



Università
Ca' Foscari
Venezia

Master's Degree

in Economia e Gestione delle Aziende

Final Thesis

**Storytelling in the Luxury Industry: Narratives as
a Tool for Experiential Branding**

The Case of Christian Dior Couture

Supervisor

Ch. Prof. Fabrizio Panozzo

Graduand

Francesca Sergio

Matriculation Number 852500

Academic Year

2018/2019

Acknowledgements

Giunta al termine di questo lavoro, sento di essere sul punto di chiudere l'importante capitolo della mia vita che è stato il periodo universitario. Con queste righe, desidero ringraziare tutte le persone che, in un modo o nell'altro, mi sono state vicine e mi hanno supportata sia durante i miei studi che nella realizzazione di questa tesi.

Ringrazio innanzitutto il mio relatore Prof. Fabrizio Panozzo, per la sua grande disponibilità e per avermi fornito suggerimenti sempre creativi e originali su cui indirizzare il mio lavoro, rendendolo per me tanto appassionante quanto stimolante.

Un ringraziamento va anche a Luca Marchetti, Sofia Gnoli, Stefania Ricci, Gabriele Monti, Riccardo Ruini e Chiara Battaglia, che con spirito critico hanno contribuito alla ricerca etnologica di questa tesi, portando nel mio lavoro la loro visione, acquisita tramite la vastissima esperienza che vantano nel campo del lusso e della moda.

Ci tengo molto a ringraziare anche la mia Dior Family, che per sei mesi mi ha accompagnata nel percorso di tirocinio per quest'azienda la cui storia mi ha profondamente affascinata, portandomi infine a sviluppare questa ricerca. In particolare, ringrazio di cuore Irene, Gaia, Ilaria e Alessio per il loro supporto e per il loro affetto genuino.

Un ringraziamento speciale va anche ai miei amici più cari: Giorgia, Marco, Erica, Valeria, Stella e Filippo, per essermi stati accanto nei momenti più difficili e per avermi dato sempre l'energia necessaria per continuare a dare il massimo. Ringrazio in particolare Giorgia e Marco, i miei migliori amici sin dai banchi di scuola, con cui condivido tutto da ormai più di dieci anni. Grazie a Giorgia, per la sua dolcezza, la sua comprensione e il suo affetto incondizionato, e a Marco, per la sua sincerità, la sua lealtà e il suo ascolto sempre attento e premuroso. Nonostante l'università ci abbia allontanati fisicamente, vi ho sempre sentiti profondamente vicini a me, facendomi capire quanto vorrei che la vostra presenza fosse una costante nella mia vita.

Ringrazio immensamente Luca, per il suo amore, la sua sensibilità, la sua tenerezza e il suo infinito supporto. Ci siamo conosciuti all'inizio di questo percorso magistrale, e questi

due anni non sarebbero stati gli stessi senza di te. Grazie per avermi spronata ad essere sempre la versione migliore di me stessa, per aver asciugato le mie lacrime durante i periodi più tristi e avermi fatto sorridere in quelli più felici. Grazie per ogni momento trascorso insieme, e per i tanti altri che ci aspettano.

Grazie, infine, alle persone più importanti della mia vita, la mia famiglia. Grazie ai miei genitori, Linda e Sebastiano, per avermi sostenuta sempre, per essermi stati vicini ogni giorno di questo percorso, e per esservi schierati sempre dalla mia parte. Non sarei la persona che sono oggi se non fosse stato per il vostro infinito amore, la vostra premura, la vostra dolcezza e per il coraggio e la forza che mi avete trasmesso. Grazie a mia sorella Federica, per la sua gioia e la sua leggerezza, per aver preso molte volte le veci di sorella maggiore, nonostante per me rimarrà sempre la più piccola da proteggere e custodire. Grazie ai miei nonni, Aldo e Vincenza, per la loro saggezza, per avermi insegnato ciò che è “giusto” e per essere stati sempre per me un riferimento fondamentale.

Chi mi conosce sa che per me la mia famiglia è la mia luce, e sento che queste righe non riuscirebbero mai ad esprimere quanto sia grata per tutto ciò che fate e avete fatto per me. L'amore che nutro per voi va oltre qualsiasi limite.

Dedico a voi questo mio importante traguardo.

Index

Introduction	9
I. CHAPTER ONE: The Luxury Brand	11
1.1. The Anatomy of a Luxury Brand.....	11
1.2. The Affluent Consumer	14
1.2.1. Positioning Luxury.....	17
1.3. Brand Heritage.....	18
1.4. Emotional Branding.....	23
II. CHAPTER TWO: Storytelling in the Luxury Industry	28
2.1. The Definition of Storytelling.....	28
2.2. The Origin of Storytelling: from Humanities to Businesses	30
2.3. Storytelling in the Luxury Industry – A Theoretical Perspective	36
2.4. Subjects and Themes for Luxury Narratives	41
2.5. Luxury Storytelling Techniques and Narrative Components	49
2.6. The Power of Visual Narratives for the Luxury Industry	53
2.6.1. Visual Narrative Art in Cinema: Luxury Storytelling in “ <i>Breakfast at Tiffany’s</i> ” and “ <i>Belle De Jour</i> ”	55
2.6.2. The Artification of Luxury Narratives.....	58
2.7. The Role of the Store	62
2.7.1. Beyond the Store: The Servicescape Model in Relation to Stories.....	68
2.8. Effective Storytelling in Marketing.....	69
III. CHAPTER THREE: The Digitalization of Storytelling: Online Approaches to Transmedia Narratives	75
3.1. The Luxury Industry Digitalized: The Online Transition.....	75
3.2. Luxury Consumers in the Digital Age.....	81
3.2.1. Young Generations as New Audience: What Stories Do They Prefer?	83
3.3. Digital Storytelling: A New Approach to Marketing.....	85
3.3.1. Digital Storytelling: Features and Techniques.....	89
3.4. Digital Storytelling through e-Commerce Platforms	92
3.5. Digital Storytelling as a Tool for Social Media Interaction.....	96
3.6. Transmedia Stories: Branded Entertainment as Main Source of Engagement.....	100
3.7. Interviews in Qualitative Research: An Ethnographic Approach to Storytelling Analysis.....	107

3.7.1.	Methodology of Research.....	107
3.7.2.	Cross-Case Assessment of Interviews.....	109
3.7.3.	Discussion and Results.....	113
3.8.	Storytelling Innovation: a Contemporary Evaluation of Luxury Brands	115
IV.	CHAPTER FOUR: The Case of Christian Dior Couture	118
4.1.	Brand Overview	118
4.2.	The Historical Roots of Christian Dior: The Origin of the Myth.....	120
4.3.	Dior Brand Identity through Storytelling.....	122
4.3.1.	Luxury Brand Identity Prism	122
4.3.2.	Luxury Brand Expansion through Pyramid Analysis	126
4.4.	The Evolution of Dior Storytelling Strategy	127
4.4.1.	Archetype Persona and Visual Narrative Art	128
4.4.2.	Corporate Storytelling through Organizational Change: an Analysis of Narratives	129
4.4.3.	The Digitalization of Storytelling: from the Fashion Film to Transmedia Narratives	131
4.5.	Online Storytelling and Social Networks Analysis	134
4.6.	The Dior Flagship Store: an Emotional Selling Point for Brand Experience	137
4.7.	The Importance of the Storytelling Dimension for Dior: The Interview.....	140
V.	Conclusions	143
	List of Figures.....	148
	List of Tables.....	149
	List of Abbreviations.....	149
	References	150
	Bibliography.....	150
	Webliography	160

Introduction

In “The Culture-World: Answer to a Disoriented Society”, Lipovetsky and Serroy (2010) begin their sociological study with a relevant assumption: “a literature without roots produces empty stories in a scenario of unstoppable production and consumption”. Considering the last thirty years in particular, and more specifically the dawn of the World Wide Web and its implications, modernity has witnessed a situation in which individuals eagerly search for freedom and its breaking of barriers in the form of information. Through stories and myths, individuals have been capable of nourishing their fantasies yet looking for a clear identity, in the attempt of catching and transmitting the understanding of themselves. The Internet revolution has contributed to translate this necessity, creating more engagement for consumers through new immersive experiences, therefore turning brands into proper cultural agents (Lipovetsky & Serroy, 2010). Particularly within the luxury industry, a powerful form of experiential branding resides in storytelling that, employing culture more directly, have led many brands to excel at this dimension. While the concept of building brands upon stories might feel archaic, the last fifty years have proved a significant period in which luxury companies have confronted themselves with media, entertainment, press and art, to create special responsiveness for consumers to bond with brands’ values and feel innovative luxury experiences.

This master thesis aims at analysing the evolutionary path of storytelling for luxury brands. Going through original, generational stories, as they are found in archives in the form of books, magazines, interviews and movies, this dissertation aims at understanding whether the stories told by luxury brands in the pre-digitalized era are the same ones that are digitalized nowadays in blogs, product pages and social media. On the contrary, it will analyse whether they are the product of the digitalization, or as well, the invention of something called “digitalization” in storytelling terms.

The following question will be considered:

In luxury branding, is storytelling a product of digital transformation based on the human relational process, or is it something invented and eventually called digitalized?

The thesis relies on qualitative research according to which data collection happens through the use of primary and secondary sources. The primary data is obtained with the implementation of semi-structured interviews with fashion and luxury professionals, which are conducted and examined through a thematic discourse analysis. The secondary data is collected through an observation of trends and statistics of luxury brands obtained by means of literature review and previously conducted researches, in addition to information gathered by luxury companies' websites and channels of communication. Finally, the case of the luxury company Christian Dior Couture adopts a business history methodology, looking at the evolution of the brand storytelling from an ex-ante perspective.

The dissertation starts with the analysis of the luxury industry, as related to the concepts of heritage and experience. The second chapter is dedicated to the notion of storytelling in the luxury field, exploring the theoretical background of narratives as derived from the discipline of humanities, going further in its applications in marketing and branding. Following, the third chapter discusses how the variable of digitalization sets in, affecting the way consumers perceive stories and prompting luxury brands to employ new strategies that encompass new channels of communication and tactics to raise awareness. The fourth chapter examines the case of Christian Dior Couture, analysing the evolution of its storytelling strategy and the way the company engages consumers nowadays through its narratives. Finally, challenges and opportunities to the topic will be presented in relation to the study.

I. CHAPTER ONE: The Luxury Brand

1.1. The Anatomy of a Luxury Brand

Since decades, the luxury goods market has been prominently in the eye of management researchers, intrigued by the sector for a number of reasons counting diverseness, complexity, status and rapid and constant evolvement of luxury brands (Atwal & Williams, 2017). Anyway, despite the numerous studies conducted on the topic, the management literature still lacks a coherent and widely accepted definition of what epitomises a luxury brand. Although the semiotic studies conducted by Maman Larraufie and Kourdoughli (2014) have found consensus in the presence of certain “codes of luxury”, which seem to be consistent when analysed across different times and disciplines, many scholars argue instead how the definition of luxury brand reflects a relative concept whose perception fluctuates over time (Cristini et al., 2017). To begin with a simpler identification, the branding scholar David Aaker (1996) defines “brand” as a “name, a term, a symbol, a design, or a combination of these elements that add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or to that firm’s customers”.

According to the research paper conducted by Ko, Costello and Taylor (2019), when attempting to shape a prior definition of “luxury brand”, it is necessary to meet three basic conditions. In the first place, the definition should be laid on the groundwork of a conceptual foundation, as for the majority of academic characterisations in general. Secondly, it must stay pertinent when applied to any luxury product category (for example, fashion items or wines and spirits). Finally, the academic definition must be suited to be operationalized in a way that measurements can be done.

Among the many authors that attempted to define the concept, two definitions seem prominent to the view of this study. According to Dubois et al. (2001), the concept of luxury is structured around six important components, which are “(1) excellent quality, (2) high price, (3) scarcity and uniqueness, (4) aesthetics and polysensuality, (5) superflousness, and, most importantly, (6) ancestral heritage and personal history”. Vickers and Renand (2003) have given a later definition by stating that “luxury goods are

different than non-luxury goods by the extent to which they exhibit a distinctive mix of three important dimensions of instrumental performance: functionalism, experientialism and symbolic interactionism". Based on the review of the literature, it becomes glaringly clear that the experiential, historical and symbolical dimensions constitute the most important pillars of the luxury brands' conceptualization.

Henceforth, its definition lies on the assumption that a luxury brand is particularly distinctive due to three reasons. The first one binds to its application to the many diverse product categories, ranging from prêt-à-porter creations to jewellery, from yatches to cars, from fine wines and spirits to hotels. Secondly, it functions as an experiential entity that operates in the retail space, with history and heritage at the core of its proposition. Finally, the experience derived from the brand acts as the perfect means through which to convey the communication of an identity for the brand user (Fionda & Moore, 2009).

When defining the luxury brand, its conceptualization can usually find its origin either in a consumption perspective or from its applications to the domain of branding (Vickers & Renand, 2003). Speaking in terms of consumer perspective, Gutsatz (2001) assumes that "luxury includes two levels of representation: the first is material, and includes the product and the brand (its history, identity, unique know-how, and talent); the second level is psychological [...] and covers representations influenced by our social environment and brand values". This perspective finds confirmation in the central focus of luxury brands' commercialization, namely coveted products that deliver exclusiveness and status, and characterized by premium prices. The Hermès "Kelly" handbag (whose waiting list for clients may cover also a period of two years), or the Chanel no. 5 perfume, can represent clear examples of iconic products which embody timelessness and authenticity.

Most importantly, management authors have coped with providing an explanation of luxury consumption in relation to the symbolic purpose it covers at both an individual and collective level, explaining its function in terms of psychological value, status symbol identity and the role it embodies in the consumption act (Fionda & Moore, 2009). On the topic, Barnard Arnault, the chief executive officer (CEO) of LVMH, has emphasized how the culture, values and spirit of the brand, namely what is defined as its corporate identity, or in this case, brand identity, is vital to the evolution of luxury brand excellence (Arnault, 2001).

An interesting definition that takes this experiential turn on a deeper level especially when applied to the luxury field, aligns with the words of the author Seth Godin (2009) which interprets the brand as a “set of expectations, memories, stories and relationships that, taken together, account for a consumer’s decision to choose one product or service over another”.

In this light, the French economist Danielle Allérès (2006) has proposed a model that, drawing inspiration from French luxury businesses, for whom heritage represents a central focus to marketing and branding strategies, takes six dimensions as characteristic of a luxury brand: (1) the brand name, (2) the creators, (3) the location, (4) the creations, (5) recognition symbols and (6) history.

For a luxury brand, the brand name constitutes one of the most important differentiation factors, making the application of a premium price possible also in the long term. Notably, very often the brand name links directly to the person who created the brand, allowing to preserve the memory of its founder for posterity. A clear example is Chanel, which bears the name of its founder Coco Chanel, and contributes to keep alive the vivid memory of this revolutionary and innovative character, that time turned into myth and icon. Among its recognition symbols, the Chanel logo has remained unchanged since its very inception, proportionally to many other luxury brands that operate in the industry (Bruce & Kratz, 2007). Anyway, the creations of a brand stand as the very heart of a luxury company, constituting the real objects of desire for high-net-worth consumers. Iconic product designs, such as the trench coat for Burberry, or the Peekaboo bag for Fendi, have conquered the heart of consumers to the point that many of these creations become properly identifiers of a product category: the Kelly is “The Bag” as the Rolex is “The Watch” (Mosca, 2017).

Integral to these elements is the role of locations for luxury brands. This concept can be analysed from two different standpoints. The first one concerns the great deal of investments implemented by these brands when developing stores, both in their flagship or pop-up nature. Premier locations, especially if placed in capital cities, like Rue du Faubourg St Honoré in Paris, or Fifth Avenue in New York, constitute strategic spots where brands can express exclusivity and excellence. Burberry, for example, in the attempt (that eventually played successful) to reposition itself as a “credible high fashion brand”, have invested consistently for the opening of a flagship store on Bond Street in

London (Moore & Birtwistle, 2004). Secondly, yet not less important, location assumes a relevant significance especially when referred to the concept of country of origin. The relationship with the country of origin of the luxury brand is a strategic element to support the product concept of a luxury creation; insofar the territory, meant as original birthplace of a brand, becomes symbol and collateral for quality of the product, and savoir-faire of who is behind it (Mosca, 2017). In this light, history becomes central to the heritage of the brand, and integrates its singularity and uniqueness with the story associated to its founder and its products, as for the travel cases of Louis Vuitton, or Loro Piana's cashmere. Nevertheless, according to Björkman (2002), the stories that surround the company, along with their iconic products, constitute an important part of the practice of shaping an aura of distinctiveness around a luxury brand. In addition, the symbolism that these stories awake is what eventually makes them distinguishable and remarkable internationally and deeply connected to a question of cultural identity (Dubois, Laurent & Czellar, 2001).

1.2. The Affluent Consumer

As previously mentioned, the luxury industry has experienced an exceptional growth in the last decades, reaching a statement of €260 billion in 2017 (D'Arpizio & Levato, 2018) in personal luxury goods, and largely outperforming the growth of other consumer goods categories. This increasing rate reflected proportionally one of the most relevant factors of the industry, namely the growth in the size of high-net-worth individuals eager for luxury spending. It is henceforth necessary to make an identity profile of this segment of the population that falls under the category of "affluent consumers".

Although there has been a scarce literature on such segment in the past, affluent consumers have been defined mainly in terms of income and assets. When analysing the their characteristics, different variables seem to collide, such as economic, lifestyle and psychographic characteristics, not to mention the individual principles, values, priorities and buying preferences (Michman & Mazze, 2006).

In its market research conducted at Euromonitor International, Hodgson's (2018) classification comprises in the affluent category all those individuals whose net-wealth

covers the income spectrum between US\$100,000 and US\$1 million. Anyway, proportionally to the definition of luxury (Cristini et al., 2017), the last fifty years have witnessed a change in the composition of the affluent classification. If formerly, only well-educated, middle-aged individuals were the target of luxury marketing efforts, now this category seems to cover a much broader definition, including business owners, entertainers, executives, inheritors, members of ethnic groups, influencers, self-employed professionals, and many more (Michman & Mazze, 2006). Moreover, according to Danziger (2018), the wealth of those who find themselves at the top of the income pyramid seems to rise in spite of the sinking middle class, in a way that, when analysing the trend through a time range of almost fifty years, affluent consumers' income has risen from 29% in 1970 to almost 50% in 2014. In 2019, digital natives constitute the new affluent consumers, with the most valuable luxury consumer segment constituted by millennials and the younger generation-Z, who together have accomplished the 85% of luxury growth in 2017 (D'Arpizio & Levato, 2018). With mobile as the main screen for these consumers, the possibilities of brand interactions have more than doubled, making it necessary for brands to shape a different language and tone to address this segment, compared to the traditional luxury clientele that used to buy a Louis Vuitton bag twenty years ago. Anyway, while the focus of marketers have been long concentrated on this category of consumers, Dubois and Laurent (1996) specify instead not to ignore another classification that, according to their definition, goes under the name of "excursionists". Differently from affluent consumers, whose access to luxury goods stays permanent over time, and excluded consumers who instead cannot afford this category of items, "excursionists" represent the consumers whose luxury purchase happens occasionally and who incur in the luxury buying process only if driven by specific circumstances. Anyway, while their intermittent nature in the luxury purchase act makes them more difficult to identify as customer profile, at the same time it is true that when they buy a luxury creation, they do not make their choice as an expression of their "art de vivre", and hence ignore the properly symbolic dimension of the brand. Instead, their purchase comes from an exceptional decision, which cuttingly contradicts their daily lifestyle (Dubois & Laurent, 1996).

As Table 1 illustrates, by considering the range 1994-2000 as a sample period, it becomes clear that, as the average purchase figures demonstrate, luxury companies are

increasingly dealing with “excursionists”, or occasional buyers, who register one to three purchases a year, in addition to their traditional luxury customers.

Customer types	USA		Europe		Japan	
	1994	2000	1994	2000	1994	2000
Luxury customers	39	65	40	60	39	62
Occasionals (1–3)	29	44	31	42	25	43
Regulars (4+)	10	21	9	18	14	19
Non-customers	61	35	60	40	62	38

Table 1: The Luxury Customer – Europe, USA, Japan
 Source: Roux, (2002).

A striking example of this emblematic growth could be epitomized by the rise in profitability of the French suitcase-maker Louis Vuitton that, while in 1977 still constituted a family business with less than 10 million dollars in sales, in 1999, after its conglomeration in the LVMH group, stated sales accounting to 2 billion dollars (Dubois et al., 2001).

Due to the outstanding international expansion registered in the last thirty years, luxury brands have invested heavily in the opening of flagship stores in regions where the concentration of affluent consumers was on the rise (Bruce & Kratz, 2007), crafting ad-hoc business strategies reflecting the diverse cultural values. A key catalyst in the rising eagerness for luxury consumption is the increase of affluent customers in Asian regions, with emerging economies such as China, India, South America and Middle East as main participants (Kim & Ko, 2012). There is a very broad literature that relies on the cross-cultural differences among regions when it comes to purchase decisions. For example, Shukla and Purani (2012) have investigated the buying behaviour of luxury consumers across India and England, and their research has revealed key findings for luxury brands. British luxury consumers are more interested in self-directed values, judging essential the symbolic and expressive dimension of a product as well as its utilitarian and functional traits. On the other hand, Indian luxury customers value the sacrifice and cost of obtaining a luxury product, as well as its hedonistic meaning.

In other words, in individualistic cultures (typical of North America and Western Europe regions) there is more difficulty in reflecting one's self-image through the luxury purchase, whereas for collectivists cultures (which reside in Asia, Central and South America and Africa) luxury consumption is often used as a means of realising social recognition (Ko, Costello and Taylor, 2017).

In the same way, the branding process happens at different levels when analysed across different regions. In individualistic cultures, as it can happen in Germany, Italy or the U.S.A., the information (in this case the branded content) is explicit and verbal; differently, Asian cultures, such as China and Japan, rely on information as part of the context, interiorized by individuals and inaccessible to whoever is not part of it (De Mooji, 2010).

1.2.1. Positioning Luxury

Marketing embodies an exceptional importance for luxury brands, with segmentation and positioning as its main tools. Market segmentation, in the first place, represents a core activity of any strategic marketing initiative, simplifying the process of identification and satisfaction of the company's most profitable consumers (Dibb et al., 2005). In particular, according to Hines and Queen (2007), especially in the luxury and fashion industry, managers implement market segmentation strategies in order to address three main issues:

1. Meaningful identification of the customer;
2. Satisfaction of the individual customer requirements in a profitable way;
3. Implementation of the segmentation strategy in ways that provide adaptable solutions, keen to consumers' fragmented social structures.

Being the third element the most crucial one in the context of luxury fashion, due to its consumption pattern and retailing context (Hines & Queen, 2007), the concept of identity becomes central primarily from an individual perspective, and secondly, from the point of view of the group, its social identity, and the way individuals communicate to each other. Brands, especially luxury ones, represent powerful symbolic means by which building the social identity of an affluent individual (Elliot and Wattanasuwan, 1998),

according to which consumers can feel free to construct innumerable times their identity and group affirmations, in a fluid and timeless manner.

If on one hand segmentation helps to account the dynamic nature of social interaction (Hines & Queen, 2007), market positioning instead aims at attributing to a service or product a specific position (a unique selling proposition) and a valuable offer (value proposition) in the mind of the consumer (Mosca, 2017). The upper-premium positioning, in the case of luxury products, can be replicated in every market and product/service category. One example is Loro Piana, whose vicuña wool introduces consumers to a unique selling proposition – a rare and unique product of exceptional quality, at a consistently high price compared to its product category – and a unique value proposition, which resides in the distinctive value of an exclusive fiber.

Anyway, a consistent body of literature argues that an upper-premium positioning is not enough to identify a luxury product, since the product per se has a story of its own, characterized by a totality of symbolic, intangible and implicit attributes that make it unique and transcend towards the myth (Kapferer & Bastien, 2012). For this reason, to qualify as a product with an upper-premium positioning, it is necessary to call the heritage component, besides the historical context. Hence, driven by the symbolic meaning of their purchase, affluent consumers feel confident in spending more on luxury brands capable of enchanting them and with an engaging story to which they can relate. On this premise, luxury businesses should successfully manage to craft a compelling story which can resonate in the mind of their affluent consumers, while still remaining faithful to the brand's heritage and tradition (Beauloye, 2016).

1.3. Brand Heritage

Namely the cornerstone of corporate brand identity, heritage represents one of the most important assets for a luxury company. As Mosca (2017) defines it, it consists in the set of factors that constitute the historical and personal inheritance of a product or brand, as an intangible attribute difficult to imitate or to reproduce by competitors. Notably one of the most significant tools when it comes to luxury branding, heritage really started acquiring a central role for luxury marketers starting from the 1980s, when luxury companies

moved from small and independent family-businesses to a globalized industry based on large listed firms and groups (Kapferer & Bastien, 2013).

As previously mentioned in Dubois et al. (2001) definition of luxury, “ancestral heritage and personal history” constitute the sixth component of a luxury brand, whose notion is per se a concept that anchors the company to the past. In order to fall within the notion of “luxury”, the consumer’s mind must perceive luxury goods and services as being representatives of a long history and tradition, and, even better, carriers of stories, myths and legends (Dubois et al., 2001). Crucial for the luxury brand’s credibility and symptomatic of its authenticity, heritage satisfies the affluent consumer’s need for rarity and uniqueness, and is associated to values of quality, durability and timelessness. The long tradition of these brands, commonly century-old, constitutes the vibrant core of their corporate heritage. Hermès, for example, embraces its strong heritage through the brand’s tradition, its savoir-faire, its creations and their creators. Founded in 1837 by the master saddler Thierry Hermès, in 1880 the brand moved to Paris in 24 Rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré, (address which still today is the international headquarter of the company). When in 1918 Emile Hermès, Thierry’s nephew, found inspiration in the rise of the automobile, he launched a line of accessories and travel cases in leather, unknowingly giving birth to the typical classy style of Hermès, elegant and chic, which soon would have been extended to all the product lines of the brand (Mosca, 2017).

Hence, as Donzé and Wubs (2019) state, the concept of heritage encapsulates many features, counting high quality, creativity, delicate craftsmanship and rich tradition, and is based on the assumption that brands have a history and should engage it to support their identities. More precisely, by developing the concept of ‘brand heritage’, management scholars have argued the inclusion of historical elements in the brand management of luxury companies, emphasizing how these components can actually amplify the total value of brands (Wiedmann et al., 2011). A coherent definition of brand heritage, from this perspective, can be “a dimension of a brand’s identity found in its track record, longevity, core values, use of symbols and particularly in an organizational belief that its history is important” (Urde et al., 2007). In order to build a consistent brand identity, luxury companies carefully select the essential elements of their history, residing at the very core of the brand’s DNA, to shape what management scholars define as the corporate heritage of a company. Anyway, heritage as a resource is an asset that entails

management, mainly by means of three major activities: product development (the way products change over time, relating to former designs and inspirations), storytelling (the narratives used to communicate their own history through stories, media, events, etc.) and distribution (how a company organizes the brand and stages its goods).

