Luxury watch possession and dispossession from father to son: A poisoned gift? Pierre Valette-Florence, Professor, IAE de Grenoble

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Short abstract:

This research investigates the feelings linked to the transmission of luxury watches from father to son. Three qualitative studies on father-son dyads are conducted to investigate the three stages of the gift-giving process (Sherry, 1983). Study 1 investigates the gestation stage through the discourse of 15 fathers who offered their luxury watch to their son. Study 2 examines the prestation stage *via* the technique called "Album On Line" on 48 owners. Study 3 explores the reformulation stage through the discourse of 15 sons who received the luxury watch from their father. Results show that the deeper we dig into the stages, the more mixed feelings respondents feel. The first stage is characterized by positive feelings linked to freedom, accomplishment, tradition or legacy. In the second stage, negative feelings linked to family finitude, contempt or resistance, add on to positive feelings. Finally, the last stage triggers comparison logic and social pressure and leads to mixed feelings both positive and negative among the sons. Assimilation and contrast effects are identified as high stakes in the individuation-separation process.

Key Words: gift-giving, luxury brands, generation, assimilation and contrast effects, emotions, finitude

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1. Introduction

Currently, many luxury brands widely resort to male transgenerational links in their communication campaigns. The "transmission" trend is increasingly reaching pattern status among luxury watchmakers and it meets distinct marketing strategies. Conjuring up father/son filiations may be used for segmentation purposes. For example, one pioneer in the field, IWC Schaffhausen, was able to enlarge its client target by producing a double set of aviator watches in 2008, one made of platinium for the father and a steel-made one for the son. Other watch manufacturers play on father/son transmission codes to capture the symbolical gifts market. A case in point is Baume & Mercier who investigates the world of celebrations via its signature "*Life is about moments*". Finally, the "promised-for-transmission" theme is sometimes used as a sales pitch by luxury watch brands. Their peculiarity partially derives from their patrimonial dimension and from the timelessness of their products. Patek Philippe's "Generation" campaign launched in 1996 clearly showcases the trend. The brand uses real father/son black-and-white portraits and aims at reaching a form of eternity through its slogan "*You never actually own a Patek Philippe. You merely look after it for the next generation"*.

Although luxury brands put transmission at the core of their communication policies, little marketing research has focused on the theme. Two research axes have been explored: the transmission of valuables as practiced within the family and the transmission of intangible "luxury" capital to non-family members. The former axis focuses on family construction processes through objects and shared experience. Folkman-Curasi, Price & Arnould (2004) show that objects "imbue" with the history of their possessors. Once transmitted, these "contaminated" (Argo, Dahl & Morales, 2006) objects become iconic representations or memorials of the givers. Besides, Bradford (2009) studies intergenerational gifts and analyzes the practices, rituals and dynamics which maintain their significance within the family. The second axis of research does not so much deal with the tangible gift, but rather with the transmission of "luxury" intangible capital likely to transform the existence of the giver and of the receiver (Llamas & Thomsen, 2016). This capital is transmitted outside the family circle and may be economic (time, money), social (professional network) or cultural (competences and knowledge), and it is akin to a luxury philanthropic action. Previous research has indeed studied the transmission of valuable assets which are sometimes assimilated to inalienable wealth, but it has never taken luxury brands into account.

This research paper specifically deals with the transmission of luxury watches from fathers to sons. The focus on the father/son form of transmission is backed by two reasons. The first stems from the educational dimension inherent in the father/son genealogical relationships. Fathers teach their children self-control by renouncing the immediate satisfaction of their needs and desires (Dallaire, 2006). Thus, receiving a luxury watch may be perceived by the son as a "reward" which goes beyond the original paternal function. The second is linked to the "pillar-like" function performed by the father in the family. He is perceived as a symbol of "physical and psychological protection" by the sons and also as the warrant of legitimate lineage thanks to the patrilineal filiation system (Dallaire, 2006).

Starting from a multi-method qualitative approach, three successive studies were carried out to understand the psychological mechanisms in the transmission of luxury objects from father to son. While father-giving may be perceived as a gesture expressing spontaneous and positive generosity, the way it is experienced by each of the parties may be questioned. What are the motivations of giving and the consequences of receiving the object?

The first study focuses on the “gestation stage”, which is the “behavior antecedent to the gift exchange” (Sherry, 1983) and it proposes, *via* a semiotic analysis, to identify the invariant features of meaning which structure the relationships between fathers and their luxury watches. The second study analyzes the “prestation stage”, which relates to “the specific components of the exchange process” (Sherry, 1983) and it investigates, *via* the projective technique of the "*Album On Line*", the affective representations of the transmission process. Finally, the third study focuses on the “reformulation stage”, when “attention is focused on the disposition of the gift, which is subject to consumption, display, storage, exchange or reject” (Sherry, 1993) and it deals, *via* an iterative content analysis, with the positive and negative consequences of receiving a luxury object.

Two reasons back our choice of luxury watchmaking as a domain of application. First, the luxury market is booming and global turnover is expected to rise beyond the €250 billion threshold in 2015.[1] The watchmaking-jewelry sector ("hard luxury", 23%) ranks third for sales, behind accessories (27%) and fashion (26%). Second, luxury watchmaking carries strong symbolical meaning: watches are items that belong in the adult male's kit and it is traditionally transmitted from father to son.

Studying the transmission of luxury brand items within the father/son dyad, notably by focusing on the sons' reactions, is of major managerial interest. Indeed, although watchmakers are thriving, one may wonder if junior targets are a likely bonanza. A paper published in November

[1] "Luxury Goods Worldwide Market Study" report (May 16, 2013, Bain & Company, a lecture organised by the Altagamma Foundation, an Italian association for luxury commerce and industry)

2014 in *The Financial Times*[2] explains that the luxury watch market is struggling when it comes to finding new and younger customers because the younger generation is increasingly attracted by innovating watches equipped with limitless applications, such as Apple's "smartwatches". Elmar Mock, one of the Swatch co-inventors says: *"In the next ten years, smartwatches could affect up to 30% of the traditional watch industry".* So it is worth questioning the marketing relevance of the transmission theme: it is widely used in watchmakers' campaigns, but is it an effective communication axis to attract new customers? The players in the sector need to clarify which is the best masculine transgenerational positioning to renew and rejuvenate their client base.

The paper is structured into six sections. First, the theoretical framework introduces the concepts of luxury and luxury brands, the notions of time and generativity and the role of possessions in the identity construction process (§.2). Then, we present the three studies which detail the psychological mechanisms in the transmission of luxury items from father to son (§.3, §4, §5). Finally, the paper concludes with a discussion of the results and a brief presentation of future research avenues (§.6).

2. Literature review

2.1 Luxury and luxury brands: conceptual and symbolical approaches

The diversity of research on luxury in human and social sciences reveals that it is a tricky concept to grab. For example, the sociological approach to luxury emphasizes the expression of social status *via* the consumption of luxury brands (Bourdieu, 1979). Psychology focuses on the determining factors in the consumption of luxury goods and draws a line between external factors such as people's judgment (Groth & McDaniel, 1993) and internal emotion-generated factors (Vigneron & Johnson, 2004). Economics tackles the luxury concept from the angle of the applicable price-fixing mechanism which depends on the object's utility value (product/service quality, esthetic value, know-how…) and its exclusiveness (product image). Lastly, marketing investigate the domain of luxury brands and tries to define their specificities (Vigneron & Johnson, 2004), the consumption behaviors they induce (ostentatious consumption, Kastanakis & Balabanis, 2014; prestige-seeking consumers, Vigneron & Johnson, 2004) and the resulting management issues (counterfeiting, Randhawa, Calantone, & Voorhees, 2015; price-display

[2] Shotter J. and Bradshaw T. (2014), Apple watch threatens face-off with Swiss, *The Financial Times*, 1-2 November.

effects, Parguel, Delécolle & Valette-Florence, 2016; meaning linked to co-creating value, Tynan McKechnie & Chhuon, 2010).

