Using technologies. The success of the Bitten Apple in Italy

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ABSTRACT

Since the eighties of the last century onwards, introducing electronic technologies changed working conditions, study, and forms of communication and relationships. In this essay, I intend to talk about the success of Apple products in Italy by referring to the social phenomena related to the use of technologies: their role in daily life, the reasons for a consumer model that has rewarded the intuitive, direct, and friendly approach to the devices. The character of the design with refined shapes, colors, and materials played a powerful role in this model of consumption.

KEYWORDS

Apple, technological innovation, ICT, consumption, social distinction

BIO

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Introduction

The essay aims to highlight the reasons responsible for the success of Apple's products in Italy[1]. In Italy, the Apple logo shows, as an Italian entrepreneur claims in an interview, well-made, innovative, and creative products, valuable and efficient from an aesthetic and technic point of view. His words are significant: "I appreciate Lego and Apple a lot. Companies need to experiment more and show that they can sell an experience and a product" (Bennewitz 2019: 21). This qualified opinion refers to how Made in Italy should continue to be. Perhaps today, unlike Steve Jobs' age, Apple and the other massive consumer technology companies no longer produce technological objects that add something new into daily life, leisure, and work, as several observers have argued[2]. In this essay, the use of technologies concerns how various tools of electronic and digital communication become part of ordinary life in various areas: family, friends, and work. They are part of the contemporary material culture objects. The methods of acceptance and use refer to those forms of consumption that reveal processes of social distinction and identity so frequent in industrial society (see Silverstone and Hirsch 1992). These consumptions represent forms of distinction (cf. Bourdieu 1979), so they can communicate a social belonging (see Douglas and Isherwood 1979; Featherstone 1990).

Compared to the previous era, the technologies consumption landscape has become richer and characterized by an offer of objects that are all valuable and performing, as they say. Even in such a varied market, Apple still achieves considerable market shares. However, some specialized sites in recent years report a fallback position of the Apple computers in the market and, the strong competition from Samsung smartphones. Compared to its origins, Apple no longer deals only with computers, but also provides services as a distributor of cultural content and software. According to recent evaluations, the iPhone (56%) is its primary product, followed by the iMac line of computers for only 10% and, for tablets, by the iPads for 9%[3]. In 2018, iMac computers had only 7.3% of the global market, against the largest share owned by brands such as Lenovo, HP, Dell, Acer, Asus, and others with Windows operating system[4]. It had already converted into a company that also sells cultural contents, thus expecting the process of cultural digitalization (music, films, magazines, etc.).[5] Already in Jobs' era, Apple had become a company not only of computers with their operating system but also of other objects. In contrast to what the rhetorical discourse of business communication has been advocating for years, the American federal state has played an influential role in supporting technological innovation, since it has funded basic and applied research in the military and aerospace industry. Apple has over time taken over companies specialized in some technologies along with their patents. For this reason, the economist Mariana Mazzucato argued that there is "The State behind the iPhone" (Mazzucato 2014: 87). Apple has invested in its own online television production business, such as Netflix and Amazon. And long before it had launched the Apple TV device to be connected to televisions to enjoy digital films, TV series, music, etc.

This essay, therefore, wants to interpret the uses and consumption of Apple technologies. If with reason, Thomas Eriksen (2010: vii) has argued that anthropology explores large issues in small places, I will analyze users belonging to the education system and university in the cities of Cagliari and Sassari (Sardinia, Italy). The first is my city of origin, the second is the city where there is the University I work at. It represents my everyday routine where I interact with other teachers and researchers, students, public administrators, freelancers.

I intend to explore the large capitalist enterprise, now delocalized, consumptions in a micro-scale situation to understand the dynamics of large-scale capitalism[6]. In short, I will try to understand how a

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[1] This essay is part of the research activities of the University of Sassari Research Fund 2020.

[2] For example: Riccardo Luna, *Perché la Apple e diventata noiosa*, in www.repubblica.it/dossier/stazione-futuroriccardo-luna, 10 September 2019 (last accessed 9 June 2020); *The Economist* on a cover of 2013 asked *Will we ever invent anything useful again?* (January 12th 2013).