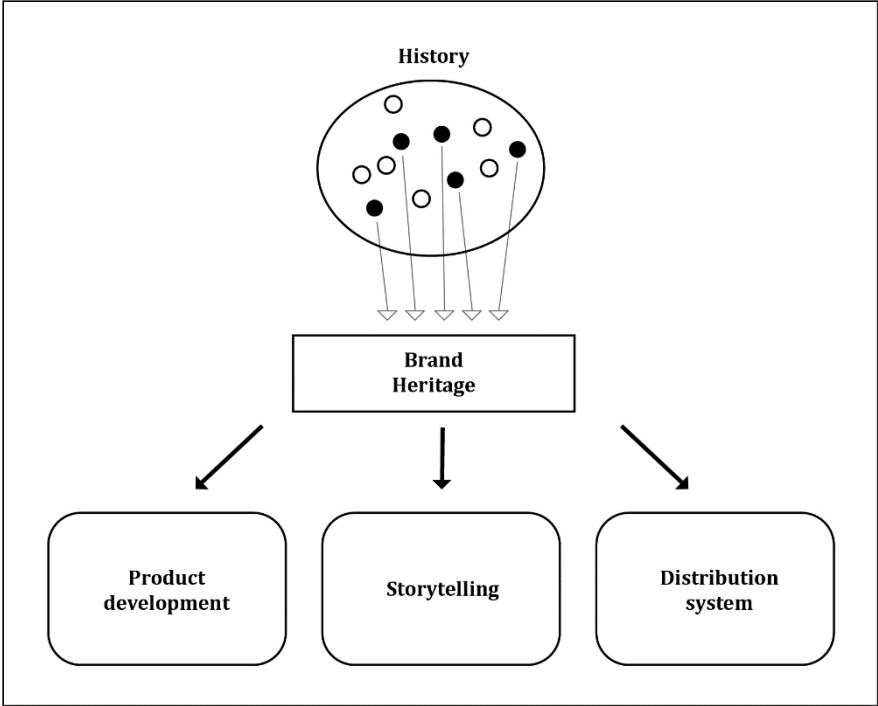


Figure 1: History, Heritage and Storytelling in Brand Management
Source: Donzé & Wubs, (2019).

From this perspective, the notion of heritage is highly connected to these three elements, where the 'brand identity' characterisation cannot be merely sustained by a research on archives, interpretations, products and testimonies (Donzé & Wubs, 2019), but roots down in the factual history of the brand. Nonetheless, it is important to highlight the link with the past in order to construct a consistent brand identity and corporate heritage, but it is also true that this is not all. The mere historical longevity is not enough, if not complemented by other factors that, altogether, form the heritage as a strategic attribute, in order to lay solid fundamentals of longevity and competition in the future (Mosca, 2017). The intangible values referring to the past constitute the starting point and main driver for the promotion of the present and, mostly, of the future, representing the main key of heritage.

In order to build incomparability, according to the insightful words of Professor Carlo Alberto Carnavale of Bocconi Business School, luxury brands must inject “time, space and blood” in the brand (Kapferer, 2017).

Among the three elements, time stays within the interest of this research, referring not only to heritage in its simplest form, but also to history (legendary and not a mere enumeration of factual historical events) and storytelling about artisans who could manage to acquire their unique savoir-faire after years and years of tradition. The Italian leather goods company Tod's, for instance, counts the deep-rooted Italian tradition in the footwear manufacturing, along with the most qualified personnel in the world.

Its history dates back to 1920, when, according to the original story, Filippo Della Valle opened his first workshop with a shoemaker's sign. A family of shoemakers since generations, Della Valle's Tod's counts almost a century of tradition in excellence (Mosca, 2017), and represent an iconic example of the revaluation of its heritage. For brands, according to the study on consumer's rapport to luxury conducted by Dubois, Laurent and Czellar (2001), it is premature to obtain recognition from consumers in terms of superior quality and symbolic experience without presenting a product (or generally without having prompted consumption). Only by doing so, facilitating trial and mostly investing on the communication of quality and hedonism, it is possible for brands to capitalize heavily on the time dimension. This serves also as an explanation why many luxury brands place ancestral heritage among their most important features.

As mentioned in the previous section, space also plays an essential role in the heritage mix, and can be analysed from a twofold perspective: either by looking at the country of origin effect, or in the view of flagship stores. The former is more relevant in terms of heritage, especially as a basis for symbolic associations and as a starting point for the storytelling purpose. The country of origin is an important factor in value creation. When defined as 'French chic' or 'Italian chic', luxury is provided with a unique national identity and boldness, associated with the brand and within the personality of its creative director. For instance, the eccentric style of the British designer Vivienne Westwood is defined as “British classic with a twist”, or the same could be said of Alessandro Michele, in-charge creative director of Gucci, with his unconventional flair still reflecting the quality and elegance of Italian brands. While in Jackson's (2004) view, “France is considered to be the home of luxury goods because of its heritage, artisan fashion skills and the centre of haute

couture”, this assumption is strongly contrasted by the advent of Italian and U.S. brands increasingly associated with luxury. For customers, Paris, and France in general, is the lynchpin of uniqueness and elegance, and brands (such as Chanel, Dior, Hermès or Louis Vuitton, which are only a few centrepieces of the oldest luxury tradition) must be capable of exploiting their country-of-origin benefit to buyers, who, when making a luxury purchase, are ultimately buying seduction, power, class, love and respect. As Italy, instead, reflects aesthetics and the “Dolce Vita” lifestyle, countries of origin, besides offering credibility based on savoir-faire and legitimacy, even serve as brand status, transmitting symbolic intangible values that detach any other copy from the legitimate products by adding prestige and status (Kapferer, 2017). As Bernard Arnault (2001), CEO of the luxury French conglomerate group LVMH, underlines, “the timeless nature of products guarantees them a prestigious authenticity, bound to an exceptional ‘Made-in-France’ savoir-faire, which endows them with an exclusive and rare character, and are characterized by an identifiable artisanship”.

Acting as the biological component of heritage, the final element of Carnavale’s mix is blood, which adds proof of authenticity to the brand. Many luxury brands (the ones mentioned above embody perfect examples) take the name of their founder, a legendary and mythical character, which pins a sense of dynasty to the brand (Kapferer, 2017).

The value tied to the product, and ultimately to the brand, is often closely linked to its creator, a person who has been capable to transform it in a legend. This element represents an essential heritage component that endows the luxury brand with an allure that set it apart from its competitors. The mythical characters that started the businesses in the first place leave an indelible imprint that translates in the concept of artisanship and attention to detail, that evoke the image of handmade products (Mosca, 2017). Coco Chanel, Christian Dior, Salvatore Ferragamo, are all charismatic mythical figures whose legend still resonates today. Anyway, when applying this discourse to a long-term perspective, luxury marketers are realising that many potential trade-offs are applied to the dialogue between brand identity and imagery (Keller, 2009). One of them is the trade-off between classic and contemporary images, a decision that the brand management bounds more and more to the type of audience it relates. Luxury brands, especially the long-standing European ones, have a heritage, history and experiences that are dear to the long-loyal affluent consumers, but may not have the same relevance to a younger

potential audience, using a more contemporary optic to judge brands. In this light, stories might be the perfect liaison to different types of consumers, preserving the longevity of the brand regardless of the perceived brand imagery transmitted by the luxury business.

Finally, as Kapferer and Bastien (2012) have argued, global luxury brands seem to share some key features, which include excellence, authenticity and creativity, as well as a delicate and detailed-oriented craftsmanship that reflects status and tradition. All these different components embody the essence of heritage, which lies under the assumption that luxury brands have a historical perspective to implement in order to convey a strong image of their identity. Accordingly, heritage mirrors a positive perception of a brand with its history, yet using it as an approach to track the evolution pattern of a luxury brand might seem incongruous (Donzé & Wubs, 2019). Instead, it should be viewed as a means of constructing the social and cultural configuration of a luxury brand, in order to use it as the principal tool to build a powerful storytelling strategy.

1.4. Emotional Branding

As companies strive to build strong and distinctive brand identities in order to compete in the luxury market, the role of emotions seems to embody the leveraging force to the creation of consumer-brand linkages on the symbolic and emotional level. The branding literature stresses the function of emotional content when it comes to the establishment of strong brand relationships (Watzlawick et al., 1967). Anyway, while highly recognized as being essential, especially as far as the luxury industry is concerned, the concept of emotional branding has been manifested only since the second half of the 1990s, as a forecaster of the brand-consumer interaction that eventually leads to the culmination of an ideal version of the affluent consumer, an “ideal self” (Malär et al., 2011). In fact, the psychological bond created with consumers actually enables a mechanism of improved commitment, satisfaction, loyalty and re-purchase intention.

Morrison and Crane (2007) define emotional branding as the consumer commitment to a profound, long-lasting, personal emotional connection with the brand, which goes beyond the simple benefit-driven sense of satisfaction, and that is built on a special trusting relation based on the hedonic emotional experience. Not surprisingly, consumers who are

connected with a brand on an emotional level are 52% more valuable than those who are simply satisfied (Otley, 2016), where value derives from the emotional feedback born by product-related experiences. The main focus of emotional branding is laid in brand meanings to which consumers can relate, inspired by their passion, memories, stories and experiences (Thompson et al., 2006). The dialogue, which comes as a result, is what creates credibility in the brand and a powerful personal relationship. Anyway, leaving out the linear theoretical definitions on the topic, emotional branding constitutes an inimitable and winning branding strategy, which bonds luxury brands to the consumers' heart and feelings, and creates a clear position in the core of their minds, along with a perceived self-congruence that let consumers identify with the brand (Malär et al., 2011). As a result, emotional branding constitutes one of the most important sources in developing brand loyalty, facilitating positive word-of-mouth and emotional attachment. Since brand loyalty translates into higher sales, investing in brand management seems to be a fundamental approach for luxury brands, which have conventionally been related to holistic, symbolic and experiential products (Fiore et al., 2005).

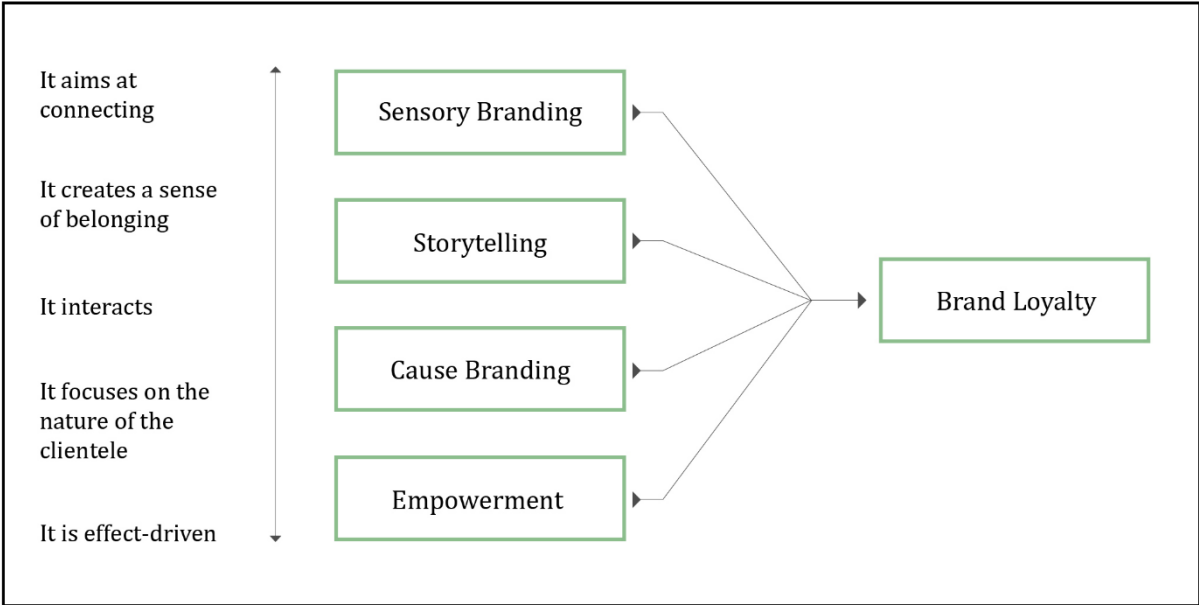


Figure 2: Emotional Branding Strategies
 Personal Adaptation. Source: Kim & Sullivan, (2019).

According to Kim and Sullivan (2019), marketers can employ four major strategies in order to establish an emotional bond with consumers: sensory branding, storytelling, cause branding and empowerment. Sensory branding speaks directly to the consumers' instincts, by engaging and stimulating their senses (Krishna, 2012). Specifically, as Lindstrom (2010) argues, appealing consumers by triggering their senses helps them to experience the brand intensely and to connect with it on a more profound scale. Chanel is one of the most acknowledged luxury businesses to make a distinctive use of sensory branding, especially when it comes to the store experience. For instance, Chanel attempts to combine its iconic recurrent colours of black and white as a clear sign of brand identity, in order to prompt clear recognition on the consumer's behalf. Notably, the sight sense is the most influential of all, being the first to identify change on the spot, indeed representing a very powerful tool to create an immediate reaction in the consumer (Orth and Malkewitz, 2008). Furthermore, Chanel stores are pervaded by the brand's iconic Chanel No. 5 perfume, being knowingly the sense of smell the one that generates lucid memories, and it arranges accessories in clear sight and "touch", since touching a product helps creating a connection with the consumer that increases the chances of purchase.

Storytelling is a powerful strategic tool that luxury companies use in order to stimulate the imagination of their consumers, by creating an emotional bond through the use of compelling narratives (Mossberg, 2008). Stories help to shape a holistic image of the brand, generating a completely immersive experience for the consumer, whom is explained through engaging and captivating plots how the company creates value, and the reasons behind its existence. Considering that stories usually stick to the mind of consumers more than plain facts or statements do (Escalas, 2006), incorporating storytelling in a brands' strategy can trigger feelings and emotions in consumers, creating entertainment and influencing their opinions and lifestyles. An iconic example of a luxury brand that successfully exploited its storytelling to create a clear identification in its customers' mind is Burberry. Founded in 1865, and representative of the British style, Burberry's stories root down to long ago in history, but they have not been recounted until Angela Ahrendts, former CEO of the luxury company, decided to rejuvenate the image of the brand, reviving the stories of the iconic trench coat.

Among the narratives implemented to capture the consumers' imagination, there is the one that recounts the ventures of Lord Kitchener, the British Secretary of State and senior

British Army officer, who wore the iconic trench coat during his crossing of Africa during World War I (Kim & Sullivan, 2019). As central to this discussion, the storytelling strategy will be analysed further in this thesis. Cause branding is a marketing strategy that consists in offering consumers the opportunity to make a purchase decision to address a social and moral cause, rather than for reasons strictly tied to personal benefit (Kim & Johnson, 2013).

In doing so, many luxury companies aim to increase consumers' purchase motivation, to bond with them on an emotional level and to improve their corporate image. When deciding to pursue this strategy, though, luxury brands should be aware that the addressed cause should resonate to their image, values and identity, in order to create more credibility within its target market (Kim & Sullivan, 2019). Stella McCartney, for example, can be considered the forerunner of the luxury sustainable crusade, being strongly devoted to causes of ethical and ecological production since its very foundation. Founder of the fur-free movement in luxury fashion, all the lines of the committed designer use fabrics sourced sustainably, comprising recycled materials (Lewittes, 2018). In this way, the consumer, while purchasing a luxury product with a sophisticated and fashionable design, embraces philanthropy through the commitment to a cause that finds an identity in her mind, boosting both self-esteem and satisfaction.

Finally, empowerment serves as a solid branding technique that, subverting the luxury traditional strategies that convince consumers to overcome their insecurities by purchasing prestigious products, recasts customers as heroes (Kim & Sullivan, 2019). Dior, for instance, can serve as the perfect example, after that Maria Grazia Chiuri, the maison's first female creative director, laid a feminist message through her first collections' creations with her "We Should All be Feminists" t-shirts.

All these different branding techniques, when employed, can serve as successful means of creating an emotional relationship with audiences. Luxury brands can really make a difference in the mind of consumers, when associated to a recognisable style, powerful identity, high consciousness and enriched emotional and symbolic associations. Behind all these strategies, though, the way of communicating a message of uniqueness that, most of all, sticks to the mind of the consumer, relies on the one of telling stories. Narratives, whether centred on history and heritage, processes, or values, are the most powerful tools at brands' disposal. Anyway, as digitalization has provided new tools to deliver narrative

content, luxury brands' main objective should be to convey a constant and credible identity to their customers through the masterful use of storytelling techniques.

II. CHAPTER TWO: Storytelling in the Luxury Industry

2.1. The Definition of Storytelling

Storytelling has always constituted a long-established tradition of human culture. Although its definition and applications in the marketing world can be found distinctly only from the beginning of the 1980s, storytelling finds its birth in the foundations of narrative as the primary, most powerful and enduring means of communication (Alterio & McDrury, 2003).

The very first signs of storytelling, in their most primordial formula, date back to 15,000 B.C., when the primitive cultures, in the absence of proper written languages, used cave walls, wood, stones, and materials of many kinds, to communicate and perpetuate their stories with symbols and representations (Mossberg, 2008). An opening notion of storytelling by Green et al. (2015) defines it as “oral communication, structured around a logical sequence of events, utilizing human and/or animal characters, with personalities and emotional qualities, presented with voice, gestures and facial expressions”. Besides, a more comprehensive and straightforward definition comes from Sachs (2012), who derives its main components and their interactions from classic drama and myth construction: according to his work for the Harvard Business Press, stories constitute a particular category of human communication aimed at persuading the audience from the storyteller’s perspective. In this view, the storyteller is able to convey an engaging story by assigning to its characters, whether fictional or real, a role to play, and whose personality is displayed over a period of time, pursuing some type of objective in harmony with their ideals and facing obstacles along their way (Sachs, 2012).

As such, storytelling organizes sequential facts in a coherent and logically consecutive way, starting with the introduction of the events (the stories, in this sense) through its complication, until the end where the problem is solved. While the first definition relates to a mere historical perspective, belonging strictly to the word-of-mouth cultural tradition, Sachs’ (2012) view touches the modern society where politics and businesses tackle storytelling as a method to inspire, explain, convince and bequeath narratives. This is true especially for companies, where values and culture represent a cornerstone to both

employees and customers. For marketing and branding issues, storytelling, also referred as the narrative approach, has proved a successful strategy, especially for its triggering effect on the emotional reactions it activates on consumers. Just to mention one example, the Italian luxury brand Bulgari, which finds its roots formerly in Greece but considers Rome as its native place, indissolubly binds its origins to the myth and the social, cultural and historical context of the roman “Dolce Vita” (Mosca, 2017).

Not surprisingly, according to Yang et al. (2017), stories represent a more persuasive method to display information compared to the use of statements or quantitative data, as the story itself allows to prompt complex emotions thanks to its structure. Hence, as already mentioned previously in the study, a fundamental aspect of storytelling embeds emotions, therefore the cognitive truths that the story educes in its audience. A clear evidence in favour of this theory is delineated in Stephen Denning’s book “The Leader’s Guide to Storytelling” (2006), where the author proves how the lack of consistent storytelling brought him to fail in raising some projects funding in his management career, mainly due to fact that some kind of emotional elements were missing in his applications and presentations to the audience. Adding a story creates a personal emotional connection between the audience and ideas, since “emotion is the fast line to the brain” (Stevenson, 2014). In this light, the narrative approach facilitates understanding and comprehension, with the mere verbal description of a fervid situation stimulating the activation of specific areas of the brain dealing with emotional reactions (Wallentin et al., 2011).

Any historical context, whether past, present or future, can be defined in terms of stories, outlining people ‘who they are’, ‘what they believe in’ and ‘what emotions they want to feel’. When this discourse is translated into its managerial perspective, companies are realizing that selling a mere product is not enough to create engagement and loyalty. It is only when brilliant and captivating stories complement the product that the magical unintended power of narratives, appealing to their emotions and adding meaning to their lives, serves as the perfect gateway to the heart of consumers, which is what finally makes them prefer one brand over another. In other words, this explains the natural link between branding and storytelling, where while the former represents the goal, the latter identifies as the means (Fog et al., 2005), with emotions and beliefs being their common launch pad.

Anyway, while the business standpoint of storytelling will be explained further in this thesis, it is important to understand how the narrative process has become part of the luxury industry, and how culture has played an essential role in translating these successful and engaging narratives into luxury brands' visions. The next chapter, in particular, will take a multidisciplinary perspective on authors, particularly in the fields of humanities, arts and cinema, where luxury storytelling has found its most diverse and original expressions.

2.2. The Origin of Storytelling: from Humanities to Businesses

Before starting to deepen the subject of luxury storytelling with the support of studies and researches of important authors, it is important to understand where the storytelling process traces its roots, and how its origins have been transposed to different contexts according to the cultural needs of the time. A preliminary remark addresses affluent consumers, who, according to McKee (2003), have always been characterized by a tendency to think in narrative terms rather than paradigmatically or argumentatively. As far as the narrative transportation argument is concerned, nowadays storytelling takes many forms for luxury brands, constituting a marketing strategy that thrives on branding content for consumer engagement, aiming at communicating brand values, intrinsic features and a history of their own.

Anyway, luxury has experienced a very deep transformation through the years, either in its macroeconomic structure, overexposing itself to the competitive market while building a more engaged and diversified community of consumers, and in its internal components, of which storytelling falls indeed. In order to make sense of its change, it is necessary to move away from the digital dimension, to analyse instead the real first sources of inspiration, which have nurtured the expectation of luxury in the affluent consumer's imagination. As far as the word "narrative" is concerned, it is impossible not to think of storytelling in terms of literature and humanities, from which it indissolubly takes its form. "Narrative" per se is a concept that merges the narrative content (in the form of a story) and the narrative form (as a discourse): in essence, narrative can be

thought of as “a fundamental way that humans make sense of the world” (Meadows, 2002).

The underlying importance of incorporating stories into experiences is yet something coming from Aristotle’s poetics, where the protagonist is allowed to experience “proper pleasure” by recreating events and outcomes along his journey (Hiltunen, 2002). Translating this discourse into branding terms, consumers find storytelling a naturally pleasurable activity, capable of letting them embody both the role of the protagonist and of the audience when reliving the experience time after time. Many high-profile luxury brands, like Hermès, Gucci or Burberry, find their birthplace in European countries, which over the years have been the stage of important historical events as well as influential cultural movements. Narratives about luxury constitute a solid part of the literature of the XVIII century, recalling the wealth of the Avignon’s papal court or Marie Antoinette’s splendid Versailles residencies. In this light, luxury coincides perfectly with the expression of power, a sentiment that resides in humankind since the most ancient times and still finds manifestations in wealth.

This lust for luxury has later found a diverse expression in the more humble context of the Realism where, while society manifested its changing patterns with the rise of new economic classes, new cultural and artistic movements prevailed to display a society that, still suffering from economic depressions, was ready to aspire to something better. The literature of this period is permeated by a strong luxury ambition, one that could be found prominently, for example, in the narrative of Gustave Flaubert’s “*Madame Bovary*”. Although Flaubert’s novel is characterized by an in-depth description of luxury items, the author revealed how the quests of Emma Bovary in the realms of love and wealth represent nothing more than a search for a transcendent world, which, in Emma’s view, is represented by the longing for luxury (Black, 1985). Henceforth, the universe of “*Madame Bovary*”, without its context and aspiration to luxury, would not exist, as well as its characters and their portrayals.

Although luxury acquires a special relevance in this historical context, it is actually from the end of the XIX century that, with the imaginary of the Belle Époque, luxury brands started to build the base for the creation of their stories. In this perspective, it is important to mention that the cultural aura of this period almost coincides with the foundation of the most relevant luxury brands, such as the formerly mentioned ones, which date back

to the early decades of the twentieth century, and that still today use their long-established history as their main attribute of heritage. It is in fact only from the beginning of the XIX century that society began to witness a cultural, aesthetic and literary consecration of luxury (Calanca, 2002), that, most importantly, was not built only in the European context, but later also the United States' scenario.

The works of Emile Zola and Charles Baudelaire majestically display the imagery of the French Belle Époque, where luxury, eccentricity and fashion became the symbols of a country on the verge of richness. In "*Au Bonheur Des Dames*", Zola perfectly describes the luxury world of the new "Grand Magasins", proper cathedrals of commerce that became a fearsome incitement to expenses. Urging the madness of the increasingly expensive fashion, these luxury boutiques resembled the actual plans of the luxury goods group LVMH in the French capital city, which nowadays are gradually spreading to the rest of the world (Bishop, 2011).

In line with the general sentiment spreading in the French literature, Italy has also lived its period of great splendour which coincided with the Umbertina Age, when the Italian fashion ateliers were starting to spread particularly in the capital city, which was the favourite destination of many celebrities and movie stars. It is enough to think that the Italian jewellery and watches company Bulgari unveiled its flagship store in Via Condotti in just 1905, in the midst of the Belle Époque shining period (Triossi & Mascetti, 2007).

"I am a luxury animal, and the superfluous is as indispensable to me as it is to breath": with this citation from a letter to Emilio Treves in 1896, Gabriele D'Annunzio perfectly summarizes his philosophy, that he later conveyed in "*The Pleasure*" (Senardi, 1994). In this literary work, that most reflects all his love for fashion and mundanity, luxury storytelling assumes a strictly personal value for the author, yet still reflecting the general romanticism of an era that even later will be taken as an inspiration for many designers in the luxury industry. Just to mention one component of this aesthetics that became predominant on all aspects of life and fashion, dandyism represents the culmination of the Belle Époque imaginary, where a careful search for elegance and perfection of detail became the quintessence of luxury interpretation. This cultural portrayal, whose personalities span from D'Annunzio to Oscar Wilde, Marcel Proust and Robert De Montesquiou, has later found affirmation in the collection of many luxury fashion maisons that have translated these narratives about luxury, mundanity and aesthetics into

products. One example can be found in Hedi Slimane's collections for Dior Homme in the early 2000, where his personal interpretation of dandyism actually draws inspiration from the early aesthetics described in the stories of the Belle Époque authors (Ripley, 2018). Enticed by its eclectic figures, many luxury brands have recognized an ideal of elegance in dandyism, where luxury acquires an ideological value, and exteriority becomes expression of life through elegance and sophistication.

Anyway, another relevant source of inspiration for luxury narratives comes from the United States of the 1920s, an iconic era that echoes in very recognisable manners the conspicuous luxury consumption proudly exhibited by the wealthiest class of American people. Amused by the fervour of this era, Francis Scott Fitzgerald provided a perfect representation of the myth of the American self-made man in his most famous work "*The Great Gatsby*", creating a sharp idea of luxury consumers to the public imagination, which would have later been transposed to modernity. The lifestyle displayed in his narrative depicts the luxurious and extravagant, yet legitimate and recognized, icon of prosperity that inspired the creation of a clear image of affluent consumer not only in the relatively new American context, but also in the long-experienced rich European cultural scenario (Batat, 2019).

This literary excursus provides interesting insights relevant to the understanding of luxury storytelling. It applies particularly when it comes to define a line of separation between its two main components:

- I. Luxury storytelling in its purest form, as the narration guided and mediated by luxury brand;
- II. The narration about luxury that, independently from what high-profile brands attempt to do, incorporates their identities.

It is important to clarify that storytelling, before attaching to any phenomenon, is an activity that finds its roots in humanities and social sciences (Batat, 2019). Each discipline has loomed the theme of luxury according to perspectives that relate much to its field of application. In marketing, for example, the existing literature goes beyond the bare economic luxury definition in terms of price elasticity and demand, establishing a categorization of luxury goods based on experience and emotion (Kapferer and Bastien, 2009).

This consideration comes from recognizing the awareness of the origin of luxury storytelling, which grounds its foundations on the literary and cultural movements of Western society, and finally applies to the luxury consumption phenomenon for brands.

Taking as reference the literary examples mentioned above, the novel "*The Great Gatsby*" by Francis Scott Fitzgerald has been later readapted for its cinematic version, a piece of news that has struck gold among luxury brands. The narration about luxury in the novel has been turned into a wonderful occasion for high-profile brands to recreate a new imaginary aura around the movie's characters, converting the plot into well-crafted storytelling about luxury. As orchestrated by the film production team along important luxury maisons, the movie features forty MiuMiu and Prada 1920s cocktail dress designs – which have been on an itinerary display at Prada's flagship stores in New York, Tokyo and Shanghai – each of them embroidered with crystals, sequins, fringing and fur (Greene, 2013). In the same way, Tiffany & Co. features in the movie with fine jewellery based on 1920s Art-Nouveau-inspired designs consisting in bracelets, necklaces and dripping headpieces that, successively to the film, were sold on the market, strictly on request (Mosca, 2017). In addition, Moët & Chandon's luxury champagne spotlights in every party scene of the movie. Such new kind of product placement does not depend solely on obvious close-ups on these luxury products, whereas the narrative behind these brands constitutes the actual tool that marketers adopt (Greene, 2013).