As different as they may seem, these research ventures highlight the subjective dimension of the "luxury brand" concept and they approach it *via* consumer perception (Vigneron, 2004). The degree of luxury attached to a given brand, may, say, be linked to the notion of product category: i.e., a brand may appear to be luxurious in one category of products and not in other ones (Kapferer & Laurent, 2016). Alternatively, luxury brands may be ranked depending on the ostentatious character of consumption (Kastanakis & Balabanis, 2014). Appreciation for some brands derives from their rarity and their capacity to operate distinctions between different classes of luxury consumers (snob consumption, Mussweiler, Rüter, & Epstude, 2004; Kastanakis & Balabanis, 2014). Other brands attract interest because they are popular and they create forms of mutual recognition and a sense of belonging in a "circle" of luxury brand consumers (bandwagon consumption, Amaldoss & Jain, 2008).

Although it is difficult to define the concept, luxury brands feature five perceived characteristics detailed by Vigneron and Johnson (2004) in the Brand Luxury Index (BLI): superior quality/performance, rarity, social status, hedonism and identity connections. They are the building blocks of identity construction processes and they relate to time and history in specific ways. In that respect, Bastien & Kapferer (2012) underline the enduring quality of luxury brands as they gain in value and remain time proof. Similarly, their added value is attached to their heritage, their historical roots and to the founding myths of their origins. Opting for luxury watches as a field of application, Bergadaà (2005) observes that their buyers are traditionally motivated by a duty of remembrance (the notion of legacy) and by a longing for immortality (the notion of timelessness). Thus, they tend to follow a linear conception of time to fulfill their generative aspirations.

2.2 The linear conception of time and generative tendencies

The idea of the linear conception of time symbolized by the past/present/future arrow of time is most commonly accepted. Here, the reality of time is understood in its duration (Bergson, 1959). The past and the future are definitely linked: the present is furnished with traditions which tend to persist in the future (Bergadaà, 1990). The purpose of this idea of time is *in fine* to extend oneself in time after death, a process also known as "generativity". Generativity, as defined in the seminal work of Erikson (1959) in psychosociology, refers to the concerns of individuals for future generations and it is expressed *via* the transmission of tangible or intangible patrimony to their descendants. The notion is linked to the awareness of their own finitude and it evolves as they grow old (Urien & Kilbourne, 2011). Following the path opened by Erikson, Kotre (1984) distinguishes between "communal generativity" and "agentic generativity." The first form of generativity is conveyed through a willingness to act for the well-being of future generations in a selfless and altruistic way. The second one envisages other people's well-being from a personal and selfish viewpoint and contributes to the narcissistic promotion of the self. Lacroix & Jolibert (2015) propose a two-factor consumer generativity scale of six items, one factor measures the motivation for symbolic immortality (agentic generativity) whereas the other factor measures the motivation to be useful (communal generativity). In both cases, transmission is a dynamic linkage which helps generations get closer. "Intergenerational transmissions" (Moore, Wilkie & Lutz, 2002) refers to the vertical relationships existing in the family. With "communal generativity", elements transmitted are mainly intangible and deal with values or consumption practices. Here, the giver and the recipient don't play an exclusive part, influences are reciprocal: it's through transmitting that we learn, we share and we receive in return. Elements are usually transmitted through education and apprenticeship and refer to the notions of sharing. With "agentic generativity, elements transmitted are mostly tangible and involve a dispossession or a transfer of ownership.

McAdams and de St. Aubin (1992) were the first to propose a conceptual model of generativity and to introduce antecedents such as the giver's internal desires (symbolical immortality and a need to feel useful). They also underline that legacy transmitted to the descendant enables the ascendant to virtually prolong his existence and it subdues his anxiety in the face of death (Urien & Kilbourne, 2011). Given that the "precious" items transmitted from generation to generation are rooted in family heritage, they become "inalienable wealth" anchored in the identity construction process (Folkman-Curasi, Price & Arnould 2004; Bradford, 2009).

2.3 The role of possessions in the identity construction process

Possessions play a central part in the way we define and think identity. They are generally attributed several functions: creation, preservation and identity continuity; recognition, differentiation or control over people; restoration of memories. To understand the role of possessions in the identity construction process, Belk (1988) revisits the works of William James (1890) and recalls that "a man's self is the sum total of all that he can call his". The notion of control is crucial. By claiming "This is mine", we end up believing "This is me"

(Belk, 1988). Thus, objects are used as the self's mirror but their nature and function vary depending on the progress of aging in the life cycle (Myers, 1985; Schultz, Kleine & Kernan, 1989).

For Winnicott, a psychoanalyst (1953), children's special possessions (doll, security blanket…) are substitutes for their mother's breast and they have a comforting function in their mental development. Metcalf & Spitz (1978) acknowledge the objects' role as "psychic organizers" in the establishment of cognitive capacities (memory, creativity, imagination…). For adults, attachment to material possessions contributes to preserve and transform identity (Myers, 1985). Certain possessions are characterized as "memory objects" (Belk, 1988) and they are valued for their capacity of conjuring up memories. They may be materially associated with a period of history, a place or a person and they recall and provide tangibleness to past life events (Solomon, 1983; Dittmar, 1992; Gentry, Baker & Kraft, 1995). Other objects are favored because they convey a form of narcissistic self-promotion, particularly when they are linked to competence acquisition (college degree), a type of know-how or an achievement (Hirschman & LaBarbera, 1990). Finally, elderly persons sometimes associate possessions with transmission concerns. This may be seen as a longing for immortality or an indirect will to control the future (Price, Arnould & Curasi, 2000; Curasi, Price & Arnould, 2003).

Object relationships are also to be approached through the gaze of other people. Material possessions are pregnant with symbols and they convey the image that individuals wish to project of themselves (Hirschman, 1980). Richins (1994) studies the public significance of private possessions and he shows that their meaning may be subjective but shared by society as a whole. The emblematic example is provided by luxury brands. Their significance reaches beyond their mere functional utility and gives the consumers an opportunity to improve their image and assert who they really are (Megehee & Spake, 2012).

This paper aims at understanding the psychological mechanisms in the transmission of luxury objects from father to son. A multi-method qualitative approach lays the foundations of the three successive studies (see framed below).

Framed 1. Methodology

Methodological approach
Three qualitative studies on father-son dyads are conducted to investigate the three stages of the gift-giving process (Sherry, 1983). According to Turner, Cardinal and Burton (2015), our mixed methods approach relies on a holistic triangulation aimed at obtaining a better understanding through unique perspectives gained from the different research strategies being utilized. With respect to the generality, accuracy and simplicity (GAS) attributes of our approach, the focal priority is accuracy, and generality is a secondary priority.