[3] https://tech.everyeye.it/notizie/apple-calano-vendite-mac-crescita-mercato-pc-421653.html (last accessed 10 June 2020); https://www.digitalic.it/economia-digitale/business/vendite-pc-2018 (last accessed 10 June 2020).

[4] https://mac.iphoneitalia.com/110060/programma-permuta-apple-mac (last accessed 10 June 2020).

[5] For a historical-social overview, see Balbi and Magaudda (2014).

[6] I have collected the suggestions in Miller (1997) when he speaks of "Local-Global" and "Global-Local Companies". In this case we will have a global company with multiple national and local markets. I would dare to say that at the beginning the advertising message was formulated to reach possible Italian buyers; today, from the organization of exhibition spaces to media campaigns, it seems that the message is increasingly interested in "global" and not national or "local" codes and references.

company that has already a wide range of action from its origins can have such a significant impact on consumption on a national and local scale[7].

Aesthetics and function

"Design is not just what it looks like and feels like. Design is how it works"[8]. This direct sentence summarizes Steve Jobs' thought about the aesthetics and usability of Apple techno-objects. In this essay, I intend to show how this principle has become a consumption practice that has embodied the appeal of these products among global customers.

After the event that would have launched the first iPad model in one of the Sardinian stores, young adults and people aged 40-50 await their turn to see and touch the new product up close. According to a scene that I would have seen several other times, the various movements test the ergonomic characteristics of the tablet, a new item. The first experiment concerns the act of zooming in and out photos and maps through the joint movement of the thumb and forefinger; then testing the sensitivity of the retractable virtual keyboard and test the weight and ease of grip. The company is aware of the wonder effect that these gestures produce; in fact, regarding the launch of the new operating system for iOS7 mobile devices, they say: "It's amazing how far you can get with the tip of a finger"[9]. In the corner dedicated to the Bitten Apple inside a large electronics warehouse near Cagliari we witness the same astonishing effect.

Apple storytelling

In corporate storytelling, tactile and sensory elements appear central and it does not consider design a secondary element. It is not a question of simple aesthetic taste; it is a choice of efficiency that seeks to respond to the practical needs of users: "Much of Apple's appeal lies in its belief that design is not something added to the end […]. Design is everything: it's not just how a product appears, but also the way it works and how it makes the user feel" (Mac Magazine, March 2015, p. 38). It is interesting to note Roland Barthes' observations regarding the allure of the Citroën DS car, not for nothing nicknamed the "Déesse". The potential customers or enthusiasts in the showrooms used to examine this car, defined as "a great vintage creation" and "a superlative object", with the touch: "you examine the joint of the glass, you run your hand through the large rubber grooves that connect the rear window to its nickel finish" (Barthes 1957).

Looking at the first Apple advertising posters in Italy, we can get an idea of the meanings that the company attributed to its products. First, they were original and innovative objects. The user's relationship with the device had to be easy, immediate, intuitive, and capable of guaranteeing work efficiency. Another innovative aspect was the possibility offered by these computers to continue working at home. These meanings are part of the spread of personal computers. Computers suitable for everyone and in every home would have led to the democratization of knowledge and technology (see Isaacson 2014).

In the seventies and eighties advertising campaigns a new narrative arrives, *storytelling*, as we would say today[10], in which the approach to the personal computer becomes very 'practical', direct, and intuitive to learn. Because of the shapes, materials, and colors, this approach led to a sensorial and

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[7] I dealt with the success of Apple technologies in two stages: one around 2014-2015 and then, more recently, in 2018-2019. Research has in various ways required methodological adaptation and flexibility, as Boellstorff (2012: 53-54) argues with regard to the study of social processes produced by digital technologies. This flexibility does not only concern the approach, but also the sources used (Olivier de Sardan, 2014: 71-72). First of all, I did not limit myself to collecting discursive interviews, but in several cases I have had conversations in the course of daily social interaction; conversations which I later transcribed as research notes. During the launching of new products, I visited the sales points to see "live" how people decide what to buy. In these cases too, I have transcribed my observations as research notes. Since I have been a user of computers and other technological objects for over thirty years, especially the Bitten Apple, I cannot say that passions, "obsessions" and uses of technologies are a foreign world to me. During the collection of documentary materials I was interested in advertising materials, journalistic materials and specialized websites.