In the domain of film culture, many examples could be mentioned where the presence of luxury brands has somehow contributed to add up a level of iconicity. It is enough to think of the original 1974 "*The Great Gatsby*" movie where Ralph Lauren features for costume designs, or Givenchy's ones for "*Breakfast at Tiffany's*", or Donna Karan's creations for 1998 "*Great Expectations*". Whether the intentions of product placement are clear for luxury brands, if done in a meaningful way, this kind of narration can add up a great extent of experientialism in the mind of consumers. The pervasive presence of luxury brands in movies or novels, hence in any kind of potential narration, has contributed to the creation of a consumer *tòpos* that, translated in branding and marketing terms, coincides with the one of affluent consumers. Nonetheless, in older times, novels were written for the sole purpose of being sold to magazines such that its authors could receive some remuneration for them: for this reason, Fitzgerald assumed too, most often the plots and its characters were adapted to conquer the sympathy of the reading public (Greene, 2013).

In this view, and adapted to contemporary times, storytelling about luxury contributes to create a specific placement for consumers' awareness, such as to create an added value for luxury brands, which eventually will make customers switch their purchase decisions on them. Anyway, this applies to the extent that there is clarity around the notion of luxury storytelling. As a product of humanities and literature, storytelling about luxury companies is influenced by a minor extent by luxury brands themselves.

On the other hand, building on heritage, artisanship and myths of icons, luxury storytelling done by brands proves a very successful strategic tool for narrative communication. The story of Salvatore Ferragamo, for example, represents a perfect kind of narration constructed, assembled and delivered by the brand, with no backing on the behalf of cultural agents. Eleventh of fourteen children, Salvatore Ferragamo was son of farmers who did not want him to choose shoemaking among the many professions. Taken by an artisan in a workshop when nine-year-old, his story resonates as the myth of the hero that, after being stumbled upon many unforeseen events along the way, made it to become who he wanted to be (Carù et al., 2017). This type of stories are the narratives built by the luxury brand with the objective of creating an emotionally charged aura in the consumers' perception.

As a final point, along with art, cinema or whichever else creative medium employed by cultural agents, storytelling about luxury is yet narration configured as an ecosystem from which luxury brands have drawn, but it is important to define the fact that this imagery, as far as it can inspire consumers, has not been commissioned by brands. Hence, luxury companies, although not framers of these stories, cannot help but incorporate the experiential dimension generated by this literature in their identities, precisely because it precedes them and their attempt to shape their own stories about it (Pini, 2017).

This dimension, by the way, is too large to be explored as it misinterprets the notion of storytelling as it is intended to be addressed by luxury brands. While these stories are not the main object of study of this research, it is essential to recognize the importance they cover as narratives that, yet not built by brands, have been created, framed and disseminated by the world of cultural production, that has seen something to tell in the world of luxury, with its objects, products and consumers.

2.3. Storytelling in the Luxury Industry – A Theoretical Perspective

The concept of storytelling in the luxury industry, as explained in the previous argumentations, traces back to narratives that belong to the world of literature and humanities. In this domain, some important differences concern the perception of luxury to consumers, especially when comparing the European perspective to the American one. In particular, the world of luxury has experienced a shift from a traditional perspective that is grounded in the comparison between conspicuous and distinctive luxury consumption, and its shift to an experiential dimension, which emerges as more sensible to symbolic and sensory self-brand associations. This differentiation constitutes the basis on which it is possible to trace down two diverse historical perspectives on the heritage of luxury brands, and which helps to understand also the type of consumers that self-associate with their values.

This section will take as a reference two major theories (Trigg, 2001):

- I. The theory of “conspicuous consumption” presented by the American anthropologist Thorstein Veblen in 1899, that reflects the values and reference literature of the American leisure class;
- II. The theory of “distinctive consumption” of the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, published later in 1979, and that builds on the ideals of consumption in luxury maisons.

These two perspectives have constituted the basis of studies on the consumption of luxury in many disciplines, helping luxury brand managers to comprehend the many motivations behind luxury consumption, and contributing to the studies in the fields of marketing and consumer behaviour (Batat, 2019).

The theory of conspicuous consumption lies on the assumption that the reason why individuals purchase luxury products is to exhibit a social status such that the other actors belonging to the same social class can recognize them (Trigg, 2001). In line with the adoption of luxury ideals by the new emerging social classes identifying with the bourgeoisie and the new rich (Batat, 2019), this theory reflects the American ideals of luxury, displayed by brands such as Ralph Lauren or Tommy Hilfiger. “*The Great Gatsby*” example, portrayed in the previous chapter, serves as a perfect reference for this luxury

consumption mechanism, where affluent consumers are more apt to display a luxurious lifestyle as a recognition sign for their fellow men, rather than from the perspective of personal values and ideals (Greene, 2013).

Contrarily from the American perspective, and conceived almost a century later, the theory of “distinctive luxury” by the French Pierre Bourdieu, although built on Veblen’s approach, differs for the role designed for luxury consumption. According to Bourdieu’s perspective, affluent consumers perceive the consumption of luxury products as a way to differentiate themselves from the mass trends (also in the same social sphere) such that they can affirm their own identities (Trigg, 2001). In this light, luxury products become symbols of influence conveying a specific culture of their own. As far as the Bourdeusian perspective is concerned, European luxury brands, such as Dior, Chanel or Prada, are described in accordance to their brand DNA, and define themselves as part of some specific codes conveying different types of luxury cultures. These codes reflect the profile of different women who, in line with the ideas of themselves, rely on luxury storytelling to convey a story (and identity) of their own (Batat, 2019).

Although Veblen has theorized the cultural dimension of luxury before Bourdieu, his model seems to reflect American luxury brands who have seen their foundations in the last fifty years, namely Tommy Hilfiger, Stella McCartney or Ralph Lauren, whose public imageries find their roots in the American literature of the Belle Époque. On the other hand, Bourdieu’s work is very recent, thinking that his rationale has been conceived in 1979, but applies indeed to European luxury brands born in the late XIX century, and having a history of their own that, although inspired by humanities, relies on heritage, tradition and artisanship, where the founder is seen as an unforgettable icon. In this view, storytelling for luxury brands acts as a form of cultural capital, namely the “accumulated stock of knowledge about the products of artistic and intellectual tradition” (Trigg, 2001), that applies to different extent from the American to the European perspective, depending on the cultural production of reference.

Anyway, both perspectives assign to symbolism an essential importance. Whether distinctive or conspicuous, both theories give meaning to luxury consumption practices as anchored within different cultural backgrounds and moulded by specific social codes. This theoretical discourse serves as a critical premise to examine the role of storytelling for European and non-European luxury brands. According to Kapferer and Bastien

(2012), there are two models to develop a luxury brand, which reflect deeply their identities and histories.

The first one is more typical of European luxury brands, which identify with the distinctive luxury perception, where the quality of the product is taken to the extreme and the designer stays true to the brand's heritage, maintaining the same original spirit of the founder. Moreover, European luxury brands build on their brand DNA and country-of-origin effect, leveraging their storytelling strategy as based on heritage, craftsmanship, the myth of the founder and tradition (Kim et al., 2016). In this European vision, history nurtures the brand to the point that it becomes its strength, and adds an emotional component to the brand's assets. Furthermore, Kapferer and Bastien (2012) highlight that the myth created around the luxury brand's history constitutes the "real source of the brand's social idealization". Perfectly in line with this European perspective, Gucci's history begins in 1921 in Florence, when Guccio Gucci lays the foundations to his fashion house in the specialization in leather goods. Since its origins, the equestrian theme is recurrent in Gucci's creations. Moreover, the quality, artisanship, and the founder's taste are important elements that characterize the brand's philosophy. Gucci has been able to evolve over the years, still maintaining a link with its tradition and becoming an icon of style and refinement. The reference to the past rests in the re-enactment of the symbols of its origins, in its "Made in Italy" perception, and in the emphasis on craftsmanship and respect for quality (Mosca, 2017).

The second model, typical of more recent luxury brands of American origin and characteristic of the theory of conspicuous luxury, does more with the personality of the creator and, lacking a history of its own, it manages to build one from its reference literature. In addition, the model provides that the point of sale constitutes a way to create brand identity, building an atmosphere such that the brand's values can be perceived in the store, so giving a priority to the experiential dimension of clients. Considering again Ralph Lauren as a reference, the luxury brand was founded in the Seventies by Ralph Lifschitz, an American designer little known back then that, leveraging on his Gatsby-like personality, managed to create a global luxury icon (Mosca, 2017). It represents the classic traditional image of the American lifestyle, re-interpreting and emphasizing its symbols and values, to shape plausible imageries that might please consumers. As a result, Ralph Lauren managed to invent its story from scratch, successfully building an appealing

identity derived from its stories' emotional involvement (Kapferer and Gaston-Breton, 2002). When Kapferer and Bastien (2009) asked themselves how American entrepreneurs could create valuable luxury brands with no heritage or long history of reference, they found the answers to this question in the devaluation of the importance of real history, constructing narratives in its place. In line with the argument, they claimed, “this is the talent of Hollywood, creator of mythical histories, maker of images that cause the planet to dream” (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009).

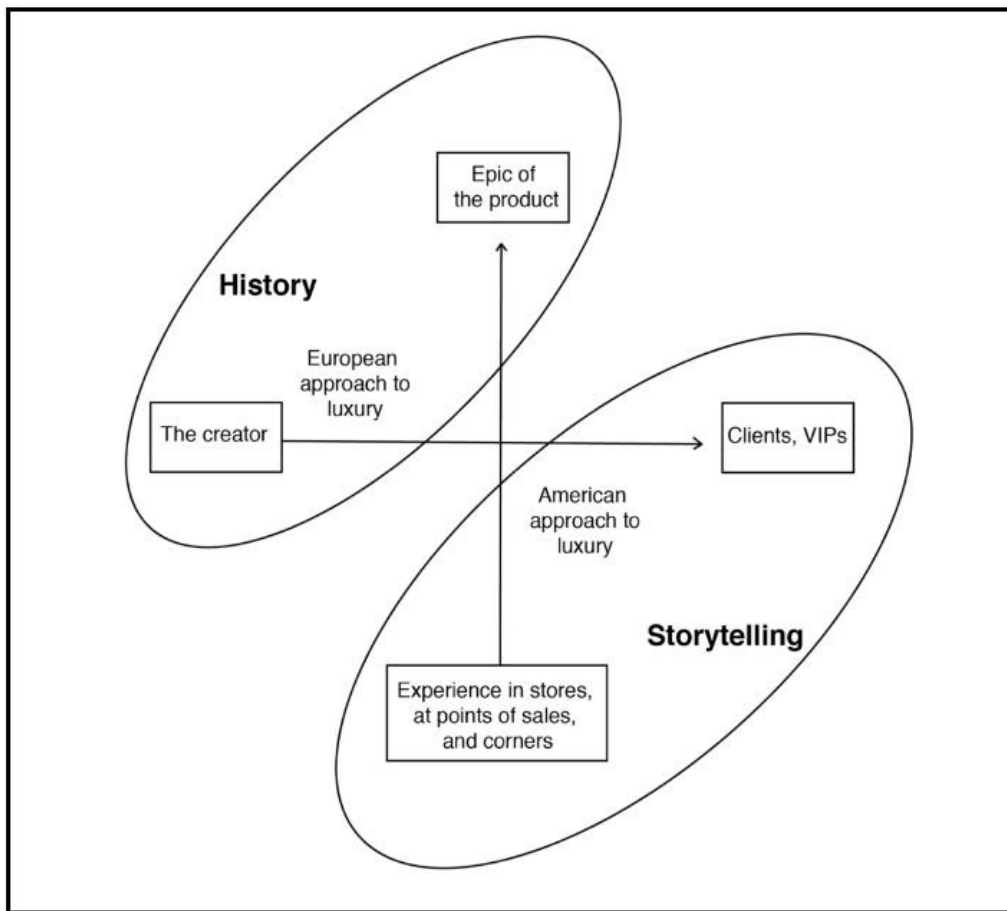


Figure 3: The Two Modes of Luxury Brand Building
 Source: Kapferer & Bastien, (2009).

Storytelling represents a crucial component for both models. In the European perspective, it begins with the real history of the brand, where the founder and creator is an icon to the point that in most cases the brand is named after him or her. Moreover, the importance of heritage as the main source of stories makes the brand more remarkable and recognizable to the public. According to Misiura (2006), this celebration of the past is

the fundamental tool for the construction of a relationship of trust and empathy with the client, whose involvement is one of main objectives (if not the most important one) to develop and promote the brand's corporate heritage.

By the way, storytelling serves as a perfect strategic tool for brands following the American model too, and indeed its importance is even more relevant than that in the European perspective, since stories, which in most cases are a product of invention, must be crafted majestically by marketers such that the brand's values are clearly understandable and emotionally engaging. At the core of the question, as the luxury marketing researchers Kapferer and Bastien (2009) argue, "If there is no history, it must be invented". Moreover, they add up three classifications of history which luxury companies can use: the brand's true history, which builds on the myth; the creation of a new legend based on reference literature from the past; and finally the authors supplement the framework with a third type of history, which consist in the re-appropriation of true historical elements by recent brands (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009). This third classification can be mirrored in the luxury vintage champagne brand Dom Pérignon, which although founded in the 1950s, has been able to borrow a mythical history through its name. The individual in question shall be the monk Pierre Pérignon, who in 1665 created by accident an effervescent straw wine that soon became the favourite at the courts of Versailles, claiming that it could "make women more attractive" (Beverland, 2005).

While providing an interesting framework to comprehend the logic of luxury consumption and the values of affluent consumers, today these two models are aligning, since European luxury brands are increasingly leveraging the atmospheres of flagship stores, and American luxury brands are building a stronger brand identity suited for a more demanding and sophisticated European clientele (Mosca, 2017). In addition, the cultural and historical evolution of luxury will translate in new major challenges for brands in the industry, in order to create a balance between their historical customers (e.g. French, European, English, North American, etc.) and their new clientele (e.g. Russian, Indian, African, Chinese, etc.), who have discovered and adopted luxury in their culture more recently (Batat, 2019).

2.4. Subjects and Themes for Luxury Narratives

Stories have been an important communication tool since the beginning of times. As luxury brands manage to have a specific place in the imagery of consumers, the stories told by these companies communicate to a great extent the brand's codes and values (Fog et al., 2005). Moreover, whether real or products of fictitious elaboration, stories are meant to provide a reason of existence to luxury brands (Salzer-Mörlin and Strannegård, 2004).

These stories can be interpreted also as part of detailed frameworks that enclose luxury brands, by combining them with archetypal stories. Jung (1990) defines an archetype as an "unconscious primary form, an original pattern or prototype in the human mind"; Wertime (2003) adds up to the definition by arguing, "[...] archetypes are not learned or acquired – they are with us from birth and are as natural and embedded in us as our own DNA". In addition, Campbell and Abadie (1981) have claimed that the most ancient archetypal forms flourished in Sumer and Akkad around 2500 B.C.

Jung's claims (1990) go on examining the cultural perspective of consumers, which contributes to provide a path (which might be a product of deep memories developed into archetypes) to narrative transportation enhanced by the formation of myths over time. In this light, the central proposition around archetypes involves that storytelling of such events embraces conversations between luxury brands and consumers on both conscious and unconscious levels of thinking (Zaltman, 2003). Stories and storytelling in particular, are crucial to understand the consumer psychology, reason why marketers have drawn insights from consumer storytelling theory in order to frame narratives that manage to excite luxury brands' clients (Escalas, 2006).

Considered as the main topic of research of his academic career, Woodside (2010) addresses consumer storytelling theory starting from the archetypal framework of storytelling.

Consumer storytelling theory is based on five important propositions, which place the consumer psychology at the center of the luxury marketing examination.

- I. The first proposition assumes that people always tend to think narratively rather than in terms of paradigms or arguments (McKee, 2003);

- II. The second proposition lies on the assumption that, in storytelling theory, the consumer stores and retrieves information in the form of episodes or stories: as such, incidents, experiences, evaluations, and summaries of person-to-person or person-to-brand interactions located in specific contexts (Fournier, 1998);
- III. The third proposition is based on Aristotle's drama theory (Hiltunen, 2002) which states that to retrieve, relive and re-experience stories results in "proper pleasure" – a kind of cathartic process that consents to experience one or more archetypal myths (Woodside et al., 2008);
- IV. The fourth proposition states that specific brands and products can assume a key role in facilitating the enactment of specific archetypes, resulting in the previously mentioned "proper pleasure" prompted by reliving the experience thanks to story repetition (Woodside et al., 2008);
- V. The fifth and last proposition can be summarized by the question "how do I know what I think until I hear what I say?" (Weick, 1995). Individuals pursue clarity to make sense of prior conversations, and through storytelling and particularly repetition, they can shed light on events and outcomes. In fact, repetition is a plea for clarity not only for the listener, but also for the storyteller that, by re-telling the story, manages to recognize the archetypes being enacted (Woodside et al., 2008; Weick, 1995). The idea of repetition will be mentioned further in this thesis when referred to the experience of consumers in stores, and especially the role of sales assistants in luxury storytelling.

Put in simpler terms, buying, wearing, and experiencing luxury brands allows consumers to put in place psychological archetypes that result in a deep connection to culture, lifestyle and state-of-being, whether these stories may belong to the subjective or collective imaginary.

In their book "The Hero and the Outlaw", Mark and Pearson (2001) identify twelve separate archetypes that could be enacted through brands. To be accurate, not all of them can be applied in the luxury context due to the framework of the stories, as well as the fact that one luxury brand might or might not incorporate different archetypes.

As Figure 4 displays, these twelve archetypes are oriented to different functions depending on the values and characteristics of brands.



Figure 4: The Psychology of Branding: The Twelve Brand Archetypes Personal Adaptation. Source: Mark & Pearson, (2001).

The Hero, the Magician and the Outlaw are concerned with leaving a mark on the world by creating a legacy. The Hero archetype follows sentiments of honesty, candidness and bravery, and it represents the core archetype of ego orientation. Heroes want to change the vision of the world, and their characterizations may find confirmation in the figure of Coco Chanel. Beyond her artistry and entrepreneurial spirit, she was an independent woman who managed to do what she wanted. Born into poverty, she used her sewing skills to earn her living as a seamstress but, overcoming all the obstacles along the way,

from the misery of the war to her social status, she began her career as the most influential and legendary tailor and fashion designer of France's fashion scene through hard work and tenacity (Font, 2004). Anyway, Chanel can also embed in her personality the archetype of the Lover, with her idea of femininity and seduction, conveying a noble and elegant brand image. More luxury brands that embed the Lover archetype could be Tiffany & Co. and Dior, using respectively New York and Paris as the perfect scenarios for special moments and celebrations of love. The Magician archetype seeks fullness in himself and the others, connects the opposites and pursues knowledge and sharing. By developing a vision and living in it, Karl Lagerfeld enacts this archetype, as well as the designers Marc Jacobs and John Galliano (Arnault, 2001). The Outlaw archetype seeks revolution, and builds its character on radical freedom disregarding the general standards, hence challenging the status quo. Vivienne Westwood, Maison Martin Margiela, and Diesel embody perfectly the Outlaw archetype, being bold with leadership, courage and power, and seeing conformity as the common enemy. Encouraging, facilitating and empowering the "Redvolution", in reference to its founder Renzo Rosso, Diesel tends to build a family perception based on resistance (Micheletti, 2013).

The second quadrant focuses on the archetypes seeking paradise, namely the Explorer, the Sage and the Innocent. The Explorer archetype seeks freedom through discovering the world in a search for the self. The theme of the journey is the predominant subject of Louis Vuitton, founded at the time of the French colonial expansion, and represents the central subject of the luxury brand's historical storytelling. Iconic products of the French maison, Louis Vuitton trunks take up the nautical motif, reflecting the journey of the brand from a small company to a global luxury champion, emphasizing the concept of brand domination (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009). The Innocent archetype instead reflects an idea of purity and virtuosity, demonstrating trust and optimism in the world, along with freedom from the responsibility of having committed something wrong (Hartwell & Chen, 2012). The luxury brand that stands on these premises is Stella McCartney, having at the core of its values the belief in a better world. Her sustainable practices constitute the foundation of the brand, which finds inspiration in nature and animals, along with elements connected with childhood (Yang et al., 2017). The Sage archetype, strictly connected with the world of computer science and information technology, lacks its recognition within luxury brands, but is dedicated to the discovery of truth, using intelligence and analysis to understand the world (Hartwell & Chen, 2012).

The third quadrant is concerned with providing structure to the world, and embeds the archetypes of the Creator, the Ruler and the Caregiver. The Creator archetype is expressed through the need to stand out as a cultural pioneer, with a fervent commitment for self-expression and a high sense of aesthetics. It is synonym with sophisticated taste and unique perspective (Hartwell & Chen, 2012), perfectly delivered by brands such as Marc Jacobs and Alexander McQueen. The latter luxury brand reflects the quintessence of originality and fine taste, with the ability of his designer to be always a forerunner of styles, capturing the zeitgeist and transform it in stunning fashion designs. The Ruler archetype, instead, represent boldness, control and power, showing a tendency to leadership. Confident and successful, this archetype is permeated by a sense of achievement and high-status. Infused with a deep need for order, brands that fall within this archetype stand for success: among the most important ones, one could find Rolex, Louis Vuitton, Mont Blanc and Burberry (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009). Even Armani, pervaded by the power of elegance, represents the perfect example of the Ruler archetype, in the constant quest for success. From the prestige built around its iconic suits and the minimalistic interior design of its flagship stores, everything oozes with power and exclusivity. The Caregiver archetype, as well as the Sage one, in addition to the Everyman one (displayed in the final quadrant), lack their identities within luxury brands, considering that they are tied more to cosmetics (in the former case) and utility (in the latter case), while the last one stands particularly far from the luxury vision.

Finally, the last quadrant is concerned with creating a connection with others, and concerns the Everyman archetype (excluded from the luxury archetypal conception for its distance from exclusivity), the Jester archetype and the Lover archetype. The Jester seeks to live to the fullest, play and be funny, by twisting meanings and surprising the public in the most unconventional ways (Hartwell & Chen, 2012). Moschino is the perfect example of the Jester archetype, having its unique style and playfulness that stands incomparable to any other brand in the luxury industry. Humour and irony stand out at the core of the brand's values, recreating colourful and entertaining shows that transport the consumer in a surreal world. Finally, the Lover represents one of the most encompassing and powerful archetype in the luxury industry, creating an intimate and intrinsic relationship with individuals, based on beauty, sensuality and passion. Transcending emotions through the sensory and sensual experience (Hartwell & Chen, 2012), this powerful archetype reflects motivation for commitment and a desire for

intimacy, something that feels close to many luxury brands in terms of values and codes. Examples encompass Tiffany & Co., Chanel, Dior, Victoria's Secret, and many more. Tom Ford is another iconic brand that identifies in the Lover archetype, creating a universe that is synonymous with luxury, lust, indulgence and superior aesthetics (Woodside, 2010).

By the way, important to the analysis is to recognize that each one of the brands mentioned do not fall within a single category of archetype (Woodside et al., 2008). Chanel falls within both the Hero and the Lover archetypes, as well as Louis Vuitton that is represented as both the Explorer and the Ruler. Archetypes help luxury brands to connect with their clients on an enrooted human level, garnering a primordial kind of affection tied to values and beliefs (Pini, 2017). They represent powerful tools that can help brands to differentiate themselves in terms of identity, rendering their stories more authentic. Anyway, while these luxury brands might embody different archetypal frameworks, using plenty of them could be damaging in terms of distinctiveness, reason why it is important to stick to one and try to stay true to the history and roots of the company. In addition, research shows how consumers engage with archetypal structures also through advertising imagery, which uses widely recognized symbols such as the tree of life, the siren, the earth, and so forth (Mark & Pearson, 2001). While other authors and researchers suggest the existence of different possible archetypes in addition to the ones described above, their selection can range a wide choice of options, offering hints to the storytelling structure and delivering a character model that might influence brand behaviour during the construction of the narrative and its interaction with customers (Woodside, 2010).

An alternative approach to luxury brand storytelling derives from consumer psychology on brands as narrative built on master plots, where different characters and details contribute to make them fresh, alive and unique (Papadatos, 2006). The plot is something incorporated into narratives since the most ancient times: just to think about Aristotle's "Poetics" as a primary source, the plot (or mythos) represents the most important component of drama construction, and the basis on which to create a "structure of incidents", the sequence of events which takes place in time and space (Hiltunen, 2002). According to Aristotle, the plot of a good story must have a beginning, middle and end, where actions must follow a logical sequence (Hiltunen, 2002).

The German novelist and theorist Gustav Freytag has later transposed Aristotle's dramatic theories in a proper operational framework, according to which the narrative structure breaks down the story into five parts: exposition, complication (rising action), climax, reversal (falling action) and resolution (denouement). This framework creates narratives that are the result of a chain of events governed by a cause-effect relationship.

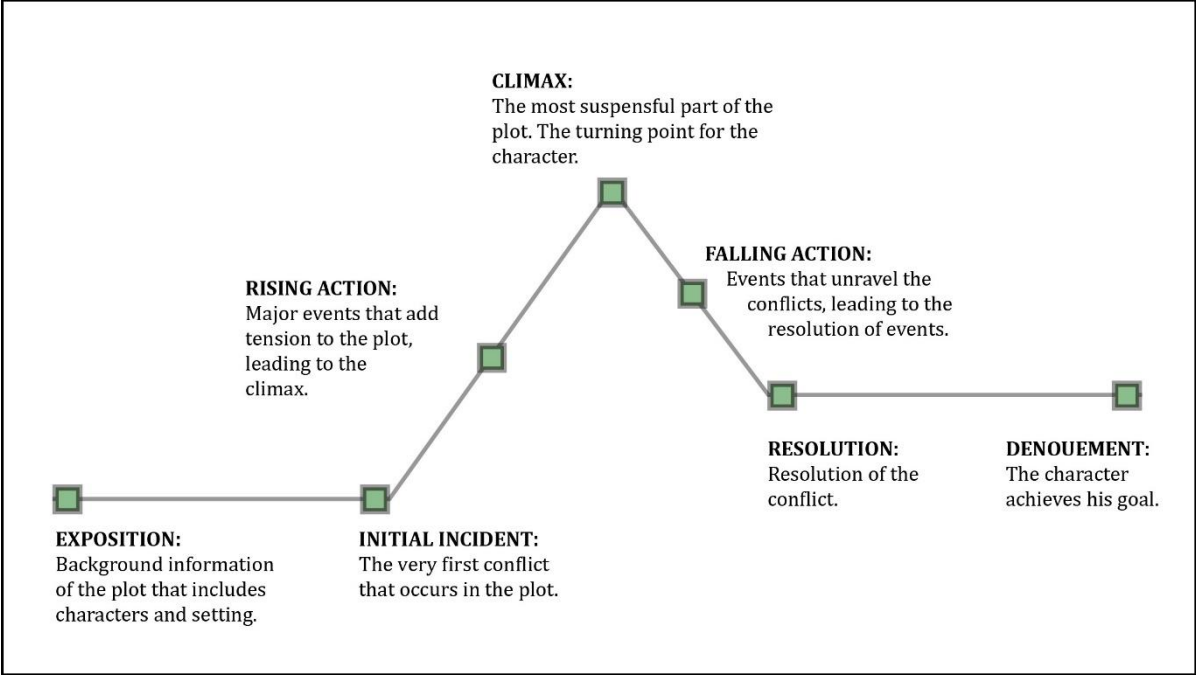


Figure 5: Freytag's Pyramid: The Seven Steps in Successful Storytelling Personal Adaptation. Source: Freytag, (2008).

The Freytag's pyramid is a valid pattern to examine luxury companies stories' plots, in order to analyse the narrative structures that govern brands' storytelling strategies. The extensive use of this framework allows the listener-consumer to produce self-brand associations in their minds, prompting a mechanism that stimulates the unconscious and enhances the probability of purchase decision (Freytag, 2008).