Design of the research
Study 1 investigates the *gestation stage* through the discourse of 15 fathers who offered their luxury watch to their son. It proposes, *via* a semiotic analysis, to identify the invariant features of meaning which structure the relationships between fathers and their luxury watches.
Study 2 examines the *prestation stage via* the technique called “Album On Line” on 48 owners. It investigates the affective representations of the transmission process of luxury objects from father to son.
Study 3 explores the *reformulation stage* through the discourse of 15 sons who received the luxury watch from their father. It deals, *via* an iterative content analysis, with the positive and negative consequences of receiving a luxury object that belonged to the father.

Sample
The three studies are based on collected data. To build the corpus for studies 1 and 3, 15 father/son dyads were recruited by word of mouth and thanks to 2 fan clubs on Facebook. Study 1 is only based on a semiotic analysis of the 15 semi-guided interviews of the fathers. Conversely, study 3 only focuses on an analysis of the content of the 15 sons’ answers. Study 2 is based on a selection of 24 owners of Rolex watches (12 fathers and 12 sons) and 24 owners of Patek Philippe watches (12 fathers and 12 sons), recruited on social networks Facebook and Pinterest.

3. Study 1: the gestation process. Analysis of the invariants of meaning associated to father/luxury watch relationships.

3.1 Methodology

3.1.1 Components of the corpus under study

To build the corpus, 15 father/son dyads were recruited. The fathers sample was composed of 15 men aged 52 to 70. The sons sample included 15 individuals aged 22 to 34 and mature enough to be aware of the value and importance of the transmission effected by their father. The corpus under scrutiny in this first study solely consists of an integral verbatim transcription of the fifteen semi-guided interviews with the fathers in April 2014. The text corpus linked to the verbatim transcription of the sons’ discourse will be analyzed in study 3. Two recruitment methods were used to select the 15 father/son pairs: word of mouth and a call for participation *via* Facebook posted to two fan clubs, the "Oyster Passion Club" for Rolex, and the "Patek Philippe Vintage Owners Club". The sample structure derives from observing two major criteria: selecting real-life father/son dyads who experienced a transmission event (with apparent success), and recruiting sons who received from their fathers a luxury watch that had previously belonged to the latter. Owned brands were the following: Rolex, Breitling, Chopard, Jaeger-LeCoultre, Patek Philippe, Bulgari, Audemars Piguet, Omega, Breguet. Interviews took place at respondents' homes and lasted 60 minutes on average. They were recorded and transcribed over more than 150 pages. To limit father/son exchanges of answers, the twin interviews were carried out on the same day. The same guidelines were used in the twin data collection operations and covered four subjects: (1) watch history in family; (2) its context of use; (3) the circumstances of transmission; (4) psychological feedback induced by transmission.

3.1.2 Analysis of respondents' discourse

To analyze the meaning invariants that structure the consumers' relationships with their luxury watch, study 1 starts from a semiotic analysis of the fathers' discourse. Semiotics is "tinkerer's thinking" which distinguishes between the levels of generation and transmission of meaning, from "axiological" significant components (deep semantic elements) to superficial meaning (figurative elements) (Heilbrunn & Hetzel, 2003). Using semiotics is relevant here for four reasons. First, as a tool, it is appropriate given that the motivations to purchase luxury products are related to their "look" and "appearance" (Freire, 2014; Mick, Burroughs, Hetzel & Brannen, 2004). Second, following the work of Le Roux, Bobrie & Thébaul (2016) on counterfeiting and imitation, this study uses semiotics to conceive luxury brands as a poly-sensorial set of organized signs. Third, based on the work of Bettany, Kerrane & Hogg (2014), semiotics allows apprehending the continual construction of masculine gender norms and the co-production of their meaning with the help of a specific object, here "the luxury watch", which acts as a material-semiotic co-actor. Finally, the semiotic approach has a wide range of applications and can make sense of highly complex phenomena (Barthes, 1966; Floch, 1989, 1990) by, notably, decoding text corpuses on space-time relationships (Bertrand, 2002; Floch, 1990; Kessous & Roux, 2008). Two major semiotic tools are habitually harnessed by management and marketing studies: the narrative schemata which deal with surface structures, and the semiotic square which explores the deep structures of discourse (Floch, 1990; Hetzel & Marion, 1995). Study 1 resorts to the second analytical instrument to identify the meaning invariants which organize the relationships of fathers with their luxury watches.

3.2 Results: Semiotic approach of fathers' relationships with their watches

The semiotic analysis of interviews as developed by Courtès (1991) and Floch (1990), highlights three types of naratives in the fathers' discourse on their luxury watches: (1) a narrative on the characteristics of the object, its intrinsic qualities, its esthetic attributes, its mechanism, its brand, its origins, its rarity; (2) a narrative on its temporal contexts of use which differentiates events depending on their importance, celebrations and everyday life; (3) finally, a narrative on the social dimension of the watch which contrasts social recognition and the sense of belonging to an elite which may sometimes pass prejudiced judgment on people. These various narratives are based on the following semantic categories: relation to self *vs.* relation to others, public *vs.* private, hedonistic *vs.* functional, continuity *vs.* discontinuity. Among these conceptual oppositions which structure the fathers' discourse, the continuity/discontinuity semantic category is particularly relevant. It is semiotically significant in decoding the corpus to examine relations to space (Floch, 1990), to time (Lipovetsky & Roux, 2003; Kessous & Roux, 2008) and to the extendibility of luxury brands (Veg-Sala & Roux, 2014). Thus, we may distinguish:

- **"The companion watch";** it accompanies every moment in the life of its owner: "*It took me such a long time to get it, why should I hide it? It lives alongside me in the simplest and grandest moments of my existence"*.
- **"The legacy watch";** it was bought with a view to be passed on and to celebrate a rite of passage in the life of the receiver: "*We are of Jewish tradition. I bought this watch for my son as a gift for his Bar Mithzvah. It symbolizes the passage from the world of childhood to the world of adulthood*."

By projecting the semantic categories of continuity *vs.* discontinuity, two new descriptive positions of luxury watch relationships can be observed.