[8] This statement, which later became very famous, results in an interview with *New York Times* 2003, cf. Walker 2003.

[9] http://www.apple.com/it/ios/ios7/features (last accessed 20 June 2013).

[10] Coming from marketing, storytelling as a tool of persuasion has come to politics in more recent times. The art of telling a story to support the identity of a product and a brand is now part of very skillful use of storytelling also in contemporary politics, as can be seen in Salmon (2007) and Castells (2013).

emotional relationship with the device. A few years ago, some studies of the anthropology of advertising noted that producers must open up a space for action in a market with a plurality of similar goods. The aesthetic line and the corporate narrative create meanings that must make the identity of a brand recognizable (see Malefyt and Morais 2012: 60, 66-67, 99-100). For example, in some advertising posters dating back to the launch of the Apple II in Italy, one of the first and most famous models, the text reads:

> It all started less than three years ago. Yet there are already thousands in Italy who love the Apple […]. The apple solves the problems. All of them.
> Now, if you want to taste one, come to one of the over 200 Iret dealers. They are heaven on earth for those who love apples.
>
> With its simplicity and versatility, Apple speaks a universal language. Not for nothing, in the world, there are over 700,000 owners of an Apple personal computer.
> Apple computers do their utmost to satisfy your whims […]. Thus the new Apple, which you can find in over three hundred demonstration and sales centers in Italy, not only offers more RAM and greater ease of use, but also an Italian keyboard.
> The new Apple speaks and writes in your language: at work, you will have a partner who understands your problems better and solves them sooner; a sociable companion with an all-Italian fantasy in your study and free time[11].

After about forty years, the company no longer needs to show how innovative, intuitive, and efficient its products are. But even today the advertising message continues to emphasize the practical and versatile nature of the technological objects of the Bitten Apple at work, in daily life, in sports and the outdoors, in photography and video shooting[12]. The company storytelling refers to the artisanal and, technological quality of these products, emphasizing that, although they are objects made in China, they are still the result of Californian creativity:

> It is this / What matters is this. / How do you experience a product? / How do you feel with it […]. We are engineers and artists. / Artisans and inventors. / And we sign our work. / You may not notice this. / But you will always feel it. / This is our signature. / And it means everything. Designed by Apple in California[13].

Friendly devices

The distinction between the place of manufacture and the place of design appears as a characteristic of the goods of the major global brands which delocalize their production (see Redini 2008). In particular, products such as the iPhone result from an assembly carried out in Chinese factories based on components from various other manufacturers but built around a design that has its bases in Cupertino, California (Xing and Detert 2010).

Following the studies in the anthropology of design, we could say that there is a relevant theoretical core: how they create the context of use and meaning, how the sensorial and bodily relationship with technological objects develops (see Otto and Smith 2013). These aspects take shape in conversations and interviews during working and daily life, as Mario, a university professor of physics, says about notebooks: "The design had a crucial role. All devices are beautiful; you are pleased to have a beautiful object (…). The design matters, but it matters above all because the design also means robustness. (…). They make their devices of aluminum". Other people have also pointed out how people can see these computers as elements of furniture at home, because of the materials and design.

In the first half of the eighties, Alberto was one of the first people I know to buy a Macintosh. Later, he opted for Windows-based computers for his researches. In the interview, he recalls how important it was to the market an object with such strong and innovative aesthetic characteristics compared to the more conventional ones of most of the first PCs.

> The design has been a crucial point when Steve Jobs returned and Apple invented the colored iMac.

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[11] This advertising campaign dates back to the early 1980s.
[12] TV commercials are all visible on YouTube.
[13] Advertisement that appeared in *la Repubblica*, 11 July 2013, p. 28-29.

> This represented the resurgence of Apple; because he, who had a sharp sixth sense, realized that the computer had become an important piece of furniture in every home […]. Once the Internet spread, people started using computers more […]; as long as the computers remained the old ones, there was no reason to buy a new one. Nobody bought them, so the market was waning a bit, it was shrinking. The iMac was an ingenious invention; as soon as I saw it I said wow! I have to buy it back; in fact, I had already switched to Windows […] but I liked it, so I bought [laughs]. However, there was this revolutionary design, which, I repeat there has always been, because I remember it when the Apple II came out. This gadget struck many and me...it was cute! One thing already differentiated it: it was white. All the others were dark, dark gray, this was white!