Using the Freytag's pyramid as a pattern to examine the stories' plots, luxury brands like Saint Laurent and Dior seem perfect examples to incorporate these theories in marketing and branding applications. Being luxury maisons that belong to the European scene, and collocating their birth respectively in 1946 and 1961, their storytelling strategies rely on the history of their founders. The long tradition that runs through them associates their

foundations to mythical origins, which locates their birth in artisan workshops and specialized laboratories. Thanks to their founders, endowed with exceptional talents, the long-established tradition of these maisons has enabled to perpetuate the secret of their success – a mix of techniques and savoir-faire – from one generation to another (Mosca, 2017).

Christian Dior's story can be identified within the XIX century European literature, which perfectly displays the drama of the conservative society witnessing the decay of traditional values because of the unstoppable progress of modernity (Donzé & Wubs, 2019). Born in a wealthy family, Christian Dior was a loved and cherished son who lived the happiest childhood. Snatched by the 1929 Wall Street crash, and afterwards by the Second World War, the comfortable life that characterized all his life was taken away from him, until 1947, when he stood up to rebuild his dreams from nothing. Three main pillars characterize the plot of Dior's story: love, home and family that, following the previous characterization, let him fall in the Lover archetype. Anyway, he also incorporates the Hero who, defeated by the poverty of the war, managed to get back on his feet and give shape to his dreams. The Freytag's pyramid of Dior's narrative starts with a comfortable life (exposition) that is disrupted by the confrontation with society (rising action), eventually losing all his possessions (climax), and bringing him to fight for his desires and memories (falling action), finally fulfilling his dreams (denouement).

Although Dior has been his guide and mentor, Yves Saint Laurent's values and ideals diverge from him. Saint Laurent master plot is founded on the archetypes of the Outlaw and the Lover, building his character on the fight against the common customs of his era and at the same time liberating the woman from her submission, to express her femininity and sensuality (Seeling & Teibler, 2010). The brand's character was indeed given by the personality of his designer: impertinent, provocative, seductive and unapproachable (Kapferer & Bastien, 2012). Born in a bourgeois family, he developed a passion for couture since the early age, and after moving to Paris, he got in contact with Christian Dior, who has been his mentor for many years and that, after his death, left him the reins of the Dior maison. In the midst of his success, Saint Laurent was forced to join the French army and, during his military period, he found out to have been dismissed of his creative director position at Dior, something that led him to depression and to his addiction to drugs. Anyway, when he came back to Paris, he filed a lawsuit against Dior for infringing

contractual terms and won, receiving a huge compensation that allowed him to start his business, that later became one of the most relevant couture maisons in the world (Seeling & Teibler, 2010). As it may seem already clear, Yves Saint Laurent's Freytag pyramid begins with a creative childhood (exposition) that brought him to meet important personalities along the way and to realize his dreams very early in his life (rising action) until the war, depression and drugs destroyed his career (climax). Anyway, after winning the lawsuit against Dior (falling action), he overcame every difficulty and founded his business (denouement).

The present analysis provides very useful insights on the role of storytelling for luxury brands, showing how narratives engage clients and establish long-lasting relationships with them due to the presence of powerful narrative tools that stimulate the unconscious, relating the identity of the brand to archetypes and master plots already present in the consumer's mind. In this light, it is interesting to note how luxury brands bet on culture and humanities for a dual purpose: to build strong identities and work on cultural renewal (Escalas, 2006).

2.5. Luxury Storytelling Techniques and Narrative Components

According to Shepard's research on storytelling (2009), six elements make a story a "good story": a strong theme, an engaging plot, a suitable structure, memorable characters, an appropriate setting and an appealing style. Thinking about luxury brands and storytelling as two elements that incorporate each other, the natural link between branding and storytelling becomes clear, having the same starting point, that is the emotional engagement. If a luxury brand rests on defined values and codes, a good story communicates those values. Stakeholders and employees are the first individuals who come in close contact with the emotionally charged values of a luxury brand, whereas customers approach this experiential dimension through good stories which, relying on archetypal and mythical narrative structures, stimulate their unconscious, finally creating an emotional connection (McKee, 2003). In this view, storytelling is endowed with the power to reinforce the luxury brand both internally and externally. While branding represents the goal, storytelling acts as the means (Pulizzi, 2012).

In this view, as mentioned in the previous chapters, heritage plays an essential role, since it represents the origin from which branding, and subsequently storytelling, comes from.

To understand whether a luxury brand can use heritage as a strategic lever for its storytelling, three specific characteristics should be present (Lucci & Sacchi, 2014). The first element consists in having a story to tell, a past that can be positively associated to the actual identity of the brand. In the second issue, relational in nature, the brand must be determined to increase its credibility over time, consequently influencing their consumers with their stories. Finally, Lucci and Sacchi (2014) indicate the importance of brand management for long-lived companies, which turned the luxury brand into an icon over the years.

Hence, in order to create a deeply engaging luxury experience, marketers use storytelling components to respond to some specific strategic goals, integrating elements that come from the domain of experiential branding. Mosca (2017) identifies four main storytelling sources:

- I. The link to the past (Wiedmann et al., 2012);
- II. The myth of the founder and his/her family;
- III. The manufacturing techniques of the past and the savoir-faire;
- IV. The people who made famous the luxury brand and its products.

The link to the past refers to the historical heritage of the brand and its products, and it is attributable to three factors:

- a. The historical context in which the product was born and its “mythical” origins serving as the background to the specific business, thanks to the passion and craft of its founder. It is about a convergence of human capabilities and a unique and one-of-a-time situation (Wiedmann et al., 2012);
- b. The historical context in which the brand was born (which acts as a consequence of the previous factors). The brand starts to emerge thanks to the capability of adapting its products to suit events as they unfold, and to satisfy the need of its consumers;
- c. The events that made the brand and its product famous, which can be political, economic or historical in nature, and allow the construction of a story that connects the brand to that specific event, strengthening its credibility.

For example, the Swiss luxury watchmaker Omega collaborated with the NASA for space exploration missions. In particular, the Omega Speedmaster Professional Chronograph has been the first watch on the moon, worn by the Apollo 11 astronaut Buzz Aldrin (Nelson, 1993). In 1909, Omega also timed the Gordon-Bennet Cup, an international hot-air ballooning competition, not to mention the launch of the first diver’s watch, the Omega Marine.

Anyway, the storytelling of the brand often links very closely to the history of the person who created it and managed to promote it over time. The personal story, the career and the genius of the founder are all elements that contributed to forge the myth of a luxury brand and its unique identity (Batat, 2019). As previously mentioned, the story of the founder is frequently raised to the rank of icon or myth, which most often serves not only to educate new audiences, but also to capitalize on the authenticity and historical anchoring of the brand. On the matter, many examples have been mentioned already, such as the myths of Coco Chanel or Christian Dior. According to Batat (2019), the transformation of the brand DNA into strong storytelling happens through four main phases: identity, relation, story and incarnation. This methodology, as illustrated by Figure 6, serves as a reminder for the main objectives related to each step.

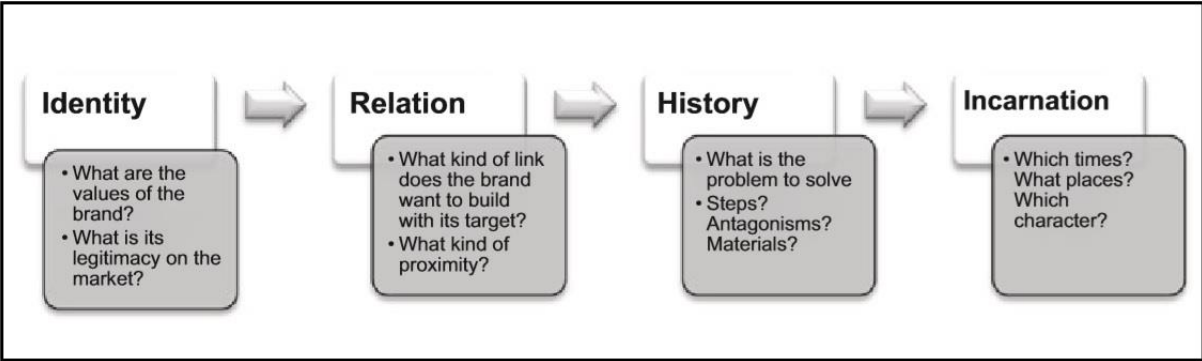


Figure 6: Steps in Storytelling Construction
 Source: Batat, (2019).

This model is particularly useful to the development of narrative communication, since it rests on the pillars of story construction to develop a plot that must be consistent from the timing of the story to the description of its characters.

The third important source of storytelling consists in the savoir-faire and know-how of the manufacturing techniques of the luxury brand, very often based on field expertise and a long history of tradition. Finally, this unique know-how gives meaning to its pricing. The quality and craftsmanship of these products are actually the pillars on which both large luxury groups and small artisanal luxury companies base their style and exclusivity (Mosca, 2017). Harry Winston, the American luxury jeweller and watchmaker, is synonymous with precision, talent and diligence: the same characteristics that are necessary to the artisans of the brand laboratory. Louis Vuitton is another clear example of luxury brand that puts tradition, quality and excellence at the core of its brand heritage storytelling. The theme of the journey, which has always characterized the creations of the brand, covers a primary role in storytelling construction. Due to the exclusivity, quality and creativity that characterize the brand, there is an extreme focus towards the manufacturing processes and the details, finalized to a critical perfection of all the products' components. The founder's workshop, which is technically the first store of the brand, is crucial as, most of the times, it represents the major setting of the story. Anyway, its role will be further analysed in the next chapters of this dissertation.

Often, a luxury brand accentuates its symbolic value and increases its notoriety thanks to the stories built around the famous personalities who have worn, promoted or exhibited the luxury product in specific occasions. They represent the prominent clients that have been associated with the icons of the brand over time, or these whom have determined a consumption ritual of the products with their inimitable style, representing a point of reference for the worldwide affluent clients of the brand (Mosca, 2017). Tiffany & Co. is inextricably linked with the actress Audrey Hepburn, thanks to her celebrated movie "*Breakfast at Tiffany's*". The same mental mechanism leads the consumer to think about Marilyn Monroe when mentioning Chanel N. 5, or Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis for Valentino's creations. Of course, these famous personalities contribute to an important branch of luxury storytelling, constituted by visual narrative art, which takes place through photography, cinema, art and visual advertising. In fact, VNA contributes to provide a tangible, emotional and symbolic experience to the audience, which is uniquely satisfying in the fact that a larger public, whether or not affluent in nature, can enjoy it over time, learning the stories of the brand (Megehee & Spake, 2012). An in-depth characterization of VNA (in its abbreviated form) will be the main focus of the next chapter.

2.6. The Power of Visual Narratives for the Luxury Industry

As a strategic tool for narrative communication, storytelling gives prominence to cultural, experiential and emotional dimensions that engage their customers, by sharing common values and ideals through meaningful and evocative experiences. In this view, luxury brand managers have always recognized the power of creativity, not only in the touch of the designer or the artistic potential of the business, yet moreover in the creativity that should be implemented from a marketing perspective, aimed at retaining current customers and attracting a new and wider audience (Batat, 2019). In addition, creativity highlights the brand's potential for renewal and capacity of innovation, guaranteeing a surprise factor for its customers that serves to raise their awareness to novelties whilst appreciating the brand's story and long-established heritage (Ravasi & Lojcono, 2005).

Compared to a proper well-narrated story, a more striking and immediate communication mode consists in transposing narratives into visuals. As claimed by Batat (2019), by arranging immersive customer experiences, the power of visual narratives resides in the incorporation of the history and identity of the luxury brand in simple and concise images that, from the functional point of view, simplify information to consumers, consequently easing their purchase decision. According to Megehee and Woodside (2010), visual narrative art (VNA) corresponds to the mapping of scenes, acts and episodes in a narrative, using different types of media ranging from photography, cinema, art, theatre and dance, to transmit a meaningful imagery of events in the story. With cave paintings representing the first attempts to make sense of reality (Megehee & Woodside, 2010), visual narrative art is among the most ancient forms of human storytelling, still enduring in the 21st century as a major means of communication. Especially in the luxury context, the creation of visual narratives results in implications for marketing and management practices. In particular, by producing VNA of stories, brand managers accomplish several objectives (Megehee & Spake, 2012). Firstly, visuals help to mentally reorganize and expand the sense making of events in the story, allowing the consumer to absorb its significance more effectively. Whether through movies or ad photography, if the visuals tell a story, they will provide multiple reference signs for retrieval and interpretation, therefore easing self-brand associations in consumers (Shank, 1990). Secondly, VNA let the unconscious surface, allowing again the identification of consumers in archetypes and

myths, and revealing hidden meanings of the brand that, translated in the logic of consumption, tend to motivate and positively influence the purchase behaviour. Finally, the third objective of VNA creation rests in the pleasurable fulfilment for the artist to express emotions (Woodside et al., 2008). More generally, consumer-brand associations stem from the unconscious process that, through the desire of archetype fulfilment, inspires the consumer to bond emotionally with the brand (Megehee & Woodside, 2010). For example, as the archetype-brand-consumer (ABC) triangle echoes the explicit and implicit references with the brand Dior, the advertising slogan “J’Adore Dior” reproduces the power of attraction and femininity, linked with the perspective of destruction, that associates the brand to the Siren archetype, exalting the role of companion, goddess and competitor also linked to the figures of Aphrodite or Artemis (Woodside, 2010).

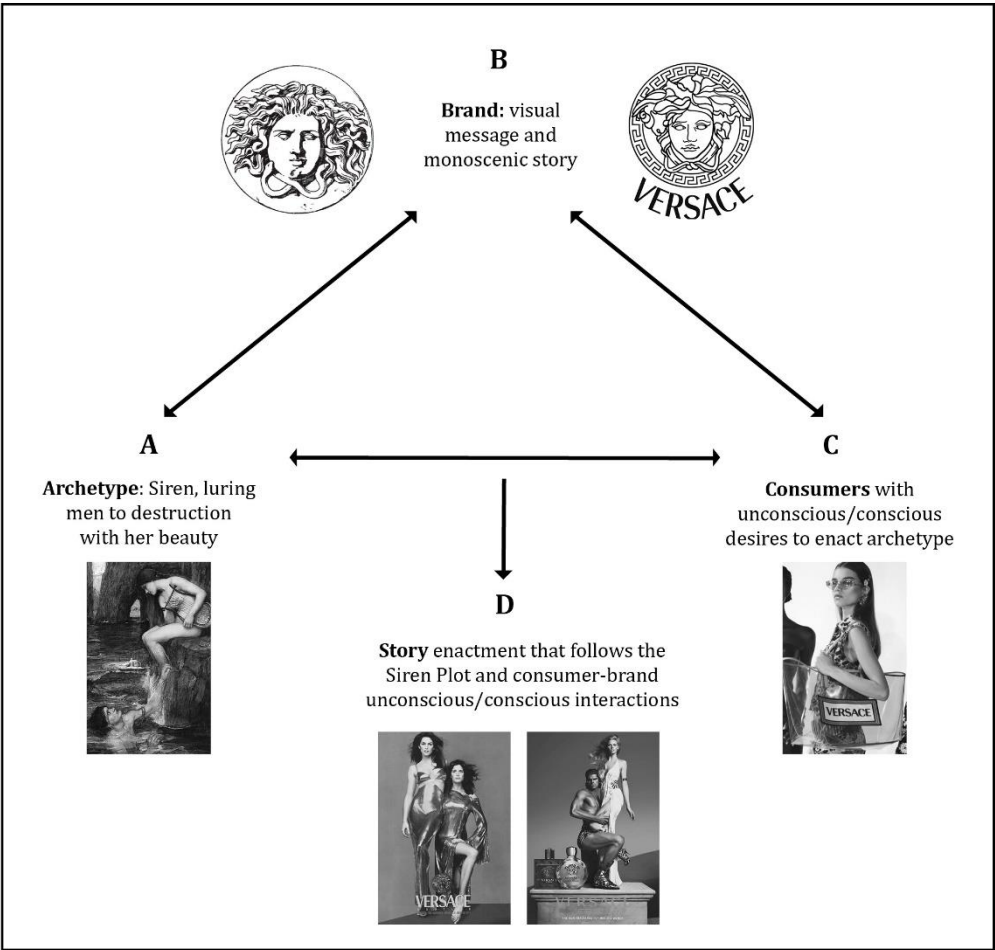


Figure 7: Brand and Consumer Interacting in Storytelling Production of Siren Archetype
Source: Megehee & Woodside, (2010).

This type of self-association works also on other brands with their iconic products, just like Allure by Chanel, or Envy by Gucci (Megehee & Spake, 2012). As shown in Figure 7, a clear application of this mechanism can be found in the luxury brand Versace, which finds Magna Grecia among his inspirations along with the theme of the Greek myth, being both Gianni and Donatella Versace, the founders of the company, of Calabrese origins (Mason, 2005). Versace's Medusa embeds a striking, instinctual visual story where the Siren archetype realization is already in the company's logo. In Greek mythology, the Medusa is one of the three Gorgons and, unlike her two sisters who were both immortal and monstrous, she was mortal and incredibly beautiful. When Athena found out that she was having a love affair with god of the seas, Poseidon, she transformed her into a creature with snakes instead of hair and a gaze so penetrating that she could turn anyone who caught her eye into stone. Gianni Versace declared to have chosen Medusa not only for "her magnetic appeal and strong reference with his land", but also for the archetype realization of this image of empowered, yet dangerous and proud woman that, since the launch of his first collection, Versace wanted to convey in her clients (Demarcsek et al., 2018). As such, Jung's (1990) Siren embodies an independent, confident, ambitious woman, who is willing to take risks for the sake of love, but still maintaining her adventurous spirit and fierce passion. Another interesting case is the one of Hermès, which is not only the surname of its founder Thierry Hermès, but also the name of the Greek god of commerce. While the brand-name association to its mythical background was made much later in time, indeed it remains a relevant branding action on the behalves of marketers, who could reference the most brilliant of gods and ruler over wealth, commerce and good fortune (Demarcsek et al., 2018).

2.6.1. Visual Narrative Art in Cinema: Luxury Storytelling in "*Breakfast at Tiffany's*" and "*Belle De Jour*"

While the employment of VNA might have a powerful and recognizable impact on consumers, to complement it with aligned verbal storytelling can nourish the customers' imagination in ways that visual, oral or written languages alone could never do (Megehee & Woodside, 2010). In particular, luxury fashion and cinema have always been closely tied, both being two artistic forms of cultural expression arisen from the

bourgeoisification of modernity. Anyway, it was not until the 1920s and 1930s that the link became factual, allowing these two artistic disciplines to match indissolubly and complete each other (Rees-Roberts, 2018). Another element that these two industries have in common is the creation of stories, illusions, dreams and holistic experiences. In fact, the Hollywood setting has been the perfect scenario from the marketing and promotion perspective, since the narratives with luxury at their core could charm audiences much more than a story overheard by clients, or told in store by sales assistants.

According to Batat (2019), the allure generated by product tie-ins is not always the result of targeted campaigns of product placement, yet still the visual narrative born through it is capable of creating and renovating the traditional factual storytelling into more engaging narrative content. Hollywood has witnessed the arrival of the most famous French couturiers. While Chanel and Dior first attempted their big breakthrough in the movie-costume business but decided to wait for other opportunities, Hubert de Givenchy brought the high fashion in movie narratives thanks to his close friendship with the movie star Audrey Hepburn.

In light of this strict collaboration, "*Breakfast at Tiffany's*" seems to incorporate the perfect example of visual narrative that has created an influential imagery not only for the American luxury jewellery giant Tiffany, but also for the French maison Givenchy. The opening scene immediately grasps the essence of the storytelling purpose for both luxury brands, with Holly Golightly, played by Hepburn, stepping out of a taxi on Fifth Avenue in New York at the first lights of the morning. She is wearing a classy Givenchy evening robe and a sparkling diamond tiara with coordinated necklace (accessories also chosen by the French designer), to enjoy her breakfast while gazing at Tiffany's windows (Aberra, 2015). The "little black dress" became an iconic symbol of class and elegance, exemplary emblem of French couture, which contributed to dethrone Dior's New Look-influenced silhouettes of the 1950s and consecrate Audrey Hepburn as the personification of style. A curious story about the movie is that on 2nd of October 1960, the day in which the first scene of the movie was filmed, Tiffany's store opened on a Sunday for the first time in history (Gristwood, 2010). Translating the previous archetypal discourse in this context, Holly Golightly perfectly incorporates the Lover archetype, playing the role of divine and feminine beauty with a strong charisma and a natural ability to attract people. She embodies the description of a classy woman, living in the moment and not afraid to show

her feelings, with a mystifying personality that adds an aura of mystery to her character. This visual narrative, along with the characterization of her role, contributes to create a story around the typical personality of the Givenchy woman, perpetuated through time by the designers that succeeded in the maison, as well as to feed the rich collective imagery created through Truman Capote's work, that still today creates a valid emotional bond that ties consumers to Tiffany's creations (Gristwood, 2010). In fact, as the brand speaks to sophisticated, intellectual and classy consumers, the movie constructs a romantic story where Tiffany's is associated to the narrative of a sophisticated upper-class client who lives in a big city and likes spoiling with luxurious products.

Hence, based on the iconic status attained through the film, Tiffany and Givenchy have long nurtured their heritage based on this story, having clients dreaming about products that had this clear narrative, images and perceptions in their minds.

As Givenchy maintained a close collaboration and friendship with Audrey Hepburn for the rest of his life, the same holds true for Yves Saint Laurent and Catherine Deneuve. Saint Laurent has always considered Deneuve "her muse", and the personality of the actress, both in her movies and in real life, aligned with the unconventional idea of luxury fashion aesthetics that Yves Saint Laurent has always transposed in his creations. Her association to French couture reached its highest expression in the 1967 movie "*Belle De Jour*" directed by Luis Buñuel, where Deneuve's image is intensified by her style, bringing the narrative to be alive within the brand (Rees-Roberts, 2018). In the movie, Catherine Deneuve plays the role of Sevèrine, the quintessential bourgeois housewife who has a handsome doctor husband and a chic Parisian apartment, but she seems so bored by her role that she chooses to live a secret double life working in a pleasure house as a prostitute named "Belle De Jour". Due to the sociological context ruling in France at the time, the movie succeeded in combining the most scandalous story of the decade with one of the most promising designers of all times, overturning the image of the woman who, beyond a pretty smiling face, was a thinker, a feeler and a sexual being (Rees-Roberts, 2018). In the story, Sevèrine's alter ego reconciles her bourgeois cast life with her twisted violent fantasies, where her dresses speak to the audience to the point that, according to the British fashion expert William Banks-Blaney "the film could be still watched with the sound off, and the audience would still understand the story from her clothes" (Banks-Blaney, 2017). While this kind of storytelling differs from the heritage-based one, in the

movie the narration is still guided by the brand, since it was the designer's choice to embark on this narrative (through his close collaboration with Deneuve) with the chosen medium of film and fashion, in order to visualize effectively his image of sensuality. As this narrative from the 1967 shows, and comparing it with that of 2019, Saint Laurent's narrative is still faithful to its origins, adhering to the image of a woman in charge of her own destiny, which is of self-destruction. Anyway, as stated by Hirschman (2000), movies such as "*Breakfast at Tiffany's*" or "*Belle De Jour*" create mental constructs in the consumer's mind that transcends the use of archetypal forms as a representation of the luxury brand's iconic dimensions, allowing them to create strong brand attachment by organizing enactments in their minds based on stories and myths appearing in movies.

2.6.2. The Artification of Luxury Narratives

Transposing this storyline in an advertising logic, visual narrative art also finds application in photography, short films and art. A remarkable overview comes from the studies of Phillips and McQuarrie (2010), who argue that, while narrative transportation is unlikely to occur in reference to advertisements (where the intention to persuade is recognisable and consumer resistance is palpable), if some aesthetic properties are present, consumers are more compelled to act, identify and feel the brand, hence buying the story. In fact, according to Batat (2019), in order to entice consumers, three main components should be part of the visual storytelling structure of a luxury brand: aesthetics, refinement and originality. Another interesting insight comes from the analysis of Zatwarnicka-Madura and Nowacki (2018) of luxury commercials, recognizing that the success of 30-second commercials comes from the use of a structure derived from the five-act Shakespeare's play. Not surprisingly, a relevant definition of "good" story comes from the classical drama, where it is the protagonist and his stirring incidents that make the narrative enticing and prompt unconscious preconceptions in consumers (McKee, 2003), making storytelling through ad commercials the primary expressions of archetype enactments (Holt, 2002). In addition, luxury advertisement can also be delineated as ads predominantly appearing in fashion magazines like Vogue or Harper's Bazaar. Turning to bona fide fashion advertisements, one example could be the Dolce & Gabbana advertising in Figure 8.

Ads like the Dolce & Gabbana one shown in the figure below build intentionally narrative constructs that, as in this specific case, include some grotesque imagery. An overview on the topic has been the study subject of Phillips and McQuarrie (2010), who started originally from a discourse on Victor Hugo's sublime imagery and its connection with luxury fashion photography – hence borrowing the term “grotesque” from the aesthetic literature – claiming that the sublime, defined as “an intense aesthetic experience” requires grotesque elements to come into effectiveness.



Figure 8: Dolce & Gabbana - Advertising Campaign

Source: Dolce & Gabbana (2019)

From a marketing perspective, it is no revelation that Dolce & Gabbana have persisted with a similar aesthetics in their advertising promotion, often displaying narratives appearing as fantasies of desires, where luxury products embody meanings of vanity and narcissism. The ad displays a woman that gazes intensely something in the distance, with her left hand raising the head of another woman (a victim, who actually holds the luxury brand's purse) and with her right hand holding a metal skewer ready to plunge it in the other woman's neck. However, while an average client could conceive this narrative as

plain imagery, Phillips and McQuarrie (2010) show a diverse range of opinions on behalfs of the target demographics they interviewed – the ad engages the audience through a mysterious and bizarre story, where, according to Beidelman (2009), “the viewer gets do to more”. In doing so, the luxury imagery about the typical Dolce & Gabbana client is evoked, where the narrative concerns a woman who is bold, audacious and provocative, but still fearful of God and devoted to family, reflecting the typical Mediterranean style of the luxury brand, inspired by Sicily and Luchino Visconti’s “*The Leopard*” (Sozzani, 1998). While the figure might resemble an ode to Greek myths, in the same way Monica Bellucci’s or Sophia Loren’s campaigns with the brand aim to convey the typical Italian heritage and Sicilian spirit, recalling classic Italian narratives from the past embodied by characters such as Claudia Cardinale or Isabella Rossellini.

As the previous analysis addresses the legitimacy of the luxury sector to communicate stories in multifaceted contexts, Kapferer (2017) posits that the pillars of visual narrative can be summarized in two points:

- I. To stick to a story, whether it is about heritage, craft, founders or endorsed celebrities;
- II. To adopt art metaphors in order to prompt curiosity and rearrange the luxury purchase as a cultural activity.

The process of “artification” of luxury, although deeply rooted in culture, is taking off increasingly in many maisons, where Kapferer (2017) defines it as “the purposeful transformation of non-art into art”. However, artification relates also to the diverse relationships that the most influential designers used to have with artists, just to mention some, Coco Chanel with Salvador Dalí, Elsa Schiaparelli and Christian Dior with Jean Cocteau, and many more, finally contributing to create prestigious product lines embellished by paintings made by these art icons who were closely tied to designers.