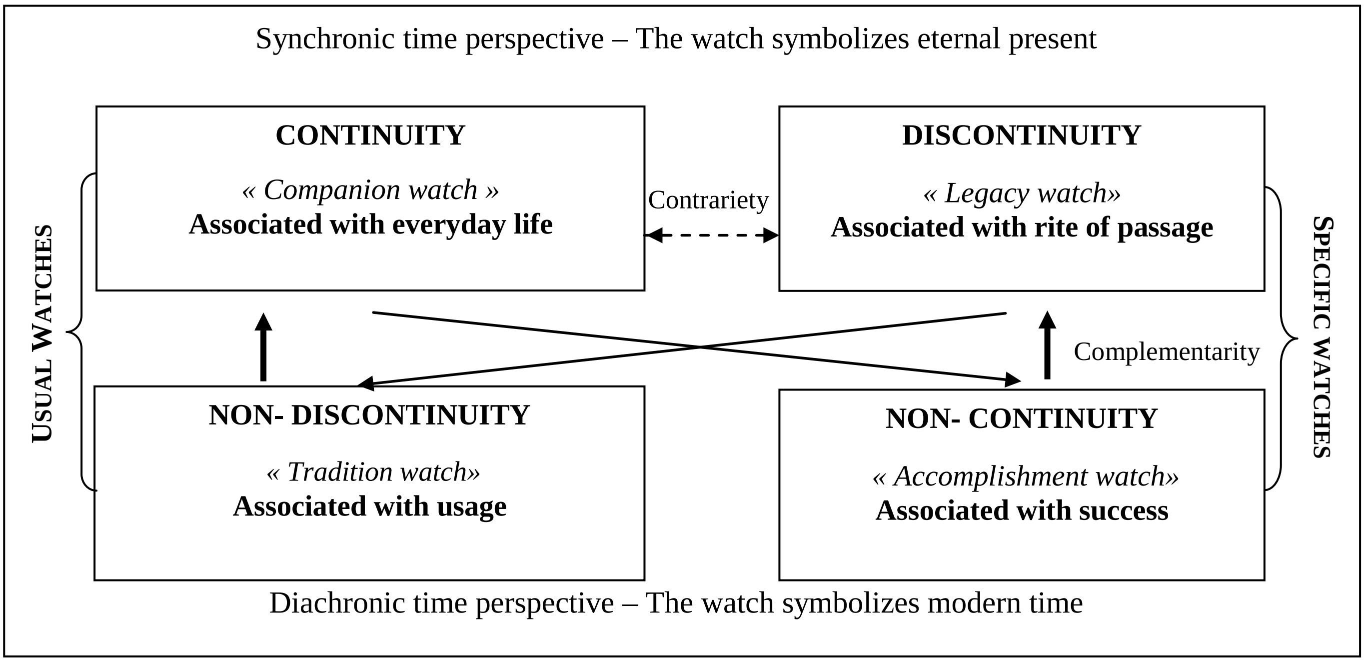
- The negation of continuity is an analogue of the negation of companion watches and puts forward "**accomplishment watches"** which symbolize positive professional and/or social transitions: "*When my business really started to flourish, I could afford my Oyster. It plays a great part in my life, it is a reward for all my efforts, it is like a leitmotiv*."
- The relationship with "**tradition watches"** is a negation of discontinuity. What matters most here is to make the past last. The watch provides needed landmarks and it plays this role by being worn repeatedly and systematically at specific events: "*I won a*

€5,000 Navitec at poker. Somehow, it is a symbol of my strength. So, every time I take part in a tournament, I wear it and it brings me luck. It's like a ritual, I can't do without it. If I don't have it, I think I am going to lose."

A second opposition "overarticulates" the "continuity" *vs.* "discontinuity" axes on the watch's temporal framework. Thus a form of "**eternal present"** (in the square's higher frame) falls in line with a synchronic time perspective which is duration-determined, while a form of "**modern time"** (in the square's lower frame) falls in line with a diachronic time perspective which is future-oriented. **Eternal present** is represented by the companion watch which accompanies every moment in existence, and by the legacy watch which, when transmitted, warrants the symbolical immortality of the giver (Bergadaà, 1990). **Modern time** is exemplified by the tradition watch which is systematically worn as a fetish object in similar events and by the accomplishment watch which symbolizes professional or social promotions (Bergadaà, 1990).

Finally, **complementary relations** contrast "usual watches" (square's left frame) and "specific watches" (square's right frame) are characterized by levels of affection. Indeed, respondents' discourse shows that emotional investment in the first type of watches is lower than in the second type. Figure 1 below summarizes these four time perspectives.

Figure 1: Semiotic square and time relationships



3.2.1 The universe of continuity: the companion watch

The companion watch accompanies every moment in the life of its owner. It is present on every occasion and is meant to be apt to face all challenges. Before becoming the keeper of lapsing time and capturing the simplest and grandest moments in existence, it is treated with particular care: gestures of appropriation are calculated, the watch is put away in specific places carefully distinguished from "profane" objects. This disposition comes as obvious in Patrick's (52) discourse: *"At the beginning I felt shy wearing it, except in exceptional events like weddings or professional meetings. Buying such an expensive thing made me wary of denting it. I felt more concerned with the watch than with myself. Well, as time went by, I got used to owning it, and since I have been wearing it all the time"*. The change in status goes along with a change in the frequency of use (from occasional to everyday) and it also shows that the value of the watch stems from changing sources: from financial to sentimental ones. *"First, value is associated with the price paid! And so, fear of breaking the watch is a constant worry. As years pass, the value gets more sentimental than financial"* (Georges, 64).

3.2.2 The universe of discontinuity: the legacy watch

The legacy watch is bought with a view to be passed on and it symbolizes a "unique life instant" shared by father and son. It is the vehicle of a rite of passage. Among the most cited ceremonial cycles, we find the first/solemn communion, the birth of the first child, weddings and death. The watch carries double symbolical meaning. On the one hand, it may be a gift celebrating one specific event. In that case, it satisfies the fathers' need for communal generativity: it is a way of taking care of their heirs in a loving fatherly manner and it strengthens mutual fondness. This may be observed in Pierre's (53) discourse: "*Giving him the watch was a way of saying 'I love you'*". On the other hand, because it conjures up passing time, it plays a temporary role and evokes "mourning the dead" (as a separation from prior status). Then, transmission happens at the end of the patriarch's life and expresses an extension of the self which satisfies the fathers' need for self-generativity. As Jean-Louis (58) observes, it paves the way for eternal life in the heir's memory: "*I gave him this watch when I fell seriously ill. It felt as if I was giving him away a part of myself, I was leaving behind bits and pieces of my life. So I will still be present even after I die...*". These results fit into previous work carried out by Bradford (2009): as a memorial, the object takes on an inalienable quality; it becomes "irreplaceable" and "priceless".

3.2.3 The universe of non-discontinuity: the tradition watch

Here, the relationships of fathers with their watches are a matter of tradition. What matters most is to make the past last and to transmit its history. The watch provides needed landmarks and it plays this role by being worn repeatedly and systematically in specific events. This appears clearly in Gérard's (55) discourse: "*I bought myself my Tag Heuer for my 30th birthday. It was a personal present I was giving to myself. It was my first watch. So even if I've got plenty of other ones, I always wear this one on my birthdays*." Here, respondents insist on the authentic and timeless character of the watch and go as far as using fetishist discourse about it: "*My father offered it to me when I passed my medical internship exam, nearly 25 years ago. Today, I wear it when I present my research in medical conferences. I don't know why, it gives me some comfort. It's just like a ritual; I say to myself, if I have got it on me, I am not going to talk nonsense. Well, I find it beautiful, it does not grow old, it does not change. I love telling its story*" (André, 52).

3.2.4 The universe of non-continuity: the accomplishment watch

The accomplishment watch is generally purchased to symbolize professional and social success. Marc-Antoine (61) compares buying a luxury watch to surpassing one's limits: *"It was a personal accomplishment. It meant reaching the goal I had set myself. It's just like when you are training to run the marathon... It takes times, you spend a lot of energy and when you cross the finishing line, it's pure ecstasy"*. For many respondents, owning a luxury watch means asserting their position in society and enjoying a certain number of advantages. "*People look at me differently when they notice my Rolex. It gives you some authority and defines your place in society. So, unconsciously, I think I had an easier time when people saw me with it*" (Gérard, 55). The accomplishment watch contributes to the definition and evolution of identity. It has powerful symbolical meaning: it is an item in the adult males' kit. For example, Rolex watches are recognized to be masculine, they are objects that conjure up ideas of strength and manhood: "*I feel a bit like James Bond in the sense that my Rolex makes me self-assertive. It is the symbol of my success. When I look at it, I can see the different stages of my life and I think I have made it*" (Daniel, 58).