Even the iPhone, later technological device, combines aesthetics and efficiency. Also in this case, we cannot separate aesthetics from functionality, as emerges in this conversation with a couple between fifty and sixty years old. He is a freelancer and she is a teacher, who have long been exclusive users of Apple computers:

> So far design has always been an element that distinguishes Apple products from others, even though you don't show your iMac around. But this is because when you like something you want to use it.
>
> When you have an iPhone…the fact that some early versions had rounded edges made them even more comfortable to hold. A friend of ours has model 3, which is not so flat; and she didn't change it for this reason, because she prefers rounded-edges enjoyable to the touch. I don't know why they changed the round edges… […] these are things Jobs was very careful about.

Apple users consider the iPhone multifunctional, although the price, from a certain point of view and for a certain period, has placed this object among the luxury and superfluous goods. Another teacher argues with irony:

> With the iPhone, you can do a lot of things, including making phone calls. It is simple and intuitive to use. It has many applications for various uses. When I travel, I load a film to watch on the plane, setting the airplane function. I can also take pictures; the camera is nothing special but as it is a mobile phone it's fine. Then I jot all the appointments down. The battery has a good life. With the fact that a new mobile comes out every year, you adapt. It costs a lot. Some people spend money on a new watch or a jewel. Me for the iPhone. What's wrong?

In the days of the iPhone 6 launch, I went to visit some large distribution centers near Cagliari. Again, several people took some iPhone samples, one on the left hand, the other on the right, as if to test their ergonomics, weight, thickness, etc. Another recurring gesture was to see if the thumb in its opposable position covered the surface of the touchscreen along the vertical and horizontal lines of the display. The design responds to questions of efficiency rather than aesthetics, as some young users seemed to argue regarding the iPhone 5, the latest model at the time of the interview. A student said:

> The design in Apple products is very important, even to the touch, when you touch the surface of computers or other products. The iPhone 3GS is unbeatable in terms of design, it is much more elegant than the most recent models.

Regarding these implications, a computer scientist from a specialized shop in Cagliari told me: "To put it in a nutshell, an Apple computer is components plus design". According to this computer scientist, what differentiates the products of the Bitten Apple is the care for the design, since they supply the components by the same manufacturers who then proceed with the assembly (Xing and Detert 2010).

As is common knowledge, however, the aesthetics in Apple products have not only involved the hardware but also the software. During an interview, the person, who at the time was a junior researcher, recalls: "We were all fascinated by the graphic interface, the icons, and because to delete a file it was enough to drag it to the garbage can". In the eighties, the graphic interface already was one of the salient aspects intended to produce astonishment also because in a sector dominated by MS-DOS, it existed only in Macintosh computers.

Thus, it could happen that being users of one or the other system almost characterized a person's socio-cultural identity. Sherry Turkle claims that on the one hand there were users who wanted a

computer with a playful and direct approach; there were users who preferred MS-DOS because they were interested in the internal functioning of the operating system and the PC (Turkle 1997). In some respects, this polarization continues even today, despite the spread of the graphic interface in all techno-objects. According to one of the first Macintosh enthusiasts at the University of Cagliari, in the early eighties, these computers had already spread to the university, while remaining a niche:

> I don't know how many users were but there were only a hundred people, maybe fifty. There was only one shop in town.
> [...] When I used it for the first time, MacPaint stunned me. It was a kind of revelation, how could I call it, a miracle because as soon as you used it you saw the eraser that erased, the pen that wrote; I said to myself: this is how a computer should be, is it possible that no one has thought of it before? [...]. In those days it was another world, another planet [...].