Anyway, what stays interesting to the purpose of this research is not the process of artification per se that has undergone for many luxury maisons, but the stories that make this process memorable and meaningful to consumers. This typology of brand storytelling has been widely adopted by the menswear brand Berluti, long owned by the luxury conglomerate LVMH, and relevant for its sophisticated leather processing. Founded in Paris in 1895 by Alessandro Berluti, this high-end footwear brand has artisanal origins:

his family business started in a laboratory where, with detail-oriented care, custom-made shoes were realized according to specific needs and custom requests. When in 1970 Olga Berluti took the lead of the business, she embarked on a very creative direction that brought her to meet Andy Warhol, who was a major appreciator of the brand, proposing him to collaborate with the brand in occasion of Warhol's request to realize a pair of square-toed moccasins. According to the story, an unsightly scar on the apron of the shoe characterized Warhol's pair that might have compromised the atelier's long work, but Olga Berluti, in order to appeal his important client, told him a story: "The leather came from a transgressive cow that liked to rub up against the barbed wire" (Foulkes, 2015). This notion appealed Warhol to the point that he declared he would have worn only shoes realized with the leather of "transgressive cows". Besides this fun fact, the luxury brand has a long-established heritage on which its storytelling relies, such as the singular feature characterizing their lambent Venetian leather, which used to be washed in the Venice lagoon and cleaned using vintage Venetian linen with a few drops of Dom Pérignon (Mosca, 2017). Anyway, Warhol's shoe, with its marked stitching on the apron, remained in production since that day, and while Olga Berluti transformed a little manufacturing defect into a distinctive mark, this transformation has actually led her to the creation of a myth that would have accompanied the brand until today.

Henceforth, the way in which consumers perceive stories is relevant also by means of visual language, that is to say through the semiotic deduction of names, symbols and narratives, which find their marketing categorization through "codes" and "values" of a luxury maison. Through this mechanism, designers like Antonio Marras manage to convey an all-round aesthetics, by transposing his multidisciplinary narrative into different media, such as the ones of contemporary art and theatre. In this light, the threshold for identifying a designer as a storyteller relies in the fact that he forms a series of narrative mechanisms around his core function that fall into the brand. In the same manner, in "*Nocturnal Animals*", Tom Ford succeeds in enriching the narrative dimension of his work by transposing smoothly his aesthetics and codes.

According to Rees-Roberts (2018), this cross-fertilization between the diverse storytelling media – in both their visual and narrative forms – represents an experimental approach finalized to align the adjacent industries of art, cinema, advertising and

literature to give shape to a multidimensional narrative with the final goal of customer engagement.

2.7. The Role of the Store

Among the multiple ways in which affluent consumers can connect with luxury brands, the store represents indeed a privileged touch point where the customer can engage with the brand with all the senses, and fully experience its aesthetics, codes and values.

Experiential setting design, in particular, covers an essential importance in giving meaning to the interior architecture of luxury stores. According to the definition by Newman et al. (2007), this design approach employs the experiential dimension in creating an interior architecture that can emphasize human needs at an immersive level for the senses. In this light, the store is designed such that it can be a product of both human and environmental interactions, providing intellectual and emotional engagement for the customer.

Anyway, the store per se is not the only place where the identity of the luxury brand is conveyed through its history and product. The workshop and its image represent an additional important component through which luxury brands can not only inform and educate their customers about the processes governing its craftsmanship, but also contribute to the dreamy imaginary created by the narratives that belong to that space (Mosca, 2017).

The place where the founder, with knowledge and attention to detail, started his business represents a space with high symbolic value that, in the collective consciousness, is the very place of origin of the luxury brand. It epitomises a long-established know-how, characterized by a tacit and non-codified knowledge, that becomes the emblem of a rare and unique value, that means longevity and sustainability (Urde et al., 2007). In the flagship store of Cartier, at 13 Rue de la Paix in Paris, there is one room called “Office of Louis Cartier” which is equipped with the original furniture and personal effects of the founder of the maison, while the whole store reproduces faithfully the workshop where Louis Cartier himself crafted jewellery in the XIX century (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009). Anyway, the store’s architectural design, as far as it might affect the way customers

perceive the brand, represents just one of the many components that augment the purchasing experience, with the salesforce and brand commercial policies contributing to communicate the brand's personality, beliefs and stories to the audience in the most distinctive ways. Outlined by Kapferer and Bastien (2009) as the "projection of the brand's history", the store represents a major tool to convey stories and create a personal attachment between the consumer and the brand, playing a vital role in the "dream equation" of luxury marketing through the expression of the brand's dimensions and evolution. Hence, the experiential perspective represents a winning strategy for luxury maisons to provide relevant insights based on the logic of customer experience management.

According to Batat (2019), the in-store experience underlines the relevance of the human dimension of social interactions, and rests within two essential pillars:

- I. Emotional luxury marketing, which consists in creating emotional ties during the purchasing act, leading inevitably to a very strong influence on the decision-making process;
- II. Empathic luxury marketing, which lies on the multidimensional concept that encompasses both emotion and cognition, and entails the brand's capability to draw the consumer's perspective into the imagery of the brand.

Indeed, storytelling lies at the core of both components, prompted by the synergies created by the salesforce's willingness to connect with the consumer on a deeper level and the magic of the store's architecture that, in every detail, reminisce the presence of the founder.

As previously mentioned, the American business model particularly leverages luxury stores as the primary locus for storytelling, compared to the French and Italian approaches which, instead of relying on the logic of lifestyle, are more oriented on creativity, heritage and country-of-origin effect, fuelling a proposition based on "the dream" (Kapferer & Bastien, 2012). Anyway, it is improper to think that the American luxury store could provide higher levels of storytelling experience compared to the European one. This is true not only because both approaches are very detail-oriented when it comes to create a genuine atmosphere in-store, but also due to the fact that today

these two models are increasingly converging, having grasped the role of theatrical in the point of sale (Kim et al., 2016).

Pine and Gilmore (1998) propose the storytelling experience in-store as the product of two concepts – connection and customer participation – that, when put in relation to consumer involvement and story intensity, bring to the identification of four experiential functional zones, namely entertainment, educational, escapist and aesthetic.

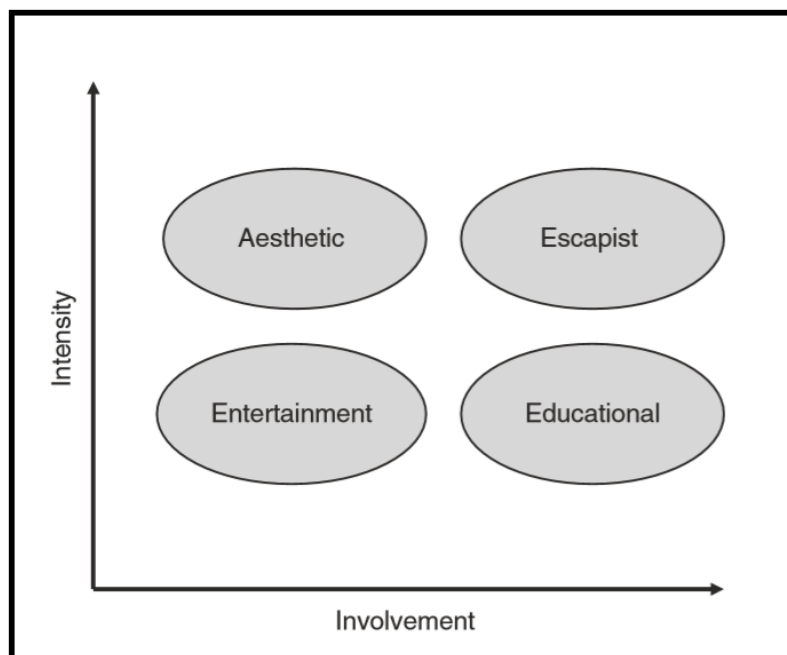


Figure 9: Experiential Functional Zones of Luxury Storytelling
Source: Pine & Gilmore, (1998).

The entertainment dimension usually entails low levels of customer involvement and story intensity. It concerns experiences such as private trunk shows for the elite clientele, where the stories recounted by sales assistants concern the inspirations behind the collection, the reasons why certain patterns and textures had been used by the designers, and the very performances characterizing the official fashion show, where every detail is embellished by stories about the brand heritage. In addition, the environment plays a focal role, especially if the flagship store also has restaurants or bistros with marquee chefs that reflect the atmospheres of the brand. This topic is going to be resumed further as the role of servicescapes in the store experience.

Educational stories prove a higher extent of involvement with still a low level of intensiveness. It is about story repetition in-store, where customers can acquire either new stories or just being reminded of those they already have. For example, Veuve Clicquot, one of the largest luxury champagne maisons in the world, nourishes of a long history of tradition, widely recounted in its headquarters and vineyards in Reims, in the French region of Champagne-Ardenne. A curious story, that impresses clients and educate them about the premium quality of the products of the Clicquot Maison, concerns a shipwrecked batch found recently. In 2010, a relict with a batch of Veuve Clicquot bottles – probably a gift from the King of France Louis XVI to the Tsar of Russia – was found off the coast of Finland, after having remained for almost two centuries on the seabed. The Champagne was still perfectly preserved (Mosca, 2017).

Along with the aesthetic zone, categorised by a passive involvement and higher level of story intensity, these two experiential areas trust stories as means of transportation for consumers to be instructed and at the same time fascinated by the historical heritage of the luxury brand. Here the consumer can immerse completely in the experience, but the level of personal co-creation, intended as the identification of the audience with the stories, attained with the salesforce is still quite low (Atwal & Williams, 2017).

The final and most complete experiential zone is the escapist one, where storytelling reaches the highest levels of both involvement and intensiveness. In this area of experience, the holistic dimension of stories is clear, and customers can shape new identities and realities for themselves (Pine & Gilmore, 1998). In this perspective, the locus of power of the luxury brand becomes even more persuasive if the flagship store is complemented by the atelier (Kapferer & Bastien, 2012). This is the case of the Dior flagship store in 30 Avenue Montaigne in Paris, which houses the historical atelier of the maison where Christian Dior himself designed, created and presented his collections, or the Valentino historical atelier and flagship store in Piazza Mignanelli in Rome. These places feature nearly religious, multisensory experiences, where stores are built as luxury cathedrals and their founders represent proper icons, providing an experiential journey that any digital tool could not remotely recreate (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009). In order to provide an immersive and multisensory experience, luxury brand managers recreate experiential settings where consumers, through storytelling, can feel part of the dream narratives that brands construct to influence their purchase decision.

As Batat (2019) claims, through this process, consumers' emotions can be reinforced by being associated to a positive feeling, which accordingly can promote an action (purchase) and finally offer a rewarding and enjoyable perception in-store (during the purchase) and out-of-store (pre- or post-purchase). The creation of such emotions links directly to the use of emotional luxury marketing in-store, where storytelling serves two objectives:

- I. The generation of strong emotions, that, through the story, makes the luxury brand memorable to the customer.
- II. The creation of associations of the same emotion with any other experience that the consumer lives in contact with the luxury brand. These associations transcends story memorization, instead anchoring to archetype-driven narratives and personal experiences.

In the view of Kim and Sullivan (2019), beyond the power of narratives, the senses can play an essential role in the consumption experience, influencing four important dimensions: (1) the perception of the brand; (2) the time spent in store; (3) the renewal of the in-store experience; and (4) the brand loyalty, which leads the customer to re-choose the brand.

Just to mention some of them, a customer that touches a luxury product, hence experiencing its texture and quality, can affect the purchase decision as well as the time spent in the store. The same is also true for the visual signature, since the visual identity of the brand must be in line with its imaginary and DNA. In the Dior boutique in Avenue Montaigne in Paris, the shade of grey created by Christian Dior himself dominates the environment, becoming the chromatic symbol of the maison (Mosca, 2017), as well as Tiffany's and Co. references, that all unite under the typical light blue shade also codified by Pantone with the number 1837, the year of its foundation. The olfactory signature is sometimes an underestimated factor for luxury brands, which usually concentrate their efforts on the visual identity, being the most striking and glaring component to the audience. On the other hand, the sense of smell is very interesting from the narrative perspective, since it is endowed with a strong ability to cling to memories and produce sensations, emotions and nostalgia, encouraging the generation of personal narratives, and hence marking the luxury experience as something pleasing and memorable (Hines & Bruce, 2003).

An exploratory study conducted by Batat (2019) highlights how a critical component of the luxury experience consists in customers' personal narratives. The author's study consisted in the testing of some new fragrances whose brands encompass Nina Ricci, Lancôme and Chanel. When entering the cosmetic and perfume store, women were invited by researchers to smell the fragrances, not knowing to which brand they belonged (such that no interference could be created to skew the sensory perception), and were asked what each perfume made them think about. Heritage perception was also measured separately from the smelling test. After the sensory experiences, the respondents described the reminiscing of intimate personal memories, tied for example, citing one answer, to "the perfume worn by my grandmother", as well as general perceptions, such as "smelling like grass" (Batat, 2019). The main results of the study showed how the participants who appealed to specific people, events or places, therefore generating what Escalas (2006) defines as "self-referencing narratives", were more prone to the purchasing decision, compared to those who simply liked the perfume with no mention to personal experiences. Another important remark concerns the brand's heritage, showing that when the brand legacy perception was considered solid, the researchers discovered that self-referencing narratives generated bias on the preferences for these products.

Anyway, something essential to storytelling in-store is the presence of passionate and qualified sales assistants who act as the primary intermediaries of narratives to the customer, guiding them throughout the experiential process with empathy and responsiveness. Beyond the product and the store, the customer experience is a critical factor for luxury companies, reason why time and resources are invested in order to provide the most accurate training – in the form of commercial policies and storytelling - such that the salesforce can deliver a reliable service in line with the reputation and the DNA of the luxury company. Hence, the seller-customer interaction must be characterized by proactive listening and understanding, since an interesting human exchange about the brand in the form of stories and easy conversations can prompt the building of lasting relationships between the brand and the customer (Batat, 2019).

In this light, the narratives provided by the salesforce should be able to strike the perfect balance between familiarity and innovation, reason why, in the view of Kapferer (2017),

brand managers should not hesitate when it comes to proposing new stories to their customers.

2.7.1. Beyond the Store: The Servicescape Model in Relation to Stories

Apart from the stories constructed and used internally within luxury organizations, there are types of narratives that transcend the brand and shape around the places in which they are conceptualized (Denning, 2006).

According to Mossberg (2008), much of the evidence on this assumption can be summarized with the servicescape model, which lies at the foundations of the holistic experience in store, and generally consists in the creation of spaces that induce the reminiscing of stories for consumers. As originally theorized by Booms and Bitner (1981), the servicescape model entails the construction of physical surroundings that intend to serve the function of commercial exchanges, where ambience, design and social factors are present. In particular, according to Bitner (1992), servicescapes can have an emotional impact on consumer behaviour, abounding with hints on what the luxury organization has to offer, and communicating the brand image in ways that go beyond mere merchandising practices. As a result, luxury brands are heavily investing in physical spaces, both in the hospitality and cultural and creative industries, in order to develop a brand visibility that rises above product placement. In the last years, the luxury conglomerate group LVMH, for example, has made important investments in the hospitality sector, acquiring first the luxury chain Belmond, which owns the most stunning hotels in the world counting Hotel Cipriani in Venice, or Hotel Timeo in Portofino (Agnew, 2018). Another interesting approach is the implementation of these logics in restaurants, like for the Beige Alain Ducasse in the Chanel building on Ginza in Tokyo (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009).

Anyway, while the storytelling purpose is quite limited in hospitality, where the affluent consumer would find little interest in stories during their stay at hotels or restaurants, this does not hold for cultural foundations.

Designed by Gehry Partners, the Fondation Louis Vuitton in Paris links directly to the story of Louis Vuitton and the archetype of voyage. With its entire structure resembling a

huge sailing ship, the building stands out the tops of the tall trees of the Jardin d'Acclimatation, created in 1860 by the Emperor Napoleon III, and consisting in the first public gardens of France (Vercelloni, 2015). A keen interest also characterizes the case of Bar Luce, in Fondazione Prada in Milan, designed by the film director Wes Anderson, who aimed at reproducing the atmosphere of Milanese cafés of the fifties, inspired by the aesthetics of the settings of neorealist movies. Although projected to become a standpoint for its neighbourhood, this place actually preserves the aura of a movie set, revealing a quite prohibitive and secret look, and recalling Prada in every furniture detail, from the light blue wooden panels to the Formica floor, as well as for the narratives of Luchino Visconti's and Vittorio de Sica's movies (Fondazione Prada, 2019). However, the blend of fashion and art is something that is rooted in history, to the point that what seemed to be a symbiotic relationship has now become an effective union (Megehee & Woodside, 2010).

Anyway, for luxury marketers, an even more holistic approach resides in the proper incorporation of entertainment into areas located in the immediate experiential setting (Atwal & Williams, 2017). In this case, Tiffany's Blue Box Café, situated at the fourth floor of the brand's flagship store in New York, represents an iconic example of servicescape with storytelling at its very core. Since its opening in 2017, the café represents an experimental and experiential location where affluent customers can perceive the narrative element behind the imaginary created by Truman Capote in his 1961 famous narrative "*Breakfast at Tiffany's*" (Montagnoli, 2017). Accordingly, Badot and Filser (2007) perfectly summarize servicescapes as "utopian islands", places that are able to provide a mystical and hedonic value, yet still endowed with sociability and leisure. In fact, it is through these almost theatrical experiences that the cues of a luxury brand's story can be analysed, and consumers can draw brands into their fantasies.

2.8. Effective Storytelling in Marketing

The luxury industry is characterised by consumption practices that take root in its history, sociology and culture, responding to detailed mechanisms that reflect the buying behaviour of consumers (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009).

In the domain of luxury, traditional marketing techniques not only do not properly suit the industry, but they could also possibly undermine it, meaning a devaluation of the brand and its corporate heritage. In fact, luxury brands reveal rich identities that, though the many touch points at their disposal, are a product of co-creation with customers, showing a dialogue where storytelling lies at the core (Pini, 2017). In the view of Firat and Venkatesh (1993), this approach to branding stems from postmodern marketing practices, that challenge the role of traditional marketing, claiming the need of a re-interpretation of branding strategies for luxury brands, due to their complex and culturally rooted identities. As such, the effectiveness of new marketing techniques calls for the unfolding of new communication processes that range from company-generated narratives to company-customer shared communication flows, where meanings and stories are co-created (Pini, 2017).

From a strategic and operational perspective, the marketing actions to implement are part of a larger framework that allows to create competitive advantage from the reminiscing of the company’s history, where heritage is turned into narratives about brilliant intuitions, artisanship, and extraordinary people and events (Mosca, 2017).

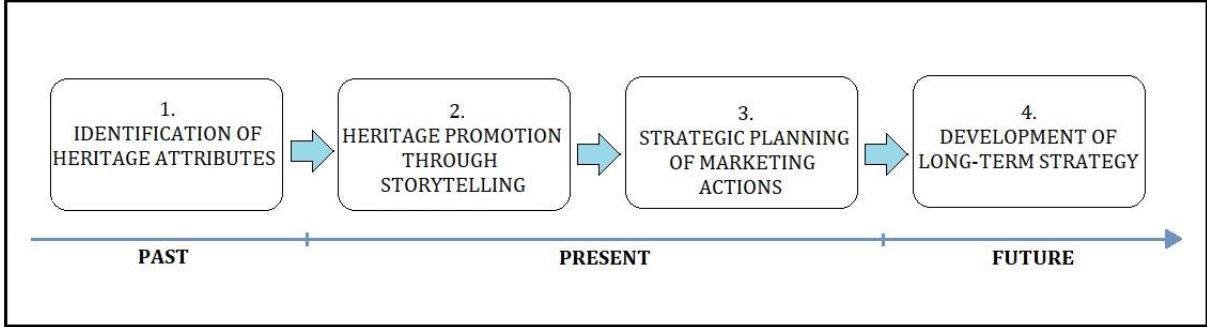


Figure 10: The Steps of Development and Valorisation of Corporate Storytelling
 Source: Mosca, (2017).

The framework, as shown in Figure 10, starts with the identification of the heritage factors that constitute the essence of storytelling, such as the link to the past, the founder’s history, the crafting techniques and artisanship secrets, or the people who made the brand and its products iconic. Not all of these elements stay relevant for a company in its specific context, reason why an important task of the marketing manager is to select and promote the most representative ones, yet all the narratives that strengthen the distinctiveness

and rarity linked to the luxury brand and its products. The third phase aims at individuating the operating marketing actions to develop in order to support the relevant narratives.

Burghausen and Balmer (2014) identify four possible actions for an effective implementation of heritage attributes as marketing tools for luxury companies:

- a. Narrating: it means to communicate heritage as a story, by means of narrative forms that draw in the past, present and future. The brand website and company magazine constitute perfect examples;
- b. Visualizing: it entails the use of visual media, such as archive footages and pictures, that serve as a remarkable link between history and the time being (Mosca, 2017);
- c. Performing: it corresponds to “staging” the corporate heritage of a brand through events, incorporating stories as cultural practices;
- d. Embodying: it relates to the transmission of the luxury brand identity into products, places and people who contributed to transform the brand into an icon, such that it can be finally “owned by consumers” (Mosca, 2017), who will internalize the brand’s stories and make them part of their self-identities.

It is in this way that, in order to become what they are now, companies like Chanel, Cartier, Louis Vuitton, Prada and so on have turned into worldwide successful businesses. Finally, the fourth and last phase concerns the management efforts to associate the brand to its heritage attributes and narratives in order to enhance the brand equity and the awareness that supports its strategic positioning in the long run (Atwal & Williams, 2017). Indeed, in order to communicate a clear and defined position in the market, these actions should not be applied sporadically, but they should be part of a coherent and comprehensive long-term strategy (Mosca, 2017).

Anyway, an important remark is that positioning, as a marketing concept, sounds foreign to the luxury approach. In fact, as Kapferer and Bastien (2009) argue, “when it comes to luxury, being unique is what counts, not any comparison with a competitor”. The authenticity of the brand, as well as the psychological and social depth of the consumer, are the basic elements that forge tight bonds with the consumers’ minds, who become seduced with the stories that surround the brand, whether real – like for Coco Chanel or Renè Lacoste – or completely invented from scratch, like for Tod’s and Ralph Lauren.

Lacoste, in particular, represents an interesting marketing example. Founded in 1933 by the world tennis champion René Lacoste, the brand does not fall under the “luxury” categorisation, but since its origins, it has been marketed as a luxury company, even if still holding a medium-price strategy (Kapferer and Bastien, 2009). As such, the management of Lacoste has complied with the branding techniques that most luxury brands were using, proving that history, time and tradition remain the three most important elements to leverage in luxury marketing strategies (Morley & McMahon, 2011).

Four guiding principles were followed:

- I. First and most importantly, a real story, that of one the French Tennis Musketeer, René Lacoste. Nicknamed “the crocodile” (Kapferer & Gaston-Breton, 2002), Lacoste embodied triumph and sport achievement but also class and sophistication. At that time, tennis was considered, along with golf, a game for the upper-class society, who perceived the narratives of the brand and adopted its story. Yet this element, alone, constitute a major motif of luxury identification;
- II. Secondly, a persistent concern for quality and attention to detail;
- III. Third, the constant presence of the founder, who also often appeared in advertising campaigns and sponsored sporting events (Kapferer & Gaston-Breton, 2002);
- IV. Finally, a distinctive historic and iconic product, the signature design of the L. 12.12 Polo shirt, a blend of comfort and style, regularly reinterpreted with a modern look.

Overall, when the brand is perceived as an icon, consumers recognize a greater deal of complexity in its identity, often connected to the interpretation of social and cultural values (Pini, 2017). According to McCracken (2005), this happens because, through marketing communications, consumers dynamically look out for personal meanings in luxury brands’ stories, naturally relating to the cultural background within which their consumption behaviour takes place. In order to shape a consistent brand image, marketers prioritize an integrated communication that, by means of advertising, events, promotion and sales, have to be designed such that a distinctive story about the brand can be internalized. A concept that stems from integrated communication is the one of “content marketing” that, by citing the Content Marketing Institute, Baltes (2015) defines

as the business process dealing with the creation and distribution of relevant content, either of informational, educational or entertaining nature, in order to appeal, acquire and involve the audience, with the goal of encouraging a profitable customer action. In this context, content marketing contributes to reinforce brand awareness such that not only consumers can feel familiar with the organization, but also employees can feel a sense of attraction and retention to the brand (Znanewitz & Gilch, 2016). Here again, the salesforce plays an essential role in cultivating intra-individual marketing skills to enhance the storytelling practice (Dubois et al., 2001), which, in its nature, seems to suit also customer-to-customer marketing through word-of-mouth and, as further discussed, e-word-of-mouth.

According to Znanewitz and Gilch (2016), seven essential criteria can be identified for effective storytelling in marketing, and they all apply to the luxury context given their detachment from traditional marketing practices.

- I. First, the brand needs to find the right story that embodies the true core of the organization. Whether real or fictional, the core of the story shall stay true in order to convey authenticity at its finest (Denning, 2006), since consumers tend to build criticisms when perceiving manipulative marketing practices, especially on the behalf of luxury brands (Holt, 2002);
- II. Entertainment and excitement should be the primary sensations of the recipients of the story. In order to do so, the story shall be in line with the up-to-date trends regarding the target audience, in this case affluent consumers (Mosca, 2017);
- III. An important requirement in story construction concerns its uniqueness. According to Shin (2013), storytelling represents a winning strategy for luxury companies as long as each story is associated to one and only one brand. As Znanewitz and Gilch (2016) remark, if the brand story is similar to others, yet not producing any added value, the audience might feel entertained at its best, but not engaged by the organization;
- IV. Along with uniqueness, conciseness stay relevant to consumers in the fact that they should be able to summarize it in a few sentences;

- V. In addition, while branching narratives might add value to the story contributing to a process of co-creation with recipients, its core shall remain simple with a binding plot but still with richness in details;
- VI. An essential characteristic is the feature of connectivity. In order to engage the customer to an even higher level, open ends, gaps in the story and incomplete information add up an aura of mystery and enticement, allowing customers to co-create with the brand, yet amplifying the brand-consumer identity (Woodside et al., 2008);
- VII. Finally, the concept of brand persona relates to the use of archetypes in story construction, through which the brand-consumer relationship is triggered by automatic yet unconscious mechanisms that prompt identification (Holt, 2002).

In this complex scenario, Woodside (2010) posits that luxury brands could be designated as “cultural narrators”, where consumers are engaged in meaningful conversations and co-creation practices where the story is only partially guided by the organization. This means that marketers, and brand managers in general, should be included in a sort of “multilogue” (Berthon et al., 2007) where old and new meanings can converge to create an engaging multi-layered narrative. Ultimately, these complementary narratives, when associated to the multitude of brand attributes belonging to the brand and its history, can create important synergies, outperforming the single constituents of what Pini (2017) defines as “Brand Gestalt”.

With this approach, brand storytelling can tightly associate with the concept of transmedia storytelling that, through diverse media languages, has reached an even more significant meaning with the advent of digitalization.

III. CHAPTER THREE: The Digitalization of Storytelling: Online Approaches to Transmedia Narratives

3.1. The Luxury Industry Digitalized: The Online Transition

For a long time, luxury has been known as an industry characterized by product excellence, exclusivity and long-established heritage, with a value proposition centered on distinctive knowledge, prestigious boutiques and bespoke communication aimed at the construction of long-term relationships with upmarket clientele. Anyway, in the scenario of postmodern society, many scholars have argued how such industry characterisation – having time, class and artisanship as its pillars – has shifted towards a new model that moves away from that of the beginning of the 21st century, progressively embracing a new digital dimension (Kapferer & Bastien, 2012). The industry has coped with the challenge of technological progress, which affected the economic sector through two main factors, namely the increasing shift towards digitalization and the consequent evolution of the buying behaviour of society, leading to a significant change in the nature and structure of the industry and its business models (Kapferer, 2014).

The trajectory of digital transformation in luxury has influenced the industry in many ways, proving a positive lever and a vast source of opportunities, not only from the strategic perspective but also from the operational point of view. Besides the luxury one, the experience from other industries has pointed to digital channels as a success, though considering the potential implementation of internal changes as a pre-condition: digital technologies need to become key to how the business functions, leading to re-think and possibly re-invent business models in order to achieve new types of competitive advantage (Mastropetrou et al., 2019). According to Reichert and Hutchinson (2019), digital transformation can be defined as “a fundamental change, a metamorphosis, in how companies generate value for their owners and other stakeholders, achieved by applying digital technologies and ways of working to all aspects of the business”. As such, management scholars have attempted to develop a proper Digital Transformation Framework (DTF) according to which the strategy of digital switch shall be implemented along four dimensions: a) developing capabilities to arrange disruptive information

technologies; b) delineating value drivers; c) re-organizing business structures and organizational processes; d) obtaining financial resources to implement the digital change (Matt et al., 2015).