The semiotic analysis of interviews follows on the work of Baudrillard (1968) and tends to show that whatever its status (companion, legacy, tradition of accomplishment watch), the resulting emotional collusion gives the watch its affective value which symbolizes its "presence." It embodies in space the immortal emotional links that can be reinvested in the following generation in a sort of nostalgic presentness. Study 2, therefore investigates, *via* the projective technique of the "*Album On Line*", the affective representations of the transmission process of luxury objects from father to son.

4. Study 2: The prestation stage – Affective representations of the transmission process: a dyadic father/son analysis *via* the Album On Line technique

4.1 Methodology

4.1.1 Presentation of the technique

In this second study, we chose to focus on the affective representations between fathers and sons, relying on a relatively new projective technique called "*Album On Line*" (AOL). The basic foundation of this approach lies on the elicitations made by respondents with regard to a set of selected images. According to Zaltman (1997), ideas emerge from images, while verbal communication plays an important role in the representation and storage of these ideas (Bickerton 1990). Zaltman (1997) proposed that customers can better express their ideas and the representations of their thinking through images. Basically, AOL is a projective technique first proposed by Vernette (2007). Although it was originally designed to identify the representations associated with a consumption experience (Vernette 2007), it can be used for the study of a specific behavior as long as it involves latent processes, mixed emotions and sub-conscious thinking processes. Practically, it mixes individual reflections with group reflection, while its foundations are based on the work of Heisley and Levy (1991), the ZMET method (Zaltman 1997), and the Delphi method (Dalkey and Brown 1972). All in all, it combines the advantages of individual in-depth approaches with the social interactions stemming from focus groups. The technique comprises using photographs available on search engines, and the participants' comments on these photos which are then submitted for evaluation by the rest of the group. The AOL method works well since it allows the respondents to indirectly express themselves about the behavior under study by projecting their thoughts and ideas while taking into account other possible justifications put forward by other participants.

4.1.2 Sample and implementation

In order to find out positive emotions as well as negative ones associated with the owners of the two selected luxury watches (Rolex and Patek Philippe), four samples were constructed for each brand. Hence, two groups of fathers and two groups of sons for each brand were surveyed with the goal to respectively elicit positive and negative emotions related to the transmission of the fathers' luxury watches to their sons. Each group was composed of 6 respondents. In addition, we carefully ensured that between Rolex and Patek Philippe the samples were comparable in terms of age and social status. All in all, 48 voluntary owners (4 times 6 respondents times 2 brands) were recruited through specialized blogs of fans and owners of the two brands. Four specific scenarios were created in order to elicit either benefits or fears associated with the transmission of the corresponding luxury watch in the context of a birthday (Table 1).

Table 1. Scenarios used in study 1

	Father's scenarios	Son's scenario
Positive scenario	It is your son's birthday. For this occasion, you offer him your (brand Patek Philippe/Rolex) watch. Could you imagine the negative feelings, the fears that could arise? What are the negative feelings that you could experience?	It is your birthday. For this occasion, your father offers you his (brand Patek Philippe/Rolex) watch. Can you imagine the positive feelings, the fears that could arise? What are the feelings and the positive emotions that you could experience while wearing this watch?
Negative scenario	It is your son's birthday. For this occasion, you offer him your (brand Patek Philippe/Rolex) watch. Could you imagine the negative feelings, the fears that could arise ? What are the positive feelings that you could experience?	It is your birthday. For this occasion, your father offers you his (brand Patek Philippe/Rolex) watch. Can you imagine the positive feelings, the fears that could arise? What are the feelings and the negative emotions that you could experience while wearing this watch?

In the first stage, for each group, we asked each participant to write down the feelings elicited by the scenario. Then, he was asked to find out, thanks to search engines like Google, the pictures best related to these feelings. At the end of the process, the respondent had to retain the 5 most important pictures, leading to what is called his individual album. In the second stage, and for each group, we created a collective album that contained all the photos of the individual albums of the group (6 times 5 photos). Then, the participants could adjust their individual album if they were inspired by the collective album. In addition, they were also asked to add comments to the newly selected photos. Finally, as regards the third stage, we asked each participant to evaluate and note all the photos of the two collective albums (benefits and constraints), representing a total of 60 photos on a scale from one (strongly disagree) to six (strongly agree) so as to determine if they corresponded to their experience of transmission of the watch between fathers and sons.

4.1.3 Data analysis

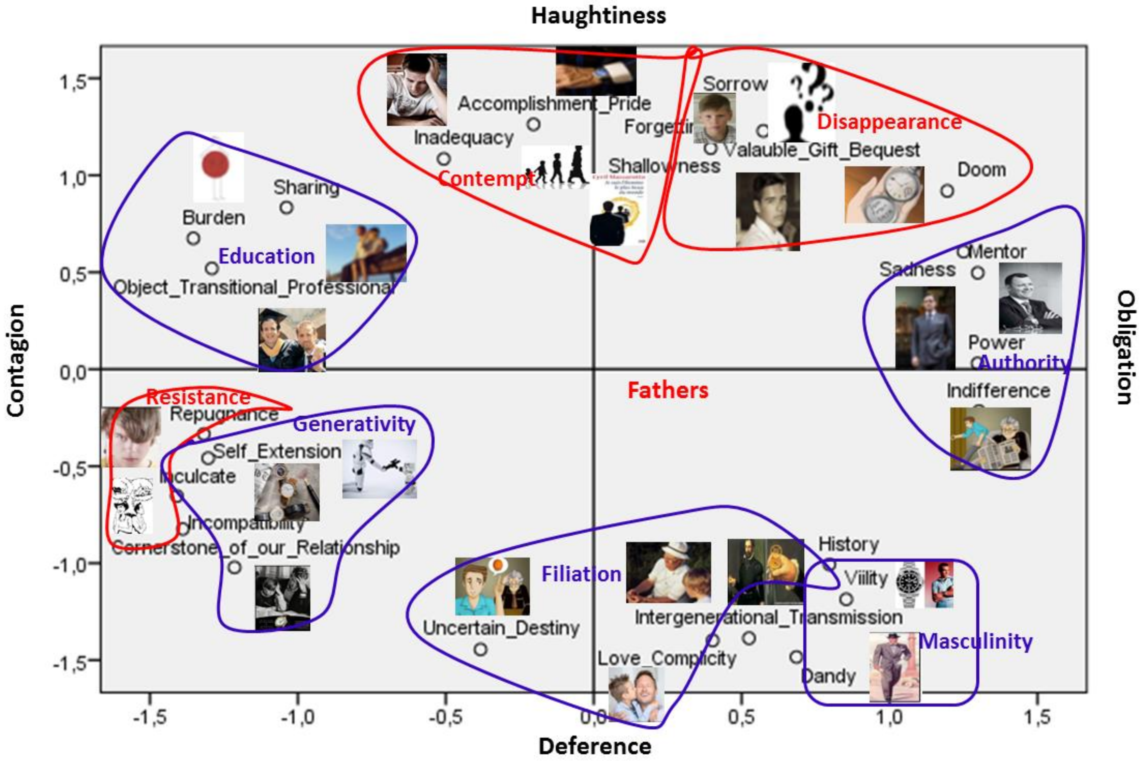
Traditionally, the objective of the final analytical stage is to structure the images and associated words in a space that represents the associations between the metaphorical images and the evocations. The researcher or analyst usually executes this final stage manually. In this work, we created a raw data set that contained the pictures with their associated words, for each collective album, graded from one to six by each participant.