In these considerations, it often comes into play the fact that you can work and use a computer for a long time without having to worry about how to maintain its system functionality since Apple users consider Apple computers more reliable than PCs with MS-DOS and Windows. Over time, the use of a system deemed more dependable and "friendly" becomes a habit and the preference becomes exclusive. The company's corporate philosophy has always considered the 'closed' hardware and software system a positive aspect. It aims at offering a guarantee of quality to customers given the greater stability in the software functionality (see Isaacson 2011). Specialized sites and newspapers discussed the usual mania of the Bitten Apple for its products total control. The manufacturer, however, considers its guarantee of reliability, the true and main aspect of the relationship with customers (see Dini 2008: 141). According to the specialized press, the move to the Mac could also represent a 'style choice' far from Windows users[14].

iPad, an object of multiform uses

When Apple launched the iPad on the Italian market in January 2010 the comments were very similar. Several readers said they disapproved of this recent case of consumerism in a phase of economic crisis. Exaggerated consumerism appeared to be the prime suspect due to the night vigils that also took place in various Italian cities to have the new technological object first.

> It's a very well-advertised luxury item that will make people spend a lot of money for nothing. Well done!

> I've been using Apple for 20 years, and I'm attracted to iPad. All Apple items are easy to access and use; however, everything is closed to what is not Apple and... I can't accept it! [...] for now, I choose the competitor, and I keep the netbook, [...] it is more versatile and - less cult object, and still nice; and then it makes me feel less disciplined, and nowadays is no small thing [...].

> Dunno... I don't understand all these absurd comments. Soon for work, I will have to travel a lot, at least 3-4 hours almost every day. I travel by public transport, metro, and train, and an iPad is very convenient for me [...][15].

Later, some research confirmed that the use of the iPad had merged regarding mobility. In 2011, the object was among the most desired as a possible Christmas gift; everybody saw it as complementary to the computer[16].

In this return to the direct use of the hand on the technical device, I see some implications of two original authors' thoughts, André Leroi-Gourhan and Marshall McLuhan. The tool extends the hand and the tool is almost 'oozing' from the hand itself; it incorporates the tools into the gestures and techniques of the body (cf. Leroi-Gourhan 1965; Parlebas 1999: 37). Marshall McLuhan states that

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[14] Switch to Mac, a choice of style, *Mac Magazine Speciale*, 2009, n . 1, p. 2-3.

[15] The comments concern an article on www.repubblica.it, *Il D-day dell'iPad è arrivato*, by Vittorio Zucconi, 28 May 2010 (last accessed 30 May 2010).

[16] Research on 2011 data published on the site www.nielsen.com/it (last accessed 30 December 2012); see also Bianchi, Longo, 2010; Longo, 2011.

media extend the body and the senses (cf. McLuhan 1964). Amid human evolution, the relationship between the capabilities of the hand and technology has developed in specific ways. The gesture of the hand in direct motility, "la main en motricité directe" (Leroi-Gourhan 1965: 41), does without the use of the mouse reproducing a very natural gesture with the direct action of the index finger on the touchscreen or the combined action of the index finger and thumb to enlarge or reduce the image on the screen. From this point of view, technological innovation would not have produced a demanualized technicality ("une technicité démanualisée") imagined by Leroi-Gourhan (1965: 62) as the destiny of the industrial world. Instead, we can think the touchscreen in smartphones and tablets has brought the use of the hand back into play in new technologies. For the models of the last few years, it is possible to draw and use the tablet with a pen as if it were a notebook and to 'imitate' the nuances in the pen's pressure on the touchscreen. Everybody knows Steve Jobs' interest in the aesthetic aspects of writing, as we also know it he did not have a particular passion for handhelds, as evidenced by the fate of the Newton model in the 1990s, which the company took out of production. But, as soon as technological innovation has created the basis for a more functional product, technicians have designed objects capable of intercepting social uses (See Isaacson 2011; Mazzucato 2013; see D'Alessandro 2013) [17].

The advertising campaign already from the first model showed the iPad as a multipurpose object: reading, writing, preparing presentations, watching videos, listening to music, connecting to the Internet; sitting at a desk or holding the tablet on your lap, but also lying down or relaxed in a train seat or at home. Instead, outdoor use in sunlight was difficult because of the reflections on the display.

