch brand. However, this work has some limitations associated with it.

One can find information regarding the relationship between the self and possessions, but when it comes to the wristwatch in particular, it is scarce. This lack of information might consequently result in lack of secondary data, which is crucial to build the premises of this dissertation.

When it comes to the selection of interviewees, this may also be a limitation to this study, once they were chosen based on convenience and proximity to the author. Nevertheless, an effort was made towards the diversification of the interviewees, in order to seek for reliable answers. Once the interviewees are acquaintances, friends and family of the author, with the appropriate exceptions; consequently, their social-economical status, surroundings, education, among others, will likely be similar.

Interviewing respondents in a random fashion might provide different insights and conclusions, once people who do not wear wristwatch, and as such, it has no impact in their self, will likely be part of the respondents' group.

More interviews could have been performed in order to strengthen and widen the analyzed data, even though the nineteen interviews were enough to get a grasp of different opinions and interpretations.

6.2 – Further Research

The study of the relationship between possessions and self as well as the factors that impact the choice of brands has been gaining traction. These are topics that are likely to obtain even more significance over time.

However the study of these research questions may gain different insights when:

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- Applying this study to other cultures, once the choice of brands and the importance given to possessions is directly impacted by culture.
- Applying this study to other countries, which may provide completely different insights and responses, due to a set of external factors.
- Applying this study to other accessories, apparel or possessions of all sorts.

It might also be interesting to test the existing observations resorting to quantitative methods, such as surveys, in order to find if they prevail.

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8 - Annexes

8.1 – Interview Script (Portuguese)

1st Research Question - To what extent does the wristwatch have an impact on our Self?

- Qual a importância que o relógio de pulso tem para si?
- Quais as razões que acha que contribuem para essa importância?
- O que é que o relógio representa para si?
- Existe algum relógio que considere parte de si? Porquê?
- Tem alguma memória/ história significativa relacionada com o relógio de pulso?
- Sente que usar um determinado relógio pode fazê-lo sentir de maneira diferente (ex. Mais feliz, Mais adulto, mais conservador, mais importante, mais cool,....)

2nd Research Question -What influences the choice of a given wristwatch brand?

- Compraria qualquer marca de relógio? Ou há marcas que deliberadamente evitava? Porquê?
- A marca é um factor determinante na sua decisão de compra? Porquê? Se não, que factores dá importância?
- Quais os factores que mais valoriza na escolha de um produto?
- Se tivesse possibilidades financeiras para tal, seria-lhe indiferente usar um relógio barato ou um relógio caro? Porquê? O que acha que pode estar relacionado com essa resposta?
- Se a marca não afectasse em nada o produto que usa, seria-lhe indiferente usar uma marca low-cost a uma premium? Porquê?
- Acha que determinadas marcas ajudam a construir a nossa imagem social? Porquê? Sente que é uma tendência crescente?

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- Porque é que acha que determinadas pessoas dão muita importância a marcas? Que factores podem estar associados a esta importância (sociedade, meios em que te rodeias, educação, etc.) ?
- Tem tendência a escolher marcas com as quais se identifique (valores, ideais ou mesmo o estilo de vida)?

Bridge Questions:

- Porque é que diz isso?
- Interessante, consegue dizer-me mais?
- Quer acrescentar mais alguma coisa?
- Sim, continue...

8.2 – Interview Script (English)

1st Research Question - To what extent does the wristwatch have an impact on our Self?

- How important is the wristwatch, for you?
- What might contribute to that importance?
- What does the wristwatch represent, for you?
- Is there a wristwatch you might consider to be part of yourself? Why?
- Do you have any memory or significant history regarding the wristwatch?
- Do you feel that wearing a particular wristwatch might make you feel different? (Ex. Happier, more grown up, more conservative, more important, cooler, etc.)

2nd Research Question -What influences the choice of a given wristwatch brand?

- Would you buy any wristwatch brand? Or is there any brand you would deliberately avoid? Why?
- Is the brand a determinant factor in your purchase decision? Why? If not, which factors do you give importance to?
- Which factors do you value the most when choosing a product?
- Would it be indifferent to wear an expensive wristwatch or a cheap one, if you had the financial resources for it? Why? What might influence that choice?
- If the brand did not have any influence whatsoever, would it be indifferent to wear a low-cost brand or a premium one? Why?
- Do you feel that certain brands might help us build our social image? Why? Do you see that as a growing tendency?
- Why do you think certain people give so much importance to brands? What might be related to it (society, societal influences, education, etc.)?
- Do you usually go for brands, which you relate yourself with (values, ideals or lifestyle)?

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Bridge Questions:

- Why do you say that?
- Interesting, can you add something more?
- Would you like to add something?
- Yes, proceed...