Then, we decided to rely on a multidimensional scaling approach which is aimed to detect meaningful underlying dimensions that allow the researcher to explain observed similarities between the investigated pictures and their main associated words. In our case, the data set was analyzed by means of an INDSCAL approach that permits to obtain a space representing all the distances between the items depending on their grading by each respondent. The INDSCAL approach fits the data at hand pretty well, since we had 6 subjects for both scenarios who rated p stimuli. The program takes a set of 6 matrices as input, each of which is a square symmetric matrix (of order p) of similar judgments between the p stimuli. The model explains the differences between the subjects' evaluations by a distance model where the stimuli are thought of as points positioned in a stimulus space. This space is perceived differentially by the subjects so that each of them affords a different salience or weight to each of the dimensions of the space. In other words, the stimulus space represents the best consensus between all the individual stimulus spaces. Finally, a hierarchical cluster analysis was performed on the items coordinates within that space and allowed them to be clustered in terms of shared meaning.

4.2 Results

Overall, the interpretation of the feelings, either positive or negative, initiated by each experiential scenario was synthesized through the graphic display provided by two mappings. We illustrated each mapping image with one word that was considered to be the most representative of the meanings given by the participants. The denomination of the mappings axes was based on the images and associated words that surrounded each axis. Globally, the INDSCAL analysis provided good quality since it represents 82% and 89% of the variance[3] for the two mappings with regard to fathers' and sons' emotional joint spaces, respectively.

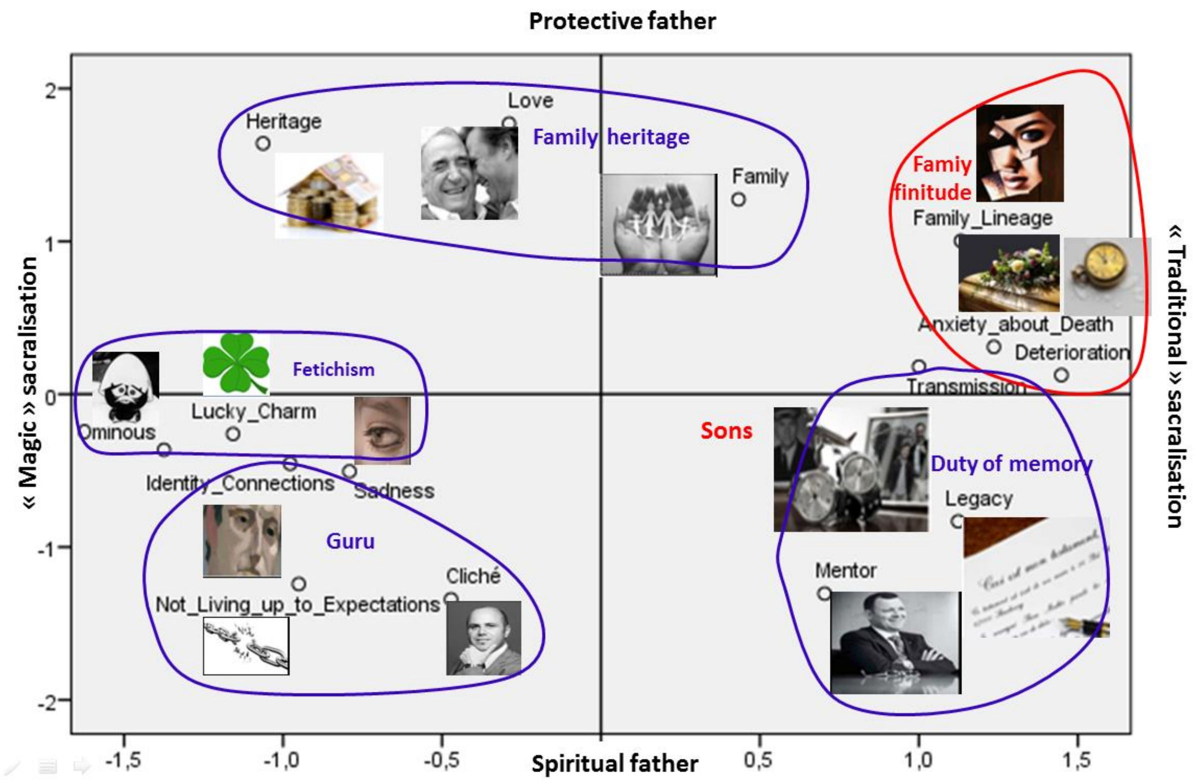
Figure 2: Emotional joint space representation for fathers



All in all, the graphic display for fathers is structured alongside two main axes: a horizontal axis which delineates an opposition between obligation and contagion on the one hand, and a vertical axis which differentiates between deference and haughtiness on the other hand. A finer analysis of the photos and their associated words put forward 8 clusters bearing either a positive or negative orientation. For instance, masculinity is closely related to filiation and, to a lesser extent, to power, whereas contempt and demise are in a close way associated. Importantly, this joint space enables us to uncover the interplay between benefits and constrains, hence putting the stress on the ambivalence of the transmission of watches from fathers to sons.

[3] The corresponding stress values 0.081 and 0.064 show a good adjustment of the final graphic representation compared with the initial individual distances between the graded stimuli.

Figure 3: Emotional joint space representation for sons



Regarding the sons' graphic representation, we can conclude from the mapping (figure 3) that two main axes help understand the perception of the watch transmission. However, the psychological representations are quite different compared to fathers' perceptions. The horizontal axis opposes a traditional type of sacralisation to a magical one, whereas the vertical axis opposes a spiritual father to a protective one. In a simpler way, compared to fathers, 5 clusters emerge, all of them positive, except one. The negative representation is related to family finitude, whereas in contrast, for instance, positive clusters relate to family heritage or to fathers seen as intellectual guides. All in all, this graphic display exemplifies that for sons there is also a mix of positive and negative feelings surrounding the transmission of watches from fathers to their sons.

While study 2 underlines the ambivalence of affective representations in transmissions, study 3 shows that, for sons, transmissions of luxury watches owned by their fathers are suffused with negative reactions.

5. Study 3 – The reformulation stage. Receiving luxury objects : the sons' ambivalent reactions

5.1 *Methodology*

5.1.1 Components of the corpus under study

The corpus under scrutiny in this third study consists of an integral verbatim transcription of the fifteen semi-guided interviews with the sons in April 2014. As a reminder, the sons sample includes 15 individuals aged 22 to 34 and mature enough to understand the value and importance of the transmission effected by the father. They were recruited by word of mouth and a call for participation *via* Facebook posted to two fan clubs, the "Oyster Passion Club" for Rolex, and the "Patek Philippe Vintage Owners Club." The same guidelines as in study 1 were used and covered the same four subjects: (1) watch history in family; (2) its context of use; (3) the circumstances of transmission; (4) psychological feedback induced by transmission.

5.1.2 Analysis of respondents' discourse

Study 3 focuses on the positive and negative consequences induced by receiving father-owned luxury objects. To identify the benefits and fears emerging in receivers' feelings, an iterative content analysis was carried out manually and in two stages. The first analytical study of all the interviews of the sons identified the most relevant themes, whether they were derived from the guide or spontaneously mentioned by respondents. The encoding of the themes was jointly performed by the three researchers. The second analytical study was carried out independently by the three researchers and examined the different types of obligations that the gift generates in the sons and the comparison process in which it develops *a posteriori*. Finally, the results were compared and a few diverging cases were discussed until consensus was reached.