After the purchase of the first iPad model, I used to show it to colleagues at the department or in the garden, sitting on a bench to check emails. A colleague close to retirement made me understand the effectiveness of the 'wow effect', the surprise effect that these technologies produced at the beginning (see Gatti 2010). He told me he would never forget what he felt when touching the touchscreen for the first time and trying the gestures of enlarging and shrinking the image and leafing through the pages of a book in digital format. The possibility to touch the screen with your fingers appeared to be the most fascinating aspect. The Italian newspaper *la Repubblica*, after the initial day of sales in the United States, reported: "A perfect screen. You write with your fingers. Now the iPad is a reality" (Rampini 2010: 17). I do not exclude that imitative dynamics follow the process of diffusion of ideas and therefore also of technological and cultural innovations like a process of 'contagion' (see Sperber 1996). I thought it appropriate to rediscover Dan Sperber's "contagion of ideas" theme in the words of a colleague who, showing me her iPad Mini, said: "See? You infected me…when I saw you with your iPad mini I thought I wanted one too… it's a drug…".

The company's narrative has always emphasized how the design of these technological objects had to respond to the criteria of essentiality, simplicity, and intuitiveness, as in an aesthetic "lightness". Features already present in the design of the early years (see Esslinger 2014). The well-known English designer Jonathan Ive, put into practice the principles of a design that had to combine aesthetics, knowledge of materials, and functionality of products (see Isaacson 2011). It is appropriate to say that the "aesthetic" comes "from meeting functionality with form" (Dorfles 2001: 15). And, as Molotch claimed, in technical objects, aesthetics and handling come together to become one (see Molotch 2005). In anthropological research, this issue is very familiar. Here, the communication techno-objects show functional and symbolic aesthetics as inseparable and complementary dimensions of the artifacts of several material cultures (see Leroi-Gourhan 1965; Cirese 1998: 15-16).

In 2010 I found a statement by the Italian writer Alessandro Baricco interesting when he defined "the world of Apple and touch technology childish" (Baricco 2010: 1). In a short time, after the spread of the iPad, other similar products made their entry into the panorama of technological consumption. In the 1980s it was not uncommon to meet someone who called the Apple GUI a thing for children. Since the touchscreen has spread, even at two or three, children learn intuitively and by imitation how to launch applications, scroll and zoom in or out on the photos on the screen, etc.

These technologies play a fundamental role in supporting life on the move not only for their portability, but also introducing wireless networks for data traffic, and for the 'traditional' voice traffic. Some scholars have also noticed that smartphones and tablets allow you to always have your 'emotional world' with you: family photos and videos, music, etc. Elliott and Urry have defined these technologies

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[17] The Newton Message Pad, a handheld, was marketed by Apple in 1993 (sold in various models until 1998). It allowed handwriting recognition and speech recognition, but was not very successful for various reasons. It has been called "the father of the iPhone and iPad" (in Ecco il device dal quale ha preso le mosse il progetto iPhone, in *Le mie apps*, n. 2, 2010, p. 12).

as 'miniaturized mobility', which have now become central to the mobile life of men and women (Elliott and Urry 2010). As for the use of the iPhone, but by extension we should apply it to all similar devices, Sherry Turkle highlighted that for many people it represents an "existential archive" (Turkle 2017). These are a series of technical possibilities inherent in technological developments in the sector and that were already present in the early days of wireless technology for both conventional telephone and messaging use. It is necessary to remember the powerful role of the diffusion of cell phones for family micro-coordination functions (see Castells, Fernàndez-Ardèvol, Qiu and Sey, 2009). As for the iPad, uses on the move accompany uses, let's say, relaxed in an armchair, on the sofa or in bed to read, watch videos on YouTube, read books and magazines. E-book readers are, from this point of view, much more comfortable for reading; but several people said they also adapted to reading lying down with a tablet, a reading practice that is easier with a book which, not for nothing, Umberto Eco defined as a perfect object. A decade ago Gino Roncaglia faced this problem. Roncaglia believed that the destiny of the tablet or e-book reader depends on its use, distinguishing between *lean forward* and *lean back* use:

> *Lean forward* occurs when we are 'leaning forward' towards information, as we do by writing, studying a book sitting at the desk [...], or working on the computer. It refers to the active use of information: we do not just absorb information but we process it [...].
> The *lean-back* mode refers to a relaxed use, 'leaning backward' (for example, in an armchair) [...]. (Roncaglia 2010: 14, 15).