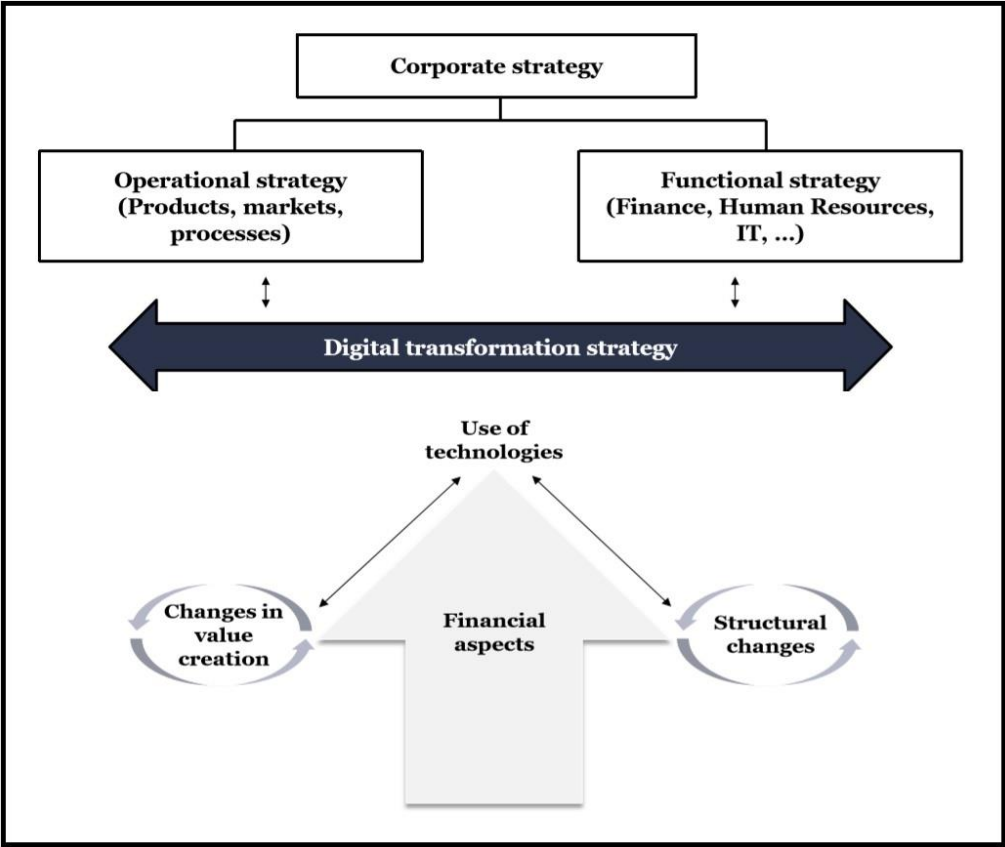


Figure 11: Digital Transformation Framework in Relation to Other Corporate Strategies
 Source: Matt et al., (2015).

While the overall goal of this strategy resides in the identification and exploitation of growth opportunities (Reichert & Hutchinson, 2019), academics are still sceptical about its application, due to the fact that most businesses – and some of them belonging to the luxury industry too – still resist the effort of developing a holistic approach to corporate digital transformation strategies. Because of this struggle, many businesses had to face a “winner-takes-all” condition, where digital-born pioneers such as Amazon, e-Bay and Google have grown to dominate industries with traditional value propositions, such as the luxury one indeed (Mastropetrou et al., 2019). Anyway, luxury managers have gradually started to deal with the underlying logic that, as far as applicable to their business structures, luxury companies differ fundamentally in terms of industry specifications.

In fact, as Bilefield (2016) posits, their slow adaptation to the digital environment has been mainly a consequence of the luxury culture that, long characterized by deep legacy roots tied to a sense of exclusivity and uniqueness, looks at digital as implying an idea of modernity that may disrupt their clients from the traditional luxury brand's image.

Anyway, over the last ten years, luxury businesses have felt the urge to finally keep up with the technological pace, greatly influenced by the pervasive presence of social media, e-commerce platforms and mobile shopping. This growing role of digitalization has come into sharper focus also due to its strong strategic potential, representing an effective way to leverage brand equity by creating advocacy, awareness and a different, amplified level of engagement. Although encountered with great concern, the luxury digital transformation has been fuelled majorly by a great deal of investments, in the attempt to approach this new technological dimension (Mastropetrou et al., 2019). Top consulting firms, such as McKinsey & Company or Boston Consulting Group, have acknowledged digitalization as the primary priority of the industry (Reichert & Hutchinson, 2019), with most of the changes to be applied in the domain of marketing, in order to offer a diverse experiential engagement to a much broader public. In particular, management scholars have identified a series of steps towards the luxury industry transformation, addressing principally digital storytelling (Beauloye, 2016) and e-commerce (Balasyan, 2015) as the main features of rewarding digitally-minded luxury firms, managing to maximise their technological opportunities.

On the topic, Bain & Company's worldwide luxury market monitor provides an eloquent snapshot of the evolution of the luxury industry, analysed through the course of two decades (D'Arpizio & Levato, 2018). At first, the study considers a relative period of stagnation that characterized the industry in the early 1980s. Figure 12 displays the digital transformation impact from 1996 until 2018, reflecting the relatively slow digital adaptations that characterized the early age of technological conversion, which started around 2002 – when the first luxury e-commerce website was launched – and its subsequent sharp peak towards success with the embracement of the digital world. In particular, in the pre-2000 era, luxury brands followed the “*sortie du temple*” strategy, according to which luxury businesses were attempting to broaden their brand appeal by escaping the inaccessibility aura – intended as the “*temple*” – while still maintaining their impression of prestige. This strategy, anyway, did not turn successful for many luxury

brands. After the democratization of luxury, in correspondence to years 2008 - 2009, one could observe a slow downturn in growth, due in particular to the financial depression that, overall, left the industry relatively unscathed, shaving around 9% off the value of the luxury goods market, regained quickly afterwards (Arnett, 2019).

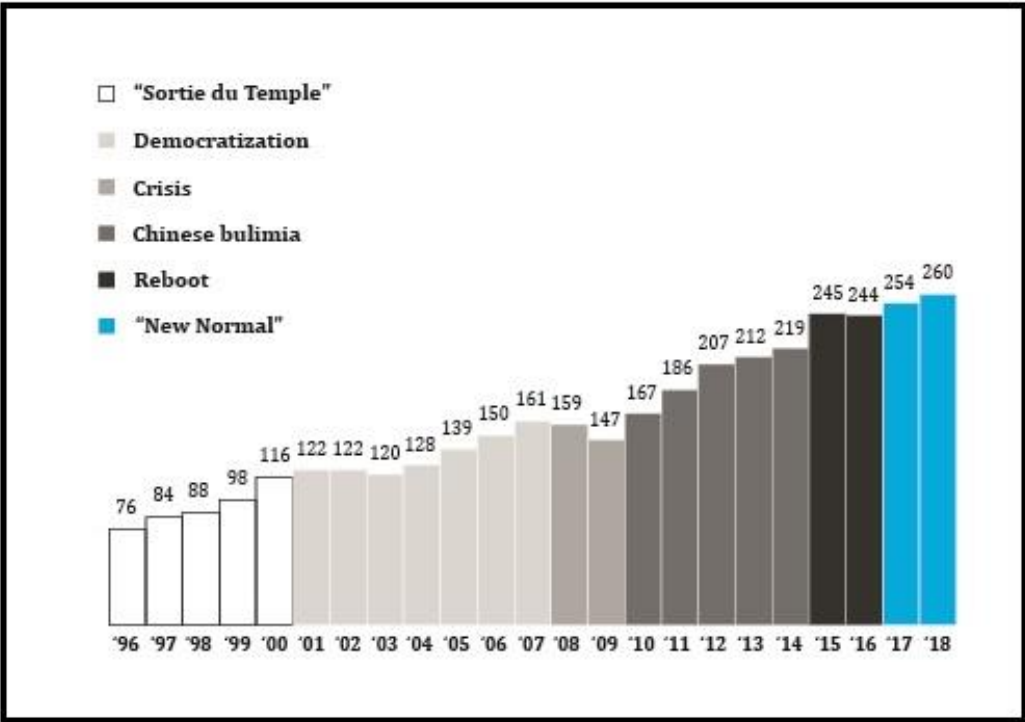


Figure 12: Luxury Industry Evolution with the Digital Transformation Variable (and CAGR), € billions, 1996 – 2018
 Source: D’Arpizio & Levato, (2018).

Anyway, from 1996 to 2018, the luxury industry displayed a constant compound annual growth of 6% that, financial recession left out, remained flat in the last two decades, finally baptizing a “New Normal” era. Such period, comprising 2017 and 2018, generates the expectation of strong performances by the end of this decade, fuelled on one hand by the Chinese acceleration in domestic spending, and on the other by an important increase in European tourism (Branstrator, 2019). According to the McKinsey & Company study “The Age of Digital Darwinism” (Achille et al., 2018), the luxury market – including all of its categories as fashion, accessories, jewellery and watches, cosmetics, experiences, hospitality, automotive and art – accounts to a global market value of almost €260 billion.

Within it, an increasingly major trend, consisting in about 8% of sales (hence about €20 billion), involves the use of e-commerce channels to purchase personal luxury goods, which is supposed to increase in the range of 3 to 5-% per year reaching an expected value of about €74 billion in 2025 (Achille et al., 2018).

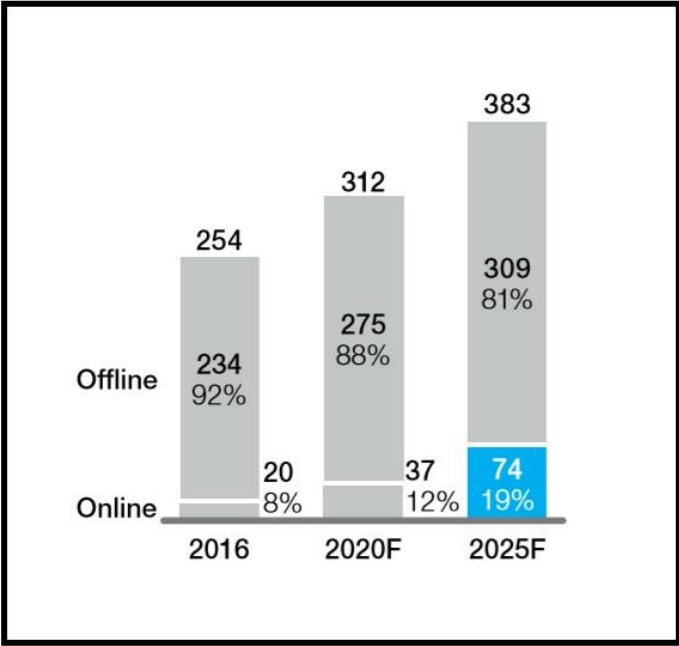


Figure 13: Online Sales Forecast 2025, € billions
 Source: Achille et al., (2018).

As Figure 13 shows, by 2025 almost nearly 1/5 of personal luxury sales will take place online, with new technologies deemed responsible for further enriching the shopping experience and brand-customer connectivity (Achille et al., 2018). In fact, digital is affecting profoundly the way in which luxury consumers select their favourite brands and products, to the point that approximately 80% of luxury goods sales are considered to be “digitally influenced”, implying that consumers hit one or more digital touch points during their shopping experience (Achille et al., 2018). In fact, nowadays digitalization affects the affluent consumers’ purchasing behaviour to the point that what results is an ambivalent online/offline journey permeated by experience. Consequently, the offline-only luxury shopper – who purchases only in physical stores – constitutes a fading category that stands for the mere 22% of all luxury shoppers, generating approximately €56 billion in sales.

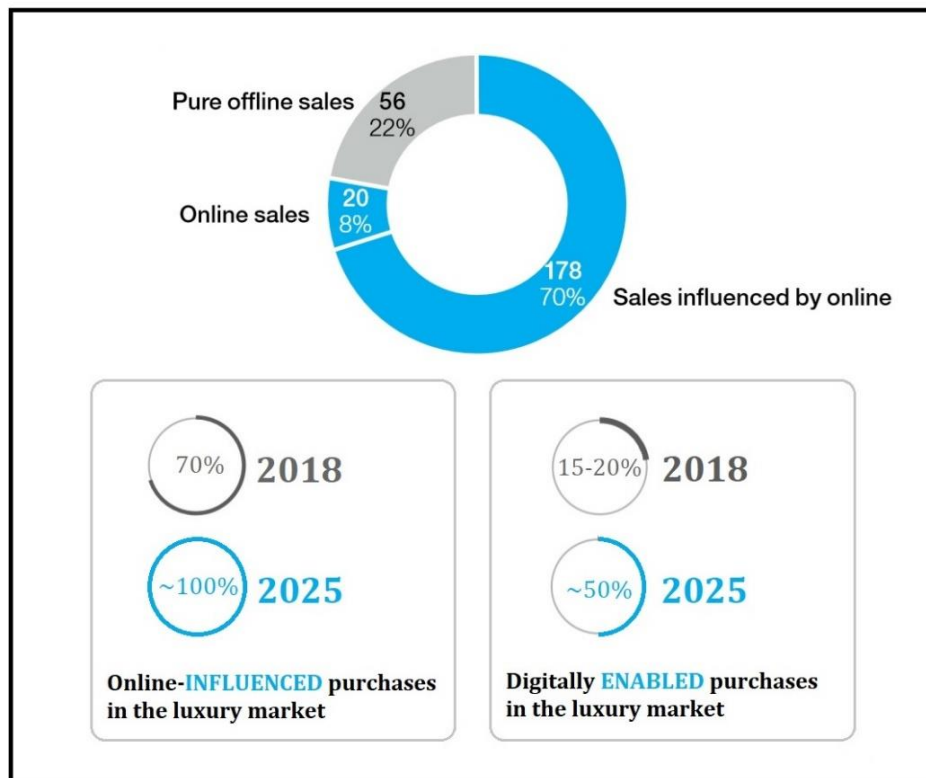


Figure 14: Sales of Personal Luxury Goods, € billions
 Personal Adaptation. Sources: D'Arpizio & Levato (2018); Achille et al., (2018).

Online channels are growing fast, pursuing a full integration with the physical ones through the application of ecosystems of business models, which imply the use of new technologies to further augment the shopping experience and improve the brand-to-customer and customer-to-customer connectivity. In this light, online-influenced luxury purchases, reaching 70% in 2018, will represent almost the totality of purchases in 2025, thanks to the continuous convergence between e-commerce websites and digital content platforms, which has led respectively to a social media integration with e-commerce capabilities, and to e-commerce websites complementation with editorial storytelling content (D'Arpizio & Levato, 2018). Differently, digitally enabled purchases indicate the implementation of digital technologies throughout the entire value chain, supported by the use of virtual reality, mobile payments, Internet-of-Things and “smart” supply chain management. As such, while the online-influence has led to higher awareness and consideration on the behalf of consumers - which is what luxury brands have been investing the most in the last ten years - the digital enablement has caused a significant improvement in the purchase experience and the equivalent increase of customer loyalty (D'Arpizio & Levato, 2018).

Anyway, while it could be claimed that in the last two decades investments in digital channels have fuelled revenues in the luxury industry, it is still unclear to what extent such increase in sales shares is the result of the online-influence – represented by innovative content marketing and social media – or a product of the digital enablement – in the form of e-commerce websites and platforms. While many luxury businesses are dealing with such transformation with marketing techniques aimed at increasing the appeal of their brand perception, a pervasive component in both the former and latter approach is represented by digital storytelling, whose evolution from the pre-digitized period until nowadays has provided interesting cues to deepen story-crafting techniques and create more engaging and captivating narratives.

3.2. Luxury Consumers in the Digital Age

The need for digital transformation has prompted new trends in luxury consumption. In the first place, the industry has witnessed a cultural change that implies a more globalized approach to sales, operations and marketing. Indeed, globalization constitutes also one of the reasons why many luxury companies, from being family businesses, have gone through a process of corporatization, becoming part of large luxury conglomerates, such as Kering S.A. or LVMH (Donzé & Wubs, 2017). In this logic, this trend, started in 1990 but grown tangible just in the last decade, also confirms the relevance of the ubiquitous presence of these companies in different countries, expanding solidly in mature markets, such as Europe and the U.S., and even outperforming in emerging countries, such as China and India (Moore & Birtwistle, 2004). Anyway, while the U.S. displays a concrete market evolution and Europe lags behind due to its strong currency, Asia actually remains the main growth engine for online channels, displaying a year-over-year compound growth of 22% in sales supported by the increasing investments in online channels (D'Arpizio & Levato, 2018).

The second trend is external to the industry, and concerns the general growing popularity of internet shopping over the last decade. In light of the previously mentioned globalization trend, while the value of e-commerce seems to be primarily sales-oriented, it actually allows customer interaction and extends geographical boundaries in bringing

the affluent consumer much closer to luxury brands. Actually, the industry has been quite slow to e-commerce adaptations, deemed to ruin the “luxury dream” and remain incompatible to the exclusivity of the industry due to its “below-brand” features (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009). Just to mention one example, Chanel has been notably resistant to the digitalization of the brand, reluctant to participate to the online revolution due to the fear of not being capable of reproducing the experiential journey delivered in the brick and mortar modality (Berridge, 2018). As the next chapters will demonstrate, Chanel has finally grown into one of the most successful and innovative digital storytellers among its competitors. Contrary on the industry forecasts, online shopping represents today the fastest-growing modality of purchase, continuing its integration with physical channels.

Finally, the most important among the emerging trends in the industry is the social change that manifested through the rise of new market segments, with the consequent switch in consumer behaviour (Hines & Quinn, 2007). In particular, the industry welcomed new-to-market customers, represented by a not-so-new mid-class audience (as a consequence of the growing luxury democratization started in 2001) and millennials and generation Z customers, who, especially in established markets, have led to an increased demand for luxury goods to be available online (Berridge, 2018). In particular, millennials correspond to the consumer group born between 1980 and 1995, while consumers from 1996 until 2015 belong to generation Z, who, compared to the former group, slightly differ in the way they perceive and interact with brands (Young, 2019). When it comes to digital, this particular audience is paving the way for older generations to set up the expected quality of communication and interaction with luxury brands, also by teaching them how to deal with mobile adaptations, which have turned namely in “the new desktops”, indeed becoming the primary source of information for the purchase of luxury goods (Achille et. al., 2018). In consideration of these changes, it is no surprise that the industry had to manage the challenge of transposing and adapting the “dream” attitude, and therefore the magic of storytelling too, in a different format. To do so, traditional approaches to marketing and communication had to be deconstructed, since today the average affluent consumer interacts with the brand passing through multiple touch points, with half of them being digital (Achille et. al, 2018).

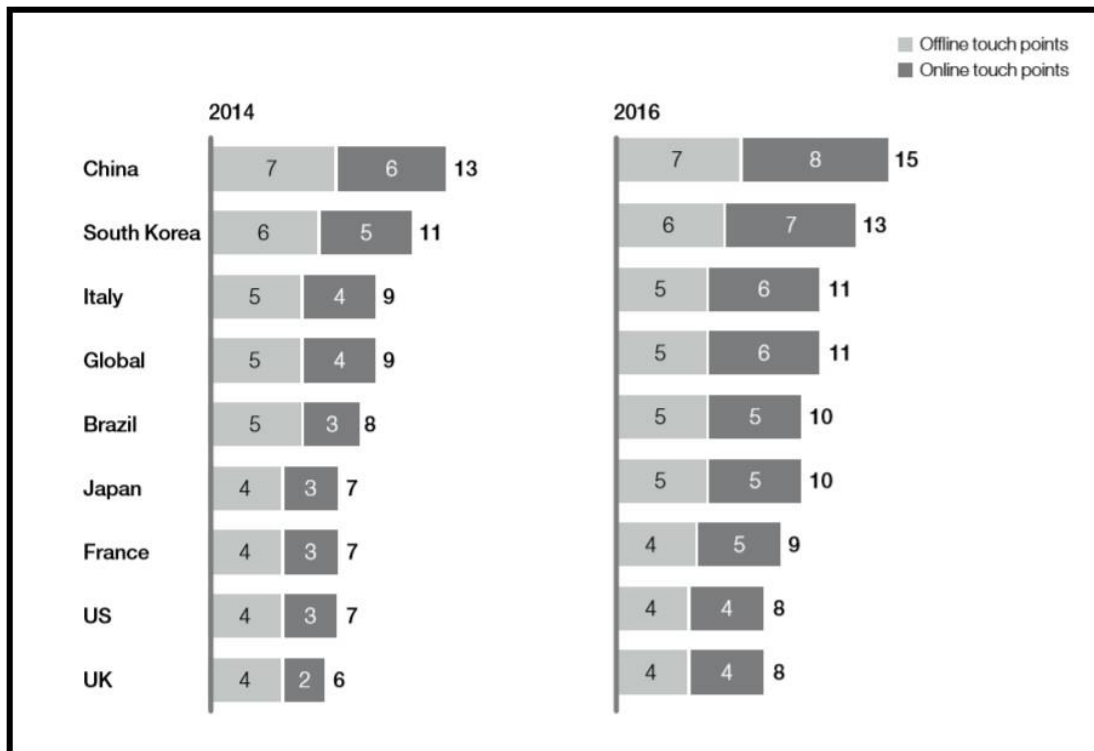


Figure 15: Number of Touch Points in the Consumer Decision Journey, 2014 – 2016
 Source: Achille et al., (2018)

Figure 15, displayed above, presents the number of offline and online touch points in eight geographic areas, with the global perspective showing an overall increasing trend towards the multiplication of digital touch points – 9 in 2014 against 11 in 2016, and yet still growing in present time – at the expense of offline channels, which have remained flat or slowly increasing during the years, in the struggle against cannibalization (Achille et al, 2018). With such young audience as main recipient, it became fundamental for luxury brands to use any possible interaction, both offline and online, to convey a strong brand identity through effective communication and advertising tools, among whom storytelling resonates as the most engaging one.

3.2.1. Young Generations as New Audience: What Stories Do They Prefer?

The innovative advances brought by digitalization in the last decades have influenced not only the way luxury brands interact with consumers, but also the way consumers are engaged by the stories of the brands they love (Beauloye, 2016). Young generations, with

their different lifestyles and attitudes, are considered fundamental drivers of change in the industry, leading luxury brands to have on the top of their agenda the amplification of the role of digital – from communication to sales – and its merging with offline channels. Among all affluent customers, millennials are indeed the most techno-savvy, trusting the Internet and social media for every kind of issue, reason why they expect their favourite brands to be constantly updated with new appealing content. Moreover, if on one hand young consumers take relatively easier at making purchase decisions, meaning that they know their style and are familiar with brands and products by means of social media interaction, on the other this kind of previously built knowledge makes it more difficult to create a deeper connection with them (González Romo et al., 2017). In fact, this customer group is much less influenced by traditional marketing techniques and tends to have a lower level of brand loyalty compared to older consumers. Constantly in search for newness and engagement, young generations are interested in new, unknown brands, whose narratives, fictional and inspired by older literatures, manage to stay authentic and engaging by drawing inspiration from their values and lifestyle (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009). Moreover, while they satisfy their buying attitude through unique narratives of products and brand values, an important difference with older consumers resides in the fact that they do not display the same enthusiasm spurred by the traditional mythopoeia mechanism of luxury brands, nourished by exclusivity and distance between designers and consumers (González Romo et al., 2017). On the contrary, young generations of affluent consumers expect a high level of involvement and engagement, as, especially through social media, they perceive the luxury brand as an open social platform, approachable and in proximity to their lifestyle, hence capable of fuelling a dynamic cultural exchange.

Therefore, for luxury brands, marketing and communication are consolidating into a composite model where the customer journey incorporates brand storytelling, social media interaction and e-commerce in a unique comprehensive model (Batat, 2019).

This may serve indeed as a reason why brands have managed to reinvent their marketing strategies to adapt and approach such emerging target, which, willing to consume luxury goods, remains quite indifferent to storytelling in its human relational form – as typical in the in-store experience – to prefer instead its digital form, to which they feel more entertained and connected.

By employing storytelling techniques in their digitized versions, luxury brands manage to consolidate an emotional relationship with their consumers, especially the younger ones, by means of stories told and visualised in unique and creative set-ups that finally portray the ultimate manifestations of the brand's culture.

In the view of D'Arpizio and Levato (2018), among the most relevant insights that younger luxury consumers may provide, is the intuition that digital storytelling serves as a means of increasing brand awareness and a tool for growth. Older generations are more attached to stories and values thanks to the reference literature of their times, already involved in their vision of intangible luxury fulfilled by experience and self-expression (Kapferer & Bastien, 2012). Young consumers, instead, are more prompted by the need of transcribing everything they do on social media, from luxury experiences to important purchases or gifts (aligning to the "if not shareable, it didn't happen" formula), causing luxury brands to rely on the idea of stories to translate their narrative codes and to render them more shareable among this target audience (Batat, 2019). Rolex, for example, represents a relevant case of luxury brand whom, to respond to the necessity to attract a younger audience, recently converged its efforts on creating an effective marketing campaign on its website called "Every Rolex Tells a Story". Through the endorsement of famous sportspeople, actors or managers, the company employs storytelling as a main tool to convey the experiences of these famous personalities and the stories around their Rolex watches, in the situations that are or have been dearest and significant to them (Batat, 2019). Anyway, since storytelling took its digital upturn, luxury companies had to learn how to carefully manage the Internet and its boundless potential in order to balance the long-lived sophistication tied to the brand with the necessity to reach diverse audiences. In this view, indeed the marketing strategies of luxury brands have to focus on digital storytelling, but still have to take into consideration the values and codes which have always been at the core of their identities.

3.3. Digital Storytelling: A New Approach to Marketing

In the scenario of contemporary markets, management scholars have witnessed the emergence of a new strand of literature relating to postmodern marketing studies on

consumer behaviour. As postmodern consumers relate to brands in terms of the level of self-identification with their narrative structures, such process takes place through conversations that, thanks to the digital transformation, can happen by means of different media and touch points. According to Pini (2017), luxury brands have managed, and generally should aim, to transform the external proliferation of their stories into conversations that move away from the traditional forms of company “monologues”, which have been deemed not sufficiently able to establish long-term relationships with their consumers and, as such, have been superseded by the advent of the digital formula. Instead, the need for a more immersive and collaborative dialogue with their consumers has led luxury businesses to employ a new set of media to reinforce their extended narratives. In this light, a resonant combination of traditional, digital and interactive media has seemed the most suitable answer to the intensification of the postmodern brand-consumer relationship, especially because the potential offered on a self-expressive, identity-building basis is something that cannot be compared to any other form of storytelling ever offered in the past.

Assisted by the progress brought by digital narratives and developed as an extension of storytelling theory, digital storytelling represents one of the most powerful tools through which brands can convey their stories and, most importantly, engage their consumers on a completely new emotional level. While it involves the production and diffusion of stories in digital forms through sites and social networks, such shift in form, while interesting to the scope of this research, is not epoch-making. In particular, a consistent difference with the past resides not only in the way brands’ stories are stored and exchanged – something that before happened generally through the support of organizational archives – but also in the “remediation capacity of digital media”, as Couldry (2008) states, meaning the possibility to transmit, retransmit and transform narratives in new original forms. As such, digital storytelling can be defined as the rejuvenated expression of the ancient art of storytelling, obtained by combining the best of both worlds: the “new world” of digitized video, photography and art, and the “old world” of telling stories (Williams et al., 2006).