5.2 *Results*

5.2.1. From the emergence of obligations to the comparison process

This section addresses the consequences of receiving a luxury watch that belonged to the father. Analysis of the interviews highlights the ambivalence of son's feelings. The affective benefits, psychological and identity remains tempered by a set of related obligations.

- *Affective benefits and obligations*

The qualitative analysis of interviews highlights three main benefits and obligations among debtor sons. The first one is affective in character: receiving the watch strengthens the attachment link between father and son and cements therefore their relationship. However, this reception is not free from affective fears for the son. The son therefore has to share the patriarch's passion for the watch. It is, in particular, what comes out of Olivier's comments (27 years old, Gérard's son):

AFFECTIVE DOMAIN

Benefit	Obligation
« When he passed it on to me, it was a strongly emotional moment. He cherished it. It took him a lot of time and money to get it. He was very fond of it ».	*« I have to live up to not disappoint my father but I am not sure I will be able to keep his passion alive ».*

- *Psychological benefits and obligations*

For many sons, receiving a luxury object is a sign of paternal recognition. Here again, the "guardian" role of the heirs is identified; they are the new possessors of inalienable wealth as defined by Folkman-Curasi *et alii* (2004). However, the negative side of this "free" reception is the perception that the sons lack in merit. Therefore, the third obligation is psychological and expresses the challenge to have what it takes. This may notably be observed in the story of Guillaume (27, Gilles's son):

PSYCHOLOGICAL DOMAIN

Benefits	Obligations
"*I am proud because it's not a mere luxury watch, it is my father's. He was fond of it and he wanted me to have it. I am proud because he thinks I am worth receiving it".*	*"But as a son who has not done anything with his life, I feel pressure on my shoulders. This is heavy. He worked hard to buy it, I didn't. I am worried I won't have what it takes.*"

- *Identity benefits and obligations*

The luxury watch acts as a hindsight landmark in the present. It is a memorial, and through it identity connections with the different stages of the father's life can be established. . Nevertheless, although it is valued because it satisfies the need for roots, it is associated with a predetermined destiny, a carbon copy of that of the father. It is therefore associated with fear of time passing and inevitably with the anguish of the father's death. It creates a third obligation related to identity building and is linked to the fact of **living the father's life by proxy**. This may be observed in the discourse of Alexandre (23), André's son:

IDENTITY DOMAIN

Benefits	Obligations
"It is his experience that gives it its symbolic value. I will bequeath to my son and will tell him that it belonged to his grandfather".	*"This watch has recorded the film of my father's life. I am not living my own life but my father's".*

Thus, giving luxury objects expresses the assertion of paternal power and it creates among the receiving sons a series of benefits and obligations which seems limitless. The result is that sons embark on a logic of comparison, or even of competition with the fathers. Beyond the challenge "to have what it takes," to be "worthy" and "meritorious," sons have to "achieve professional success," to be "socially recognized," or even to surpass their ascendants. This entails comparison with the fathers on the one hand, but sensitiveness to other people's judgment on the other. Indeed, it is clear that the ostentatious dimension of the object implies moving beyond mere family relationships over to the social image of the self.

5.2.2. Sensitiveness to social judgment

While receiving a luxury watch causes father-linked negative emotions among sons, it also generates fears related to other people's judgment, and so to a socially-degraded image of the self. For example, Cyril (34, Patrick's son) observes that he has sometimes been **regarded as a parvenu**: "*People have said: 'this is a parvenu's watch', typical of an upstart who wants to show off his little success*." Similarly, Mathieu (32, Marc' son) recalls that wearing that sort of watch triggers **prejudice**: *"I am worried about attracting prejudice; he's got such a watch; so it means that..."* Finally, Benoît (31, Marc-Antoine's son) touches on **suspicions of counterfeiting** and changes in individual attitudes when the watch is recognized as genuine: "*People always ask 'it is genuine?' When I say yes, their attitudes change!*"

6. Discussion

This paper, based on three qualitative studies among fathers and sons, shows that gift giving involves very complex and ambivalent feelings in both parties, the giver and the recipient. Table 2 below synthesizes the main results stemming from these three qualitative approaches. The first study focuses on fathers' sentiments toward acquiring and owning a luxury watch. The watch can be seen either as an everyday object accompanying its owner daily or as a traditional one worn in specific, important and symbolical events. In the first case, the watch is a luxury object which is incorporated in everyday life and is part of the self. In the second case, the watch is worn to reinforce self-confidence at specific important occasions. The watch can also be seen as an object symbolizing a rite of passage and helping memorizing it; or as a watch that is owned only when a certain social progress has been achieved.

Table 2: The Three Studies' Main Results

STUDY 1. "GESTATION STAGE": SIGNIFICANCE OF LUXURY WATCHES FOR FATHERS			
COMPANION WATCH Benefit: everyday intimate object, attachment	**TRADITION WATCH** Benefit: quest of landmarks	**LEGACY WATCH** Benefit: Extension of the self	**ACCOMPLISHMENT WATCH** Benefit: social position
⇨ Object of family transmission, inalienable status			
STUDY 2. "PRESTATION STAGE": AFFECTIVE REPRÉSENTATIONS OF TRANSMISSION			
FATHERS		**SONS**	
+ Generativity Filiation Education Vision of manhood Power	– Son's resistance Disappearane Contempt	+ Familiy patrimony Fetish object Guru Duty of remembrance	– Family finitude
STUDY 3. "REFORMULATION STAGE" : CONSEQUENCES OF RECEIVING THE LUXURY OBJECT FOR SONS			
BENEFITS	**OBLIGATIONS**	**COMPARISON LOGIC**	**OTHER PEOPLE'S JUDGMENT**
Affective: strengthens the attachment link father/son Psychological: paternal recognition Identity building: need for roots	Affective: sharing father's passion Psychological: having what it takes Identity building: living one's life by proxy	Must I share same passion? Do I have what it takes? Must I live the same life as my father's?	Degraded social image of self? - Parvenu image - Prejudicies - Suspicions of counterfeited watch

In the first case, the watch involves a significant change of status in society when an individual leaves one group to enter another (from childhood to adulthood, for example). The object is part of the individuation-separation process (Erikson, 1950); it helps the individual separate from one group. In the second case, the watch embodies a symbol of achievement linked to social success when an individual can finally integrate a desired group. The object is part of the assimilation process; it helps the individual integrate a group.

The four quadrants identified in study 1 (companion watch, legacy watch, tradition watch and accomplishment watch) relate to the assimilation and contrast effects studied by Sherif & Hovland (1961). The watch can facilitate an assimilation effect when the individual establishes a congruent relationship between two stages that are perceived to be contradictory: from poor to socially successful (the accomplishment watch), or from life before owning a luxury watch to life after owning one (the companion watch). Conversely, the watch can build a contrast effect, helping to underline the differences between two contradictory stages: from childhood to adulthood (the legacy watch), or from everyday life to exceptional traditional moments (the tradition watch).

As a consequence, the watch can be an object that an individual wears for different motivations: (1) to assert his freedom: I am free to wear a luxury product every day (the companion watch); (2) to show he has acquired the permission to be assimilated into a group: I have the permission to wear a luxury watch because I belong in a group of successful people (the accomplishment watch); (3) as a prescription against the challenges of life: I wear my luxury watch to feel protected, to bring myself luck, confidence and success in the difficult moments of my life (the tradition watch); (4) to show that an interdiction has been overcome: I am no longer a child, I belong in the adult group (the legacy watch).