Unlike digital book readers, tablets are multifunctional objects, not only aimed at reading (see Mance, Shubber, and Bond 2015: 112). However, they have also adapted to relaxed use and *lean back*, as a university professor states:

> I use it to read emails and to read books, but for writing, I use the computer. [...] The tablet everywhere, even in an armchair or on the desk; it is so flexible that you can even stand up on the sofa or in the armchair and it is very comfortable, even in bed [...].

Because of the weight that tablets had until a few years ago, sometimes the preferences went to other tablets, as Alberto and Stefano claim:

> Not being able to read at night is a pain for me [...]. I also have photographs of my wife and children on my tablet, but I use it for reading. [...] they had the good idea of making the iPad mini; for me, this is the ideal format for reading in bed [...].

> The iPad in an armchair or even in bed, do you know how many documentaries I've seen in bed? Because once you have a home network it is very convenient [...]. I thought I would use it much more like an electronic book. [...] However, the paper book is unbeatable [...].

In other cases, they highlight the versatility of the iPad as a multifunctional object at work, in leisure time, and on vacation. As for reading, the tablet makes it clear how digitization has given rise to a third historical revolution reading (see Cavallo and Chartier 2001: 37). The testimonies collected suggest that in the search for preferential postures for reading with a tablet, people try to adopt those already gained with the book: outdoors, on the sofa, at the desk, in bed, etc. (Petrucci 2001: 453-454).

Wearable technological objects
Alberto, thinking back to the years of Macintosh debut and the enthusiasm it could arise when he was a junior researcher, today claims, with a certain self-irony:

> I think it depends on the fact that Apple had 'loyalized' its users, because at the beginning, the difference between Macintoshes and IBMs was, as I told you, so profound that those who used the Macintosh felt [smiles] superior, I don't know how to define it. Everybody felt like a member of a sect, I don't know how to say [laughs], part of an elite of privileged people who used the Mac.

As for the younger age groups, some say that consumption has a high social value in the so-called mobile youth cultures (Castells, Fernàndez-Ardèvol, Qiu, and Sey 2009). Wireless communication tools

such as cell phones, smartphones, and, more recently, tablets (with all their accessories) are not only portable devices but have become objects with strong characterizations in the sense of wearability. (Castells, Fernàndez-Ardèvol, Qiu and Sey 2009). The iPod, among these, confirms the fact that we can look at, touch and wear these objects (see Dini 2008: 93). Forms of 'consumerism' manifest themselves with the periodic replacement of the device and with the choice of accessories such as cases, covers, etc., even at a high price, presented as elegant objects. The launch of the Apple Watch (March 2015) made this trend now clear: technological objects have now become "wearable" (see Chiusi 2015: 35).

The style of consumption characterized by the cult of the brand is not predominant in most Apple users. But for many people, belonging to some indefinable form of youth and metropolitan mobile culture, it appears as an act endowed with meaning within a social context focused to the spectacularization of consumption (cfr Codeluppi 2007: 49). The media from all over the industrial world have given news of the rows of people waiting for the Apple Store to open to buy the very first specimens. For a bizarre imitative process, these night vigils seem to have taken place even when no lines were necessary. In one case local media interpreted it as an out-of-scale and out-of-place 'being global'[18].