Anyway, the concept of mediation is often compared to the one of mediatization, as discussed by Schulz (2004), according to which digital storytelling generates a focus on the transformative mechanism that intends to do something different with respect to the past, in its traditional fields, processes and techniques. In this view, the contemporary

“media logic” involves the explicit claim for businesses – luxury ones in particular, which employ contents of symbolic and cultural nature as their system of reference – to assume forms that can suit their media representation (Couldry, 2008). This theoretical perspective assumes the existence of a consistent pattern through which stories of luxury brands are constructed by means of a modus operandi that embeds the start from their original format, the spoken archive-based story, followed by its elaboration into a rich hypertextual commentary of films or photography. The luxury brand Hermès, for example, serves as the perfect example of a company that excels at digital storytelling, mentioning much of its long-established heritage in rich sections on its website concerning the history of its most iconic products. Among these, stands the Kelly bag, the most classic and desired creation among the products of the maison. In origin, the Kelly’s primary purpose was the transportation of saddle and rider boots, reason why the bag was much larger than the shape it has today. When in 1930 the luxury brand decided to embark in the manufacturing of smaller versions of the bag to suit a more feminine target, its design was adjusted in the shapes and finally redefined with a padlock on its clasp. Anyway, its transformation into an icon actually occurred when in 1956 Grace Kelly, the Hollywood star turned princess, used the bag to cover her womb to hide her first maternity signs (Kapferer & Bastien, 2012). This narrative, rooted in the history of the brand, has its own section on the Hermès website, where animated pictures are complemented by engaging brief captions explaining the history of the product along the years, also following the little changes implemented on a design level. Functioning as a digital archive that chronologically traces the history of the brand, the myth of the Kelly bag stays alive through the website, with the purpose of maintaining the dreamy atmosphere usually conveyed through the offline experience (Batat, 2019). As such, this format can stick to the mind of their consumers more easily, but also be able to widely circulate online capturing the attention of consumers in a more viral way.

Therefore, digital storytelling, while innovative, is not a new concept. Its premise starts with the story and its content creation, production and distribution under the brand owner’s realm. Anyway, while traditionally the consumer is primarily a listener, digital narratives align otherwise uncoordinated experiences into a meaningful interconnected pattern that, always true to organized master plots and delineated characters, allow individuals to connect the dots of a story and frame their own interpretations based on “conversational media” that create extraordinarily powerful contexts (Couldry, 2008).

Hence, taking the form of personal narratives, historical documentaries and generally stories that inform and instruct, storytelling has changed to a certain degree. The real transformation involved the tools used by luxury brands as, in the view of Berridge (2018), digital media has contributed to transmit stories as bits and bytes converted into meaningful images that once circulated simply through word-of-mouth.

The principle of digital storytelling represents a key strategy in digital and mobile marketing, since websites, social media, events and exhibitions are pivotal to the effectiveness of online communication. Luxury brands' websites, in particular, are presented as proper showcases, digital replicas of physical stores, where stories are central to the promotion of the historical heritage, the founder's story, dates, places and key steps that brought these businesses to reach that status of prestige they have developed through time. Suitably integrated with social media platforms, the website is built as a communication means that derives much of its content from the corporate history of the brand, its iconic products and related stories, events and people that turned these products into icons, transforming narratives into something original, entertaining, but most importantly, aligned with the aesthetic of the brand (Mosca, 2017).

The luxury company Chloé, for example, has a website with an entire section dedicated exclusively to the heritage attribute, emphasizing 'the alphabet' as its signature symbol. The website presents all the alphabet letters, where each one is associated to elements and aspects belonging to the historical heritage of the brand. The branding choice behind such website layout perfectly reflects the aesthetic of the brand from a storytelling perspective. The section draws inspiration from her founder Gaby Aghion's creative consuetude of naming every collection she created after a letter of the alphabet (Creek, 2012). As such, in 1958 the first collection created by the designer was A, having every item belonging to it given a name beginning with 'A.' (Creek, 2012). Contrarily from the previously mentioned example of Hermès, Chloé's narration does not stick to the chronological order of events, representing instead a thematic journey that drives the consumer in the aesthetics and values of the luxury brand. When in conversation with Guided Creative, the creative agency behind the project, the artistic directors explained how the brand's choice of displaying its remarkable heritage through this added section came for the desire of accompanying the running exhibition at Palais de Tokyo in Paris in occasion of the 60th anniversary of the maison (Creek, 2012). Its purpose was not its bare

recreation of facts in digitized version, but the translation of its atmosphere and methodology, non-chronological and non-linear, into stories that could fully encompass the brand's themes and values. With each letter comes a theme, which alone tells a fragment of the story, but together give life to the mosaic of the brand's iconic heritage.

Through documentaries, short movies, unreleased archive footages, music and interactive media, Chloé's digital storytelling calls for experiential branding as a way to appeal its consumers' aspirations and dreams, consequently increasing their loyalty and general emotional attachment to the brand. Similarly, as noted by Von Wachenfeldt (2019), luxury brands' stories shared through social media do not follow the precise narrative scheme of a closed plot characterized by a mere succession of events, but an immersive dialogue aimed at creating identities for both their tellers and viewers. Anyway, social media storytelling will be discussed more in-depth further in this chapter.

3.3.1. Digital Storytelling: Features and Techniques

Maintaining a constant seek for interaction with the public, while offering a sophisticated storytelling, is not an easy task for luxury businesses. Online presence is not just synonym with brand awareness; since websites are within everyone's reach (and not just brands' affluent consumers), a refined online presence through digital channels helps achieve an overall business positioning, especially because, as Kapferer (2014) argues, the digital revolution has brought, among all advantages, the risk for luxury brands to all look alike online.

To prevent luxury brands from jeopardizing each other, their storytelling strategies represents a focal differentiator, reason why it is important for businesses to integrate some particular marketing techniques across all touch points in order to deliver a relevant and original experience in the marketplace. In particular, four approaches stand out as central to digital strategy.

The first feature consists in storytelling personalisation, which represents a state-of-the-art prerogative, mainly because, when consumers are able to personalise their stories and products, the achieved level of engagement contributes to advocate the idea that luxury brands constitute an inextricable element of their lifestyles.

In the process, data play an essential role revealing not only customers' values and preferences, but also the type of personalized marketing communication they prefer in order to add value to their experience through stories. As such, according to Zatwarnicka-Madura and Nowacki (2018), data-driven storytelling is going to be among luxury brands' prerogative in 2020, predicting that every second each consumers will produce 1.7 megabytes of data, serving for the creation of sophisticated data-driven stories that will make for a unique personalised experience.

On the matter, Bulgari represents one of the most creative and innovative luxury brands, emerging primarily for a storytelling strategy based on geographical position and demographics. In 2017, the brand launched a campaign called #SeeMyWish with Save The Children, that moved across different platforms through videos and posts on YouTube and Instagram, where consumers were invited to share personal stories about their luxury purchase with a picture of them with their eyes closed (Peltekoğlu, 2019). The campaign had a huge resonance, having celebrities to endorse it too, with the charitable engagement enhancing even more the effectiveness of the campaign behind the storytelling scope.

Minimalism represents the second important feature of digital storytelling. In the view of Papadatos (2006), most of the memories preserved in the human consciousness consist in a series of fragmented stories. Keeping their stories short, playful and creative helps brands to make a distinctive statement presenting fragmented snapshots of their heritage, just like mentioned previously for the Chloé case. These micro-moments help creating a greater level of engagement and curiosity, capturing the brand's essence while aiming directly at consumers' emotions. In addition, this is relevant especially from a mobile perspective, where, in order to stay competitive, content must be bite-sized and made visually engaging to in order to stay relevant. Moreover, the study conducted by Zatwarnicka-Madura and Nowacki (2018) has showed that luxury businesses dynamically using visual storytelling have an added 41% engagement rate compared to non-users.

The third feature resides in the truthfulness of the storytelling content. For instance, Tiffany & Co. with their #BelieveInLove holiday campaign aimed at sharing on its website real love stories of people who declared their love with their creations, where jewellery essentially played a role in their romantic narrative. As such, the luxury brand stimulates their consumers to have a purchase intention focused more on the story than on the

product itself, capitalizing on the potential of digital narratives to authenticate customers' ideas about love (Kim & Sullivan, 2019).

Structuring the story in a way that the narrative transportation process is enabled, sharing real experiences of their customers prompts a perceived realism that increases the effectiveness of the storytelling strategy (Escalas, 2006). Contrarily to the claim that many luxury brands' stories, particularly in the American case, are composed of fictitious elements (Kapferer & Bastien, 2012), when narratives are complemented with original and true-to-themselves elements, they reach a new level of engagement among its audience. For the community, that also comes from a sense of reassurance prompted by sharing personal stories, along with the exclusive privilege of being featured on a luxury brand's website. At a strategic level, Tiffany's & Co.'s marketing could rely on its long-established heritage for its storytelling strategy, but found in real stories an additional tool to grab the attention of its consumers and approach them with narratives that could closely bond to their hearts.

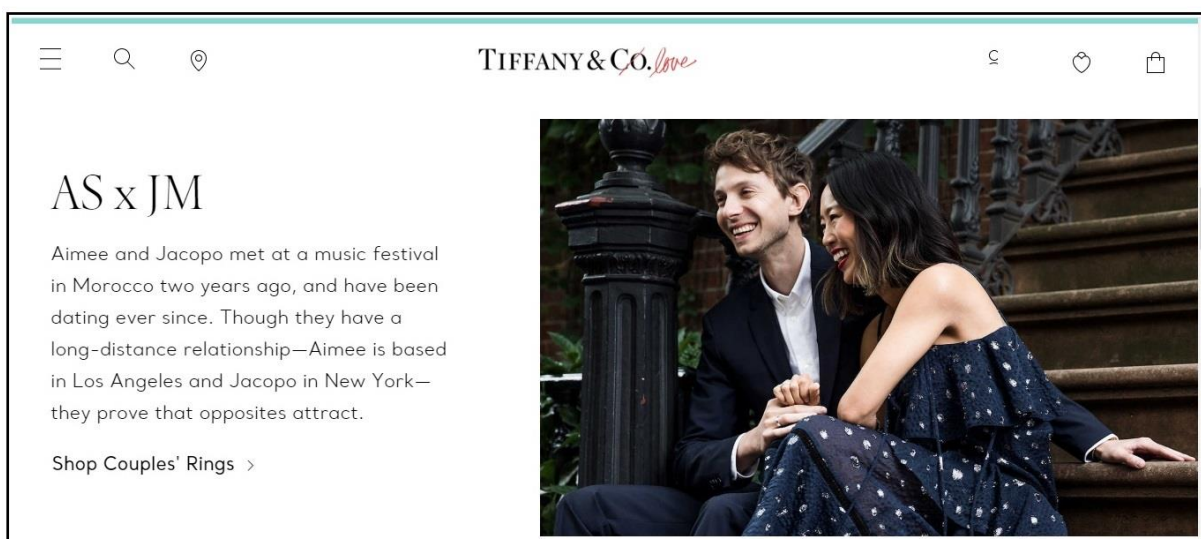


Figure 16: Tiffany's & Co. - "Believe in Love" Campaign
Source: Tiffany's & Co., (2019).

The fourth and final element consists in co-creation, where the actors involved are consumers who contribute to shaping stories through social media. In a larger perspective, this practice has also been termed "storygiving", which consists in constructing a story that sequentially creates, for its participants, an experience in which

they become the storytellers (Üçok Hughes et al., 2016). Through engaging user-generated stories, the audience can have conversations about the brand, spreading a positive e-word-of-mouth and simultaneously recommending the brand to viewers, making storygiving a powerful customer-to-customer marketing tool due to the social power of communities. A study conducted by Stackla (2017), the creative user-generated content marketing platform, revealed that almost 86% of luxury consumers perceive authenticity when content is co-created with the audience. While such practice would entail a certain degree of lack of control, brands adopting less elaborate conversations can conquer the hearts of younger audiences, conveying a more trustworthy image (Beauloye, 2016). Prada, for example, introduced in 2013 the “Prada Journal”, a literary contest and multimedia campaign committed to express the spirit of innovation of the brand by engaging new talents from all over the world in the creation of engaging stories. The brand’s invitation is to investigate the universe of Prada’s narratives and images, re-interpreting the codes and values of the brand, while seeking to expand the classic boundaries of digital storytelling (Zalewski & Linck, 2016).

As the digital perspective entails a continuous change in storytelling strategy, luxury brands need to face multiple challenges to remain competitive. Tailoring narratives and instruments to their audiences surely represents a winning approach, considering not only the shift of focus from word-of-mouth to e-word-of-mouth, but also the creation of stories and experiences that can be adapted to different devices, particularly mobile.

3.4. Digital Storytelling through e-Commerce Platforms

Among the challenges introduced by the digital approach resides the dividing issue of e-commerce that, although long-debated among management scholars, has changed the face of luxury retail, reflecting the need to rethink the traditional marketing strategies. To keep pace with the evolving landscape of luxury companies, e-commerce has stemmed from a necessary re-framing of business models and sales techniques in order to remain competitive in the digital marketplace, while approaching a younger audience that, more familiar to the use of mobile phones and Internet features in general, needs constant interactions with brands. As previously mentioned, luxury businesses have found the

integration of e-commerce problematic to their reputation, as deemed guilty of “cheapening” the exclusivity aura inextricably attached to their brands (Berridge, 2018).

Anyway, contrary to the hesitation with which many luxury brands approached the innovation of online marketplaces, e-commerce has represented a very smart intuition born out of necessity. Among the first luxury brands to go online, Gucci, Tom Ford, Fendi and Balenciaga stand out, with the person considered accountable for such digital revolution being Anthony King, one of the visionaries behind the birth of luxury e-commerce (Philips, 2018). In fact, in order to raise the ambition level online, luxury groups have learned that digitalizing the brand serves for more than mere reasons of ubiquity to the customer, in the context where social media and e-commerce tighten the liaison with potential buyers. According to D’Arpizio and Levato (2018), luxury marketers are realizing that, although the integration with e-commerce has represented an instrument to increase sales, the best websites actually address what academically is defined as the “3Cs”: content, commerce and community. While the third element concerns demographics and consumer tastes (with a social media perspective), the main concern for management scholars resides in the relationship between content, and specifically digital storytelling, and online commerce.

An interesting insight comes from the fact that while the importance of e-commerce appears to be sales oriented (Balasyan, 2015), a recent study by McKinsey & Company shows instead that its forecasted value for 2020 accounts to a mere 12% of luxury sales, with a history revealing even lower rates in the past (Achille et al., 2018). In this view, while digital channels seem to have a deep influence on buying behaviour, the purchasing stage might not represent the most relevant online activity for consumers, making content, and digital storytelling in particular, one of the most important aspect of the luxury e-commerce experience. In fact, the practice of employing digital storytelling in the e-commerce context originates from the need to distinguish brands by coupling them with distinctive narratives. At the experiential level, it comes from the activation of emotional links with luxury companies, where the use of archetypes and characters creates a higher affinity with brands’ values and codes (Hartwell & Chen, 2012). Henceforth, in order to build deeper connections through storytelling and same wise stimulate buying, luxury brands entrust the use of product pages as the ideal place where stories can be conveyed effectively and in the exact moment of purchase.

As such, emphasizing brand-driven storytelling allows a balanced combination between the e-commerce and in-store experience.

Brands such as Dior, Louis Vuitton and Burberry represent perfect examples of companies that, through their e-commerce sections, manage to balance the focus on stories and products, in the challenge to sell the former first and ultimately the latter. In fact, the brand-consumer relationship achieved through product pages can perpetuate the dreamy atmosphere typical of the in-store experience, and, as Hayes and Leprince (2015) claim, sometimes even overcome it. According to their exploratory studies, the offline experience is most often influenced by the human relational component, in which the salesforce plays an essential role through the transmission of stories to their customers. If, in any case, a less trained or incompetent member of the staff would intercept a customer and distort storytelling as intended by the brand, that would destroy the uniformly-built image of the company in the consumer's mind and, in the worst case, associate such negative experience to the brand in the form of a biased narrative (Hayes & Leprince, 2015). On the other hand, through product pages, the story associated to each product, yet inferior in length and quality of details, remains under the brand's span of control, even at the cost of foregoing content fullness.

Burberry, for instance, has found in digital storytelling the ideal strategy to connect its younger clientele to its long-established heritage, craftsmanship and codes. Its iconic product, the trench coat, stands as the leading character of its storytelling strategy, employed as a way to build brand loyalty across online as well as offline channels (Batat, 2019). In order to increase the potential of its offering on the website, Burberry's trench coat product pages are complemented with rich narratives, displaying the evolution of the item since its conception by Thomas Burberry in 1879, epitomizing the changes in its designs as a response to the functional use of the coat, later on conceived purely as high-end fashion. As the stories are accompanied by archive photography and media to better stimulate the consumers' imagery and stick to their memories, the brand is able to provide information about the product in a more engaging and straightforward modality. Nonetheless, especially when presented next to a shopping item, storytelling manages to reduce the complexity of information and downsize it to simpler and more direct content, which becomes easier to assimilate, overcoming the potential objections that customers could feel in the buying process.

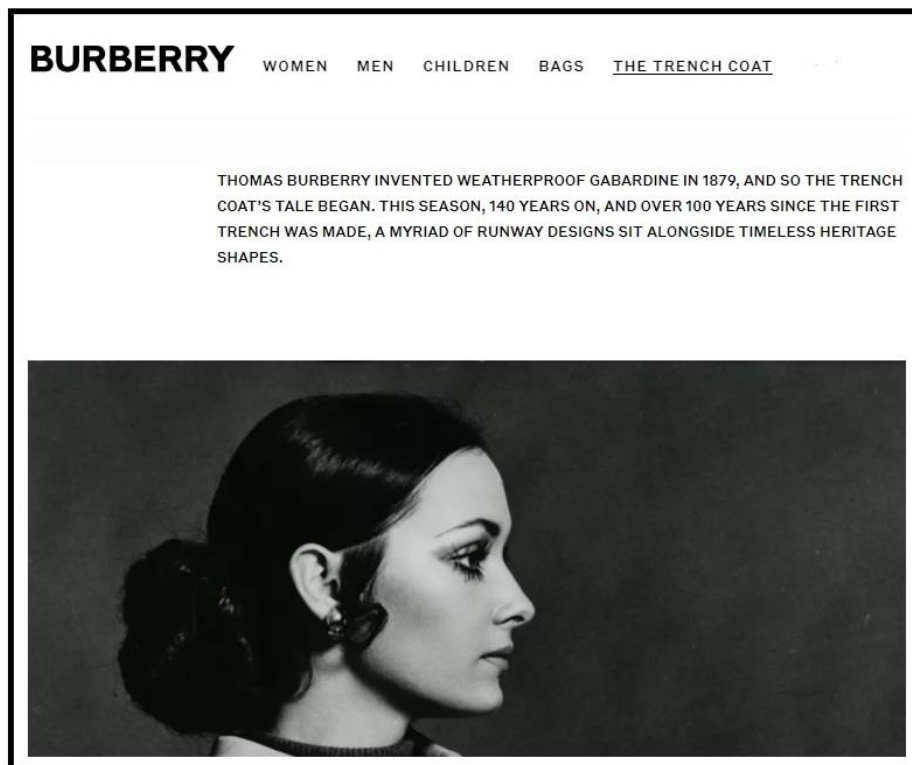


Figure 17: Burberry - The Trench Coat Product Page

Source: Burberry, (2019).

Besides, a more innovative approach to storytelling through product pages resides at the core of Chanel's strategy that, contrarily to these premises, does not integrate e-commerce in its online-selling offer if not only for its fragrances and cosmetic lines, with prêt-a-porter and accessories sales relying solely on offline channels (Berridge, 2018). Indeed, the brand operates its website – and product pages – as bare virtual windows, where only the characteristics and the stories of products are presented, with no “Add to Cart” option. As such, Chanel's website does not sell luxury products, but only the stories that incorporate the essence of its creations, using the narratives behind the brand's heritage and history, as well as an inspiring aesthetics in the design of its website, to echo its brick-and-mortar experience, deemed as its sole source of sales. As such, Chanel's online presence serves only as a way to stage narratives through storytelling, photography and visuals by means of experiential branding.

Besides, such storytelling artifice underlies the brand's need to make its consumers interact physically with the products, implying an unreachable polysensoriality attainable only through the in-store experience, and where the online adaptation stands only as a

response to the digital evolutions imposed by the marketplace to preserve the narratives of the brand (Hayes & Leprince, 2015).

Finally, digital storytelling through e-commerce platforms serves the function of giving consumers reasons to further commit to their purchases, leaving outside all the advantages that the in-store experience could provide.

3.5. Digital Storytelling as a Tool for Social Media Interaction

As the introduction of e-commerce has been widely recognized as groundbreaking from the luxury industry perspective, the wave of digitalization included much more in its process of transition. While online luxury sales might have seemed already a sufficient reason for luxury companies to go digital, the underlying main motif is in the ability to share 'branded content', intended as any media which can infuse sense, perspective and identification in the consumer, carrying a perception of distinctiveness of the brands' intangibles (Kapferer, 2014). In this view, social media interaction suggests countless opportunities to manage prospects' and clients' relationship with the brand. Anyway, for luxury brands in particular, research on social media has exiguous sources, due to the scepticism of scholars to conduct data-based studies on platforms which are predominantly visual (González Romo et al., 2017).

Social media allow to place and update stories and curiosities on the brand's history, in addition to information about events and multimedia content, such as short movies and films, which make the company's storytelling more engaging, dynamic and, mostly, shareable (Mosca, 2017). As such, Kapferer (2014) claims that luxury brands are promoting their heritage into the future, exploiting the potential and longevity of digital to create an online, constantly updated archive of corporate history, available on a wider-than-ever scale. An exploratory study conducted by the Content Marketing Institute in 2015 – year of the affirmation of Instagram as the main social media channel – confirms that, from 2013 to 2015, social media content, especially by means of digital storytelling, has peaked reaching almost 93% of usage by luxury companies, leaving the hint for an even growing trend in the years to come (Pulizzi & Handley, 2014).

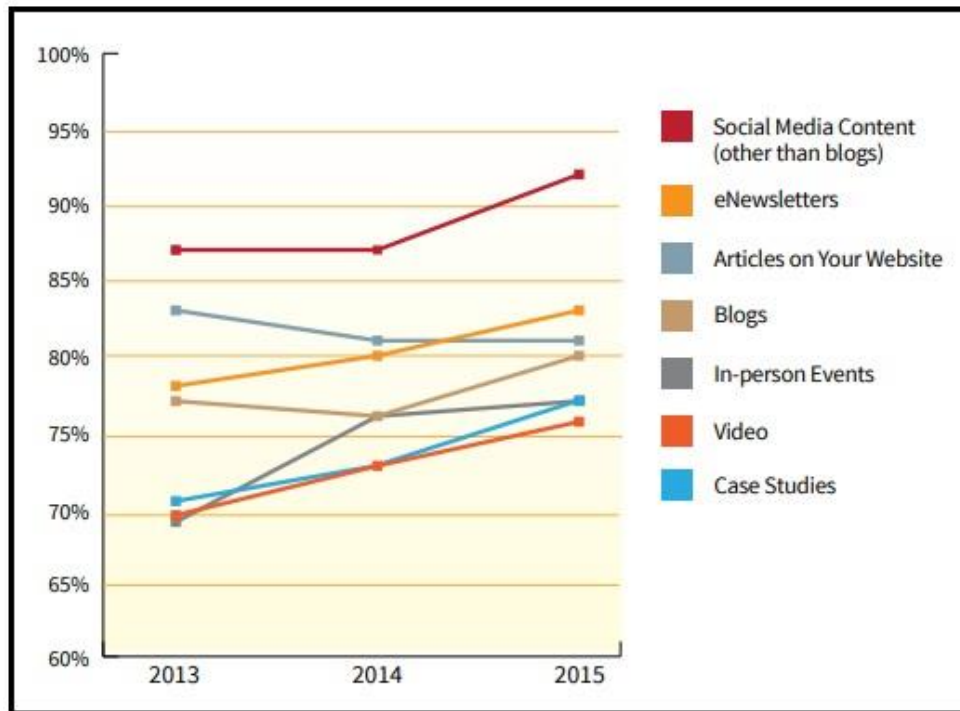


Figure 18: Changes in B2B Content Marketing Tactic Usage, 2013 – 2015
 Source: Pulizzi & Handley, (2014).

By replicating the study in 2018, insights show that 87% of the analysed companies employ social media channels with different frequencies, mainly as a tool for delivering storytelling content (Beets & Handley, 2019). Such consumer-provided media, ready to be consumed in the immediate, produce a hub of brand-submitted images and stories, purposefully designed to generate a feeling of community and cultivate brand loyalty, in particular among new prospect clients (Üçok Hughes et al., 2016). In this light, social media platforms nurtured by the power of visual storytelling such as Instagram or Pinterest, facilitate engagement for luxury brands online (González Romo et al., 2017), promoting user interaction especially through mobile, and allowing the audience to even participate, to a limited extent, to the company's storytelling.

Louis Vuitton stands as one of the companies that employs digital storytelling as a pivotal element to most of its digital marketing strategies, delivering its narratives on different platforms and made adaptable to any devices, feature which is key to success for social media networking. Through posts and stories, the luxury brand manages to touch consumers with emotions by displaying the long-established history of the company, the stories behind its products, its dedication to premium quality and the manufacturing

processes that lead consumers to be curious about how their favourite creations come to life (González Romo et al., 2017).



Figure 19: Louis Vuitton – “The Art of Craftsmanship”, Official Instagram Profile
 Source: Louis Vuitton, (2019).

In Figure 19 displayed above, for example, stands a post from the luxury brand’s social media account in which the history of the iconic monogram is briefly written. Tracking its origins back in 1896, Louis Vuitton’s son invented the motif as a reference to his father’s initials. In addition, the post suggests visiting the IGTV platform, employed for longer media, able to nurture the sense of discovery that pushes consumers to continue their voyage of research in the depths of the brand’s history.

By subdividing its rich narratives into sections – the previously mentioned one goes under the name “The Art of Craftsmanship”, subtly inspired by “The Art of Trench” by Burberry – Louis Vuitton creates brief episodes in the form of short videos or pictures accompanied by short descriptions, where the stories of the brand surface as an organized visual feed. The second chapter of “The Art of Craftsmanship”, for example, tells the story of when, in 1905, the brand invited the famous illusionist Houdini to escape a Louis Vuitton trunk secured with the patented maison’s lock deemed unpickable. As such, luxury brands can communicate their history in a richer, qualitative and aesthetically coherent way,

approaching the younger generation of affluent consumers with engaging content by means of a fervid storytelling, which conjugates the classic instruments of communication (photos, pictures and video) in an interactive structure. In this view, the rise of social media as main channels for digital narratives has led the consumer's role to shift from that of a passive listener and spectator to the one of an active participant and contributor (Singh & Sonnenburg, 2012).

From a theoretical perspective, it is important to note how the employment of narratives on social networks, where the individual has a complete control over the content he or she consumes, implies a kind of “self-branding”, that embeds the “self-conscious construction of a meta-narrative and meta-image of self through the use of cultural meanings and images drawn from the narratives and visual codes of luxury brands” (Hearn, 2008). Recalling the archetypal function of narratives, this type of storytelling while being self-centred, since individuals are deeply involved in the selection of stories they want to read, is also social, due to the community nature of these digital channels (Von Wachenfeldt, 2019).

However, behind the increasing presence of luxury brands' customers on such multi-channel journey, lies the necessity for a more experiential feedback from brands, which act as links for socially related consumers who want to engage in new conversations and interactions. This connection reflects the fact that like-minded individuals might enjoy the same narratives, unveiling the role of digital media that, with their multiplicity of touch points, contribute to a kind of consumer tribalization that finds in narratives a sharable element.

As social media represents the ideal space where luxury brands can transmit their codes and heritage, this approach to storytelling have led many luxury brands to embark on the route of transmedia narratives. Whether argumentative, descriptive or informative, transmedia content does not usually serve an advertising scope, but aims at creating conversations through the creation of entertainment-based narratives that remain coherent whatever digital vehicle has been used.