Study 2 focuses on fathers’ and sons’ feelings regarding their perception of the watch transmission process. These feelings are mixed and ambivalent. On the fathers’ side, five clusters out of eight are linked to positive feelings: power, masculinity, filiation, generativity and education, as opposed to contempt, death and resistance. Giving your watch to your son is therefore an ambiguous act generating confused feelings. On the sons’ side, things are more positive. Four out of five clusters are linked to positive feelings: family patrimony, duty of remembrance, guru ("maître à penser") and fetishism, as opposed to family finitude. Because this study focuses more specifically on transmission, the finitude issue appears as shared by fathers and sons. Fathers may also have negative feelings if they think that their sons do not really deserve or accept the gift. These results are to be linked to the difficulty of the individuation-separation process (Erikson, 1950): for the sons, the transition to adulthood is as difficult as the transition to old age for adults.

Study 3 focuses on sons' feelings on their receiving their fathers' luxury watches. They feel they have a social debt toward the donors and feel bonded through the overlapping extended selves of father and son. As a consequence, they may feel cognitive dissonance as they need to compromise between feelings and expediency. The results of this final study show that social pressure is playing a role in the recipients' feelings. They need to assimilate the gift as one that is accepted by their peers if they are to accept it fully without any hard feelings. On the contrary, if they consider the gift as an object enlarging the gap between themselves and their peers, they may reject it.

These three studies show how a luxury object's possession and transmission generate mixed feelings through the process. Study 1 focuses to the "gestation stage", which is the "behavior antecedent to the gift exchange" (Sherry, 1983). Results show that when asking fathers to remember how they acquired their watch and how they use it, they have rather positive feelings. Study 2 analyses the "prestation stage" (Sherry, 1983), which relates to "the specific components of the exchange process. Both giver and recipient are attentive to the time, place, and mode of transaction: ritual or ceremonial ambience." Results show that some negative feelings appear, especially among fathers. They oscillate between feelings of "self-aggrandizement" (giving the watch to my son enhances my importance, power, or reputation), and feelings of "self-effacement" (giving the watch demands that I keep myself in the background, as in humility). They feel contempt, death/finitude and resistance linked to fears of value or lifestyle incompatibility between fathers and sons. Finally, study 3 focuses on the "reformulation stage", when "attention is focused on the disposition of the gift, which is subject to consumption, display or storage. It may also be exchanged or rejected" (Sherry, 1983). Results show that receiving a luxury watch from one's father generates anxious ambivalent feelings related to new obligations, comparison to the father's image and social pressure.

6.1 Managerial implications

These results open interesting prospects for managers in charge of luxury brands. A major concern for the luxury industry is the danger linked to aging consumers. It is challenging for luxury brands to attract younger customers while being still appreciated by older ones. The father-son relationship may help clarify decision-making on the issue and leads to interesting managerial recommendations. Luxury managers could design their communication campaigns to enhance the gift-giving process at stake for luxury watches.

Campaigns could target different stages ("gestation", "prestation", "reformulation") and choose communication axes that do not induce negative feelings.

In the course of the "gestation stage", several benefits might be shown in the campaign: freedom, accomplishment, self-extension or protection. None of these axes infer negative feelings. Three luxury watch brands focus on the "gestation stage": Rolex, Omega and Baume & Mercier. Rolex communication campaigns trigger the accomplishment need, showing celebrities wearing the watch (Tom Kristensen, Roger Federer, for example) (see Figure 4). This refers to the accomplishment watch identified in study 1. Omega focuses on the freedom to use a luxury watch every day, showing the watch worn in different situations (work, leisure, sports activities, etc.). The brand product placement strategy using James Bond films also demonstrates the ability to wear the watch in every type of situation (from romance to work or war). This is the companion watch identified in study 1. Finally Baume & Mercier advertisement shows exceptional moments when the watch is offered (Christmas, anniversaries, etc.), with the baseline: "Life is about moments". This refers to the tradition watch identified in study 1.

Brands focusing their communication campaigns on the "prestation stage" should be careful not to build negative feelings such as resistance, contempt or family finitude. Patek Philippe brand advertisements focus on this stage with the baseline: "You never actually own a Patek Philippe, you merely look after it for the next generation." This baseline has not been changed for years. It is actually an interesting one focusing on legacy, "the next generation" deleting any bad feelings linked to finitude.

No luxury brand focuses on the "reformulation stage" in advertising campaigns. This could open new communication axes that would probably attract a younger target. One of the main difficulties faced by the luxury industry is their aging consumers and it is vital for luxury brands to attract younger consumers to ensure their future. Therefore using the "reformulation" stage offers a double interest. On the one hand it is a communication axe that is not used by brands and that would enable luxury brands to be seen as pioneer and innovative. On the other hand, it is a way to attract young consumers and to create brand familiarity. Sons feel safe visiting their fathers' favorite watch shop accompanied by their fathers, in order to make the watch theirs by adding something new to it (new wrist band, new engraving etc.). So focusing on the third stage "reformulation" is a way for luxury brands to create very soon brand familiarity occasions. The third stage still targets fathers (the buyers) but must take into account possible negative reactions of the son. Therefore, advertising messages should help the separation process lived by the father while making the son's appropriation process easier, by focusing on the multiple possibilities of the watch personalization. The logic would then be that the receiver would be more appreciative of the gift, would become more familiar to the brand which could lead to higher brand attachment. As a consequence, sons could become future client.

Brands are aware of the social pressure linked to the fact of receiving a luxury watch, and they could help sons accept the watch through a process of appropriation. For instance, this could lead to going back to the shop to personalize the watch with a new bracelet or with an engraving on the watch case. Such ads, because they do not exist yet, would be very original and might be effective ways to attract younger customers.

6.2 Limitations and further research

As is the case in all research, the present study has its limitations. The first one concerns the sample which was purposefully restricted to men in a French context. These results should be replicated on other types of respondents and in other cultural settings to enhance generalizability. The second one deals with the selection of only one product category; further research should investigate the transmission of other product categories. The third one is the unique focus on the early stage of life. Since people's motivations can change over time (life stage of Erikson, 1950), one can imagine that the perception of the receiver might be changing as well. One could wonder if in a later phase, the son having probably accomplished different things in his life could cherish the gift that seemed at first a burden.

A number of avenues for future research seem promising. First, it would be interesting to extend this analysis to other dyads such as mother-daughter, father-daughter or mother-son to see whether they hold gender bias. Research could also investigate other family ties and legacy between father-in-law or mother-in-law and son or daughter, etc. Extensions to other luxury products could also be interesting. Then, investigating from the fathers' point of view the perceived benefits of their son receiving their luxury watch would help portray a better picture of the gift giving process regarding communal generativity. Finally, the role of the gift-giving setting has not been investigated. Further research could focus on public *vs*. private settings to examine what kind of impact settings have on the feelings generated. Such avenues of research could help better understand the issues at stake in the gift-giving process and help luxury brands investigate new ways of attracting younger targets while still appealing to older generations.

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Figure 4: Semiotic square temporal relationships and brand communication

CONTINUITY

"Companion watch"
Associated with everyday life

DISCONTINUITY

"Legacy watch"
Associated with rite of passage

NON- DISCONTINUITY

"Tradition watch"
Associated with uses

NON- CONTINUITY

"Accomplishment watch"
Associated with success