Apple launched the last of its products, the smartwatch, in September 2014; it is now in its fifth series and it is part of the wearable electronic technologies. The Apple Watch was first related to sports activities, today it also functions as health monitoring with the control of cardiovascular indicators. I have observed in various situations the way users make a choice, given that it was a new object and without other reference examples on the market. As it has happened for smartphones and tablets, the choice is very wide. On an autumn day in 2018, I visited the area assigned to Apple in an electronics shopping center near Cagliari. A couple in their forties is stationing like me at the smartwatch counter. The woman tries all models from 3 to 4 in various configurations, 38, 40, and 44 mm, including the colors of the straps. She tried the three models on her wrist one by one, to check their wearability. She is undecided about the color of the watch and strap. The saleswoman asks which iPhone model she owns. The man replies saying that he has them all from 4 onwards except for the last two models (he laughed at how women follow trends). The shop assistant says that now they last about a year and a half, then you need to update or change them. The man says to his wife: "Let your aesthetic sense guide your choice". The woman is hesitant, she tries again the straps as if they were a pair of shoes that must fit well, and then decides for the 38 mm model with a black case with and pink strap. Later, I would have seen this combination many times on the wrist of young women. Also in the fall of 2018, I discussed it with various people, as I saw Apple Watches were becoming more and more. Maria wears the Apple Watch on her right wrist, a small vintage watch on the left. She uses two different watches because the one on her left wrist is a gift from her husband and she's always keen to wear it. She says she cannot help using the Apple Watch, an expression used as a mantra by many people. It's so wearable, she argues, that you forget you're wearing it; they do not make the band of some stinging materials and it is not a problem having it close-fitting. Roberto also wears two watches, but in an inverted position. On the left wrist the Apple Watch, on the right another watch. The smartwatch is a gift from his wife and he uses it when he goes for a run; he uses the watch on the right wrist to always have the time available. In a specialized shop, they told me that more and more their customers wear the two watches at the same time. Some technical aspects of smartphones come into play, as the limited duration of the charge; we cannot exclude it then becomes a habit and that users always intend to have a watch with them that does not require recharging. In other cases, as it appears most today (2020), the Apple Watch is the only device on the wrist. A student also favors this use because the smartwatch communicates with the iPhone and notifies incoming calls and messages. She shows me some functions, in particular, that of pulse control; then she takes it off to let me feel the lightness and touch impressions of the strap material. In several cases, I have witnessed these tactile and sensory tests of the materials, both of the cases and the straps. A saleswoman claims that she never used the watch before and that now, instead, she even forgets she is wearing it because it is not heavy and the strap does not cause skin irritation. She claims that customers' favorite colors are space gray and black, but also white for certain models. As for the colors during the conversation, a gender component emerges. She claims that men dislike pink and adds: "I would never suggest pink to men!" I think the question of colors for males or females belongs to the

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[18] In Sassari on the shop window announcing the sales of the new iPad from midnight to dawn, in March 2012 someone put up a small sign that reads: "Mi chi no semmu a Niu Iork", "Look, we're not in New York" (cfr. *L'iPad? Arriva a mezzanotte in città*, in www.sassarinotizie.com, 23 March 2012, last accessed 6 June 2012).

gender stereotypes widespread in various ways and at various levels in human societies (see Strathern 2016).

Conclusions

As we have seen, the success of Apple technologies is because of a powerful combination of aesthetics and functionality. At the beginning of the eighties, other computers appeared not very original in color and design and with an interface was not as intuitive. With Apple computers, the narrative is very different: a personal computer is a work tool that should be present in every home and every office; these technologies are easy to understand and master.

Looking even today at the second-hand prices of the models of thirty years ago one can understand the diffusion of a distinctive taste for these devices. Like other brands of global diffusion, the Bite Apple logo, first the one with colored stripes then the one with the unmistakable white, promises a special experience that starts with the care of the packaging and the way of extraction. Like other global brands, if not more, the Bitten Apple logo and its founders have become true 'pop icons'[19]. Other technological objects of our daily life - radios, TVs, record players, discs, gramophones, portable record players, etc. - have now become "memories of media", to use the expression by Roger Silverstone (1999: 93). In some interviews carried out a few years ago, some students stated that they did not want to get rid of, for example, an initial model of the iPhone, that of series 3, considered, with its rounded shapes, much more ergonomic and "beautiful" than the next more advanced models. The time limit therefore of the devotion to Apple computers, has been further shortened, so much so that some websites have reported the growth in price among collectors passionate about 2013-2014 computers [20].

FIGURE 1: Working at home (launching of Apple II, about 1977)

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[19] Cfr. Codeluppi 2012; Magaudda 2012; Wozniak 2013.
[20] Some MacBook Airs and Pros from a few years ago have officially become 'vintage', in http://it.mashable.com, 19 May 2020 (last accessed 10 June 2020).

FIGURE 2: Italian advertising for the launching of Apple II: Apple speaks Italian

FIGURE 3: "Drink Different", Italian imitation of the Apple advertising
campaign "Think Different" (coffee bar in Cagliari, Italy, 2017)

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