3.6. Transmedia Stories: Branded Entertainment as Main Source of Engagement

In a time when digital meets branded content, luxury brands have felt the need to stage their most relevant stories on numerous media platforms. Following the media consumption habits of their audiences, a creative answer to the impulse of remaining engaging was to combine such diversified media landscape with traditional storytelling techniques yet modernized and adapted to the context, resulting in the so-called “transmedia storytelling”. While ‘transmedia’ is per se a word which hints at something new and avant-garde, this term was originally coined by Henry Jenkins almost fifteen years ago, defining it as a skillful and innovative way of narrating stories by means of different types of media, methods and perspectives (Jenkins et al., 2018). In this context, transmedia storytelling represents a way to reference stories, characters and locations, whether new or inspired by old luxury tales, through the communication of narratives aimed at stimulating the attention of the recipient with a multichannel approach.

Compared to traditional storytelling techniques, transmedia follows a continuum of narration, allowing the expansion of a story through diverse media-specific languages and channels: this means that a story might be first introduced as a film, and stretched further through television, photography, articles, social media posts and so on (Batat, 2019).

Since several channels contribute to the development of conglomerate narratives, a transmedia story requires the presence of three conditions to be defined as such (Scolari, 2009): in the first place, as previously stated, it should be developed across different media platforms; secondly, each of these platforms should supplement the story with distinct and valuable details; and finally, each component should motivate the recipient to check the others, hence to continue his or her experiential journey across the different stages. In this manner, the audience is stimulated to deepen the story, given the multiple touch points through which it is communicated, and participate further in content creation through social media integration. With this approach, while every section of the story can be experienced singularly, they all stand in connection with each other as part of a larger transmedia narrative, such that luxury brands can convey a culturally and socially complex message through the multiplicity of touch points, finally strengthening the whole brand experience for the consumer (Pini & Pelleschi, 2017).

Of course, being a coordinated experience, this approach also contributes to bridge the gap between the online and offline experience, stimulating story-based conversations among consumers about the circulating engaging visual narratives, in turn retrieved and compensated in the physical store through the integration of sales advisors' storytelling. In fact, while transmedia storytelling refers to the art of designing a universe around a story, the process of creating such transmedia universe for a luxury brand is the art of weaving content into a concrete brand identity through the manifold online and offline channels (Jenkins et al., 2018).

Among the advantages that digital storytelling can offer, Buckner and Rutledge (2011) add up two additional benefits attributable to transmedia narratives: from the luxury brand's perspective, transmedia stories extend not only the lifecycle but also the profitability of a marketing campaign, due to the longevity and resonance that a mixture of concomitant and complemented digital tools allow through all the channels where the story takes place.

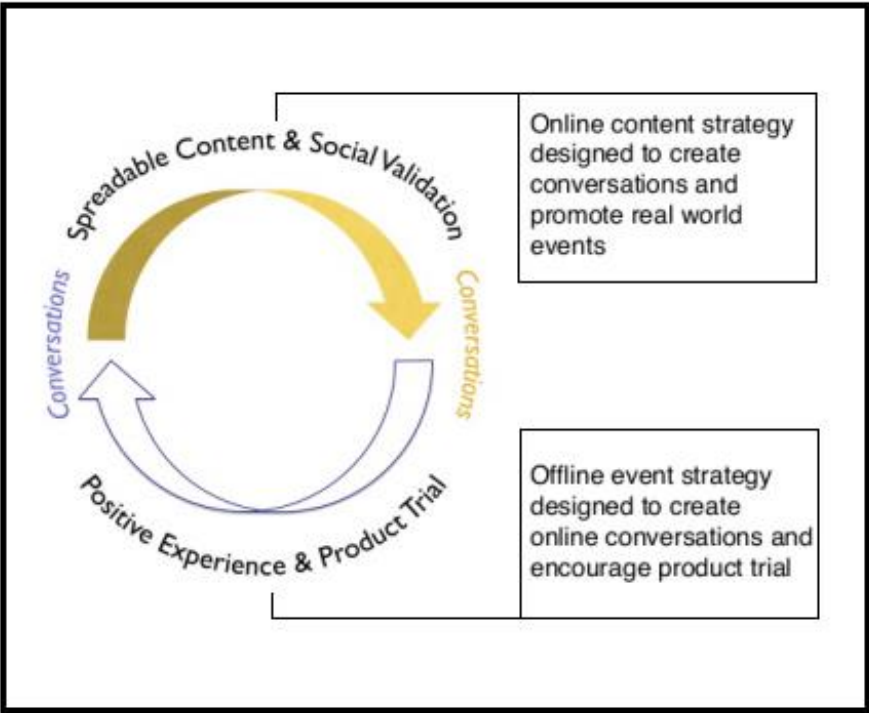


Figure 20: Transmedia Storytelling Bridges the Online and Offline Experience
 Source: Jenkins et al., (2018).

From the consumer's perspective, instead, such content longevity and ubiquity provides for a long-term engagement that adds value to the long-term product, even when that specific product - around which storytelling is created - is surpassed by more recent collections.

Analysing luxury brands with the most relevant transmedia contribution, Burberry stands out, considered by many marketing academics as the most successful branding story in the luxury fashion industry (Moore & Birtwistle, 2004). Founded in 1865, Burberry's narrative of success starts with the iconic trench coat, whose creation dates back to 1901 with Thomas Burberry's commission by the National War Office to design an original uniform for British Officers at the time of World War I. Besides, the garment began to acquire a British-iconic status at the end of the war, when soldiers and officials came back from the front and started to wear the coat in their civilian life (Kim & Sullivan, 2019). Anyway, the luxury business owes its digitalization and transmediation to Angela Ahrendts that, from 2006 to 2013, years in which she chaired as the company's CEO, turned Burberry into a global luxury brand by revitalizing the long-established company's heritage. In conversation with "Future of Storytelling" (Melcher Media, 2013), she asserted how luxury brands in particular have to tell authentic and compelling stories in order establish a life-long relationship based on trust with their consumers. Ahrendts claimed that when she and Christopher Bailey, appointed chief creative officer in 2009, had their very first group meeting at Burberry, they told the team about the amazing narrative behind the brand, and brought a cultural anthropologist as a temporary branding assistant to further study the brand. This process of understanding helped the branding team to capture the story and convey it through digital tools, to make sure it could be perpetuated to the next generation "(...) without writing another book, but some new exciting chapters" (Ahrendts, 2013).

As such, Ahrendts knew that the target of their stories had to be the younger audience, but recognised at the same time that narratives had to be kept authentic and pure such that consumers could feel the energy and be truly compelled by emotions. Therefore, the main necessity of the company consisted in "speaking the language of their new target consumer", and Burberry managed to do so by quitting the traditional marketing techniques and go visual (Ahrendts, 2013). At the outset, the disruptive effect of storytelling was given by the introduction of entertainment-based footages, whether in

the form of behind-the-scenes fragments, music videos or short movies on the official website and YouTube. In fact, before the introduction of Instagram, Facebook and YouTube (for entertainment through video or music format) were the main social networks employed by luxury brands for their marketing communications. As such, especially for their transmedia storytelling, luxury businesses heavily focused on making their YouTube channel a safe place where consumers could explore their universe and create intimacy with the brand. Burberry did so by incorporating music in stories, adjusting its digital strategy in response to the targeted millennial consumer, and conveying an even reinforced idea of Britishness through a music angle with the “Burberry Acoustic” project.

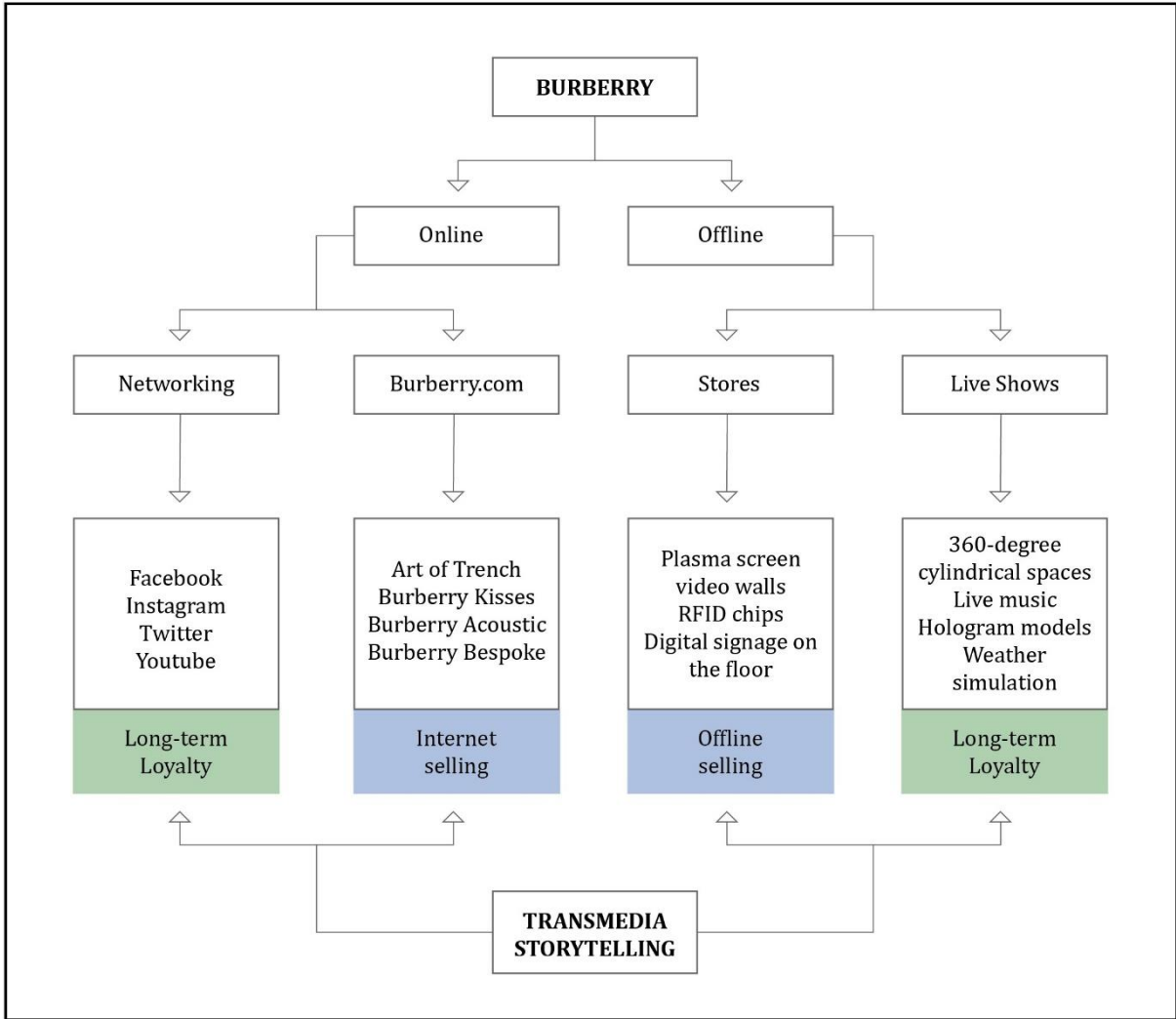


Figure 21: The Platforms of Burberry World for Transmedia Branding
Source: Medvedev, (2016).

On the website, the company created a monthly-updated section featuring more than 80 videos, where artists were carefully chosen (in line with the values of the brand) to showcase the brand's value with their British attire. As noted by Buckner and Rutledge (2011), a focal point of transmedia storytelling resides in the fact that the character's actions, thoughts and personalities are indeed subject to a sequence of events, however the way in which characters responds to such events complies with the brand's values and codes. Likewise, Burberry's transmedia storytelling focuses on the brand's strong heritage, following a marketing strategy centered around two objectives: on one hand, to strengthen consumer satisfaction along the omnichannel experiential journey with the final objective of boosting sales; on the other, to generate a long-standing customer loyalty fuelled by the trust and authenticity of the brand's narratives (Medvedev, 2016).

In addition, the typical narrative depiction of the brand personality, through its mixture of advertising campaigns and commercials, had to switch in favour of creative visuals with an engaging storyline behind, with its characters and plot as focal elements. Historically, the luxury world has always been tied to audio-visual media, using this language as an opportunity to bind the consumer to the brand in a relationship nurtured by emotion, dream and feelings, creating implicit and explicit self-brand associations (Escalas, 2006). As such, the fashion film has been identified as the perfect instrument through which conveying a clear and identifiable language and aesthetics, leading to the convergence between the fashion advertising world and the entertainment industry. Anyway, while this concept might seem innovative, as previously mentioned in the former section of this thesis, its origins root down in the pre-digitalized era, where these two components formerly merged. It is enough to consider "*Breakfast at Tiffany's*" or "*Belle de Jour*", movies where the luxury aesthetics accentuates the narrative content, which relies on archetypal discourses that lead consumers to self-associate with luxury brands. What has changed, instead, is the growing willingness of brands to embrace more innovative instruments and tools of communication, resulting in the openness to a more intimate dialogue with their consumers through the transmediality of storytelling, seizing the opportunities created by the digital age (Suma & Scaglioni, 2017).

The employment of "narrative/entertainment-based branded content", as defined by Suma and Scaglioni (2017), underpins the brands' necessity to rejuvenate their images, relying on the aesthetics grounded in photographic and cinematic culture.

With an average duration spanning from one to thirty minutes, and a particular focus on visual aesthetics, the fashion film acts as a link between luxury brands and movie directors – in addition to creative digital agencies – where the product placement intention is explicit, yet not protagonist to the storyline, serving the scope of creating the allure of the luxury brand through its values and codes.

The luxury company Prada, for example, has often involved celebrated filmmakers in its transmedia content creation, such as Roman Polanski for the short movie “*A Therapy*”, or the previously cited Wes Anderson for “*Castello Cavalcanti*” – where the director pays homage to the narratives of Federico Fellini – to tell a story in cinematic language to grip the consumers’ attention and transmit emotions to a heightened extent (Batat, 2019). The multi-platform film “*Past Forward*”, directed by David O. Russel in collaboration with Miuccia Prada, employs a hitchcockian rhythm and an abstract and surreal narrative to tell the story of three mysterious women that probably embody the same person. Behind the narrative of the movie, not only there is a clear intention of the director to transmit the idea of a brand with an intellectual attitude, but also the desire to carry its deep set of values and translate them into an experience where the viewer is left to decipher what is dream and what is memory. In fact, what is relevant about “narrative/entertainment based” movies is the fact that the product placement of luxury collections through clothing and accessories are indeed important, but remain always secondary to the story, committed primarily to the experiential dimension of the brand (Suma & Scaglioni, 2017). The whole collection of Prada’s short movies and films are gathered in “Pradasphere”, a section of the luxury brands’ website dedicated to audio-visual transmedia content.

While “Pradasphere” represents the transmedia container of the Prada universe, “Nowness” does the same with regards to the companies belonging to the luxury conglomerate group LVMH. An online magazine and digital platform established in 2010, this multimedia channel serves to deliver “information reference” about its luxury brands, celebrating the contemporary culture that, applied to luxury fashion, encompasses the domains of art, design, travel, music and society, generating a resonant awareness within a larger potential audience, going beyond the target customer (Suma & Scaglioni, 2017). Through a carefully curated and tasteful production of transmedia narratives organized as an online magazine, “Nowness” represents an innovative instrument and a creative communication strategy, embracing digital storytelling as a tool to inspire and engage its

audience and forging a solid conjunction between luxury fashion and digital. While LVMH relies on a high extent on the work of directors, artists and external-to-the-business figures to charge storytelling with emotional and human significance, the French luxury brand Chanel has been undertaking the same path, but using its own creative and artistic direction to generate entertainment/narrative-based. More than any other luxury brand, Chanel has been capable to deliver such narratives in the form of an effective and impactful historical narrative. In its collection of short movies called "*Inside Chanel*", available on the company's website, the film is divided into 26 chapters, timely updated with new stories, consisting in brief videos of 2-4 minutes, where the myth of Gabrielle Chanel is recounted through images, dates, characters and historical events (Batat, 2019). Founder of one of the most famous Parisian couture houses in the world, Coco Chanel's story represents a successful documentation of the history of the company, making the brand a true narrative storyteller and endowing digital storytelling with a new experiential dimension. From her early age to the Chanel n°5 iconic perfume, the viewer becomes highly fascinated and engaged in the brand history, triggering a self-actualization mechanism coming from the strong values and timeless identity of the brand.

Taking as an example Chapter 16 of the brand's web series, the episode focuses on Coco Chanel's love for the camellia, a flower that soon became the emblem of the maison. The short video has a duration of 02.14 minutes, where a feminine voice-over impersonates the camellia flower and its inspirational value for Gabrielle Chanel. The narrative recounts how she never said why it was her favourite flower, but Gabrielle Chanel started to be fascinated by it when, aged 13, she found herself deeply moved by Sarah Bernhardt's performance of "*The Lady of the Camellias*". The flower's use in fashion takes its roots from menswear, from when dandy artists and literates would pin it on the lapel of their jackets as a symbol of sophisticated elegance, cohesion and ambiguity. As such, after revisiting the jersey and adapting the texture to womenswear, she moved the flower from man's jackets eyelets to the belt of chemises Breton. In addition, camellias are flowers so delicate to not emanate any fragrance, leaving women to choose their own ones. Such proposition is a clear invitation from the brand to further explore the Chanel n°5 perfume's section, as well as Karl Lagerfeld's one, after showing the elegant haute-couture wedding dress he embroidered entirely with camellias. The fact that it is an evergreen flower, irresistible at all ages and seasons, reflects the timeless heritage of the brand, as well as its iconic colours

and logo. From a branding point of view, the anaphora “I remember” creates a deliberate intimacy with the audience, just as Gabrielle Chanel would have close conversations with her consumers (Batat, 2019).

Taking customers on such highly narrated, visual ride along the brand’s historical heritage and codes, Chanel embodies the perfect example of a long-established business employing a narrative attitude with the final aim of staying relevant at all times. Overall, this represents the primary goal of transmedia storytelling: to inspire the collective imagery of a broader audience to compel curiosity and prompt a desire of exploration of the brand’s universe across different media and perspectives. With ubiquity, engagement and immersion as main pillars, transmedia narratives contribute to boost awareness and nurture a positive image and perception of the brand.

3.7. Interviews in Qualitative Research: An Ethnographic Approach to Storytelling Analysis

3.7.1. Methodology of Research

In order to delve further into the evolutionary pattern of storytelling for luxury brands, this study adopts a qualitative approach in the form of semi-structured interviews to five international luxury professionals. As they represent the primary data of this research, media reports and academic papers also support the analysis as secondary sources.

With the aim of identifying potential figures whose profiles were in line with the scope of the research, fashion and luxury academics and digital creative agencies were contacted to take part to the study. Out of them, among the former and latter categories, five respondents agreed to contribute to the research, ending up in a process of self-selection. In order to preserve the anonymity of their claims, respondents have been coded as indicated by Table 2. Interviews had a duration spanning from twenty to thirty minutes.

The interview questions differ according to the areas of interest and professional fields of the selected interviewees, categorizing queries in line with their experience. On one hand, luxury academics have been asked questions focused on the historical relevance of

storytelling for brands; the businesses in the field that, by record, have collected more corporate stories, internally and externally to the company; the transition from the pre-digitalized to the digitalized forms of narratives, and their clout for brands; the relevance of real corporate stories compared to fictitious ones, and their influence on final consumers. On the other hand, the interview questions to creative agencies concerned more the process of creation of digital campaigns, short films, photographs, and generally any form of transmedia digital content accomplished through their collaboration with luxury brands. Their queries focused on the importance of digital storytelling for luxury brands; the strategy and ongoing process of content creation for brands' digital narratives; the schemes behind the notion of a corporate story and the influence they wield on the formulation of digital storytelling; the level of control and interaction that luxury brands exert on them during their construction of digital narratives.

Respondent	Professional Field	Area of Interest
A	Fashion & Luxury Academic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - History of Fashion - Fashion Journalism
B	Fashion & Luxury Academic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Semiotics of Luxury - Theory of Visual Culture of Fashion
C	Fashion & Luxury Academic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Luxury Marketing Consultancy
D	Company Archivist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Luxury Company Archive - Direction of Heritage Museum
E	Creative Agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Art Direction for Luxury Brands' Campaigns

Table 2: Key to Cross-Case Interviews
 Source: Personal Collection of Information.

Finally, interviews have been transcribed such that the respondents' claims could be evaluated and implemented in a general discourse, by means of cross-case analysis and comparison with the literature on the subject area.

3.7.2. Cross-Case Assessment of Interviews

Among the first impressions of the respondents comes a natural and spontaneous need to express the influence that storytelling has always had in the luxury industry. Respondent A, in particular, claims that, especially in the last decade, the word “storytelling” has been described as an artificial construct that spread virally almost in search of a type of legitimacy, while always being of focal relevance in the history of luxury, especially in the field of fashion. In particular, Respondent A attributes the role of luxury storytelling pioneer to Diana Vreeland, remarkable signature of Harper’s Bazaar and Vogue since the 1930s, who first noticed the power of imageries and stories around luxury fashion creations, giving prominence to the primary forms of visual narrative art and branding strategies for businesses. While Respondent A looks at storytelling as something inextricably rooted to the past, Respondent C takes a modern look to the concept, claiming that its application relates more to contemporary luxury, which is tied more to the use of aspirational imagery in terms of visual and sensory representation, rather the products. Respondent B’s claims are in line with this discourse, recognizing storytelling as one of the tools that luxury brands take in considerations in the primary phases of their projects, yet as a practice that acquired its own legitimacy starting from the 1990s.

While the stories circulating internally to the brand incur indeed in a certain extent of control by the company, being guided by the archetypes and historical heritage rooted at the core of its brand identity, exogenous narratives constitute a remarkable field of interest, especially for the fact that they usually reach the client even before endogenous ones. Respondent A states the example of Sorelle Fontana Alta Moda, one of the first luxury couture houses in Italy. Famous for receiving credit for the Costume Design of Fellini’s *“La Dolce Vita”*, the magic behind their creations resides in the stories they told to their clients, in addition to the visual narrative imagery conceived around cinematic contributions. Respondent B continues by citing *“Funny Face”* in 1957, which epitomized a sure success for Hubert de Givenchy, credited for the first time in the Hollywood landscape by receiving a nomination for an Oscar. Anyway, another relevant narrative visual imagery is the one conceived by Armani in *“American Gigolo”* and *“The Untouchables”*, movies that have indeed nurtured a story around their characters, who stem in the first place by the archetypal brand-association conveyed originally by the

brand. As far as archetypes are concerned, Respondent C claims the existence of two luxury brands that have crystalized a clear and distinct imagery around their characters: the Dior-woman and the Chanel-woman, whose external appearances are conceived as emanating the most profound ethos, something that has persisted until nowadays. Respondent D names also "*Show People*", the 1928 silent comedy film, where a young Marion Davies realizes to be arrived in Hollywood by seeing the sign of the renowned Salvatore Ferragamo's "Hollywood Boot Shop". In addition, Respondent B claims that these narratives move very ambiguously with respect to a clear product placement intention, considering that, from a branding point of view, in the pre-digitalized era operational marketing was still bringing into focus storytelling as a branding tool.

When the digital variable came to take part to the storytelling equation, it became essential for luxury brand to keep the pace of transformation and turn their stories into ubiquitous narratives. In this light, Respondent A configures Chanel and Gucci as the luxury companies that applied storytelling to their branding strategies in the most innovative way: "*Inside Chanel*" and "*Gucci Stories*" represent the most iconic collection of short stories told in the digital dimension, with a general emphasis on narratives per se rather than on products, contributing to the oneiric aura of the luxury universe.

Respondent B confirms this statement, adding that the digital dimension has reconfigured the means by which brands deliver their stories, reflecting on the vehicles that the audience employ to consume these media. On the matter, Respondent E adds that these tools have challenged the notion of engaging narrative, particularly applying this argument to the digital fashion film, which relaunched the employment of storytelling as a branding tool for luxury businesses, introducing the role of creative agencies. Respondent C continues by stating that these media have restored communication by means of much more specific capillary tools, favouring the diffusion of new techniques of heritage valorisation. On the matter, Respondent D states that while the digital dimension may have induced to the transposition of digitally native stories, these new tools have indeed given a major echo to the narratives of luxury brands, which, especially in the case of long-established ones, have remained truly authentic as extrapolated by their archives. Respondent A, in particular, adds that while digitally native stories may be part of the heritage of many luxury companies nowadays, these narratives are still very tied to the historical legacy of the brand, which, in order to keep them appealing to the contemporary

digital audience, endowed them with a more fabulist, and modern appeal. Digital stories, Respondent E continues, epitomize the perfect mix of key elements: when creative studios create narrative digital content, they start with the study of the heritage, DNA, mission, core value and social media profiles of luxury brands, which usually also provide a brief with the stories derived from the archives to take as inspiration (and that do not generally concern only the mythical figure of the founder, but also every other historical reference born by the brand). As this represents the starting point for their work, Respondent E continues, the process goes on from there by embarking on diverse creative routes, which indeed encompass timing and budget evaluations, finally leading to the establishment of a clear brand identity for the campaign, with the aim of generating a deeper, lasting connection with customers. Anyway, while the digital dimension might have provided stories with an entertainment purpose, it is also true, adds Respondent A, that the modalities through which consumers are approached in the store, as the primary touch point for affluent consumers, have changed considerably: with the democratization of luxury, consumers have witnessed a democratization of stories too.

While this is always true for luxury brands with a history of solid heritage and tradition, the argument changes when applied to relatively new luxury brands, as stated by Kapferer and Bastien (2012) in reference to the European and American approach to luxury storytelling. Respondent A claims that these brands should mobilize an invented narrative, mentioning the example of the American brand Tory Burch, which, on the steps of Ralph Lauren, conceives its narratives around the ideal of wealthy families living in the Hamptons, evoking a general imagery aimed directly at their ideal target clientele. On the other hand, Respondent B objects to these claims, stating that the European and American approach to luxury cannot be compared, arguing instead that they complement each other. This statement relies on the case of Halston, which stands among the first American luxury brands, born in 1957, that, if on one hand, is incomparable to the couture dreamy atmospheres generated through the European approach, on the other, it nourished its brand identity with the narratives created around the celebrities who wore its creations in Studio 54. In this light, the American approach provided European marketing teams with new modalities to interpret and deliver luxury stories. In the view of Respondent D, luxury brands that are not provided with a solid heritage can leverage on storytelling through subliminal messages, which should stand in coherence with the target clientele and the consumer imagery to which the brand addresses its products.

A relevant example is the case of Tod's, which made an iconic campaign in 1996 that showed Cary Grant, Steve McQueen and Audrey Hepburn wearing their iconic loafers, making a statement with products that were no longer produced – confirming the lack of a potential product placement intention – but relying instead on the powerful stories around their famous moccasins.

Finally, the interview concluded with an investigation about the relevance of the authenticity of luxury storytelling for affluent consumers. Respondent A claims that consumers do not really go in-depth the stories of brands, being unconsciously attached to the ideas and archetypal construction of the company in their minds. Respondent B confirms such claim, stating that the “truth” dimension is not important in luxury branding, being an industry that leverages its identity through the entertainment and engagement of their consumers, through their experiences and desires. Except for the cases of cause branding, luxury companies hardly ever build a faithful reportage of their past, biasing events and narratives in favour of their brand identities. Respondent C confirms these allegations by stating that affluent consumers attribute a relative importance to the authenticity of luxury brands' narratives, even if this discourse is confined to luxury brands that have a relatively new conception. With the employment of social media and digital tools, the credibility of luxury brands today is much more relevant than its “truth” dimension. By citing the example of the luxury cosmetic brand Officine Universelle Buly 1803, Respondent C explains that this company relies on a past that is built by scratch explicitly and voluntarily, since the company was founded just in 2014 but relies on the legacy of the master perfumer Jean-Vincent Buly. For luxury brands like these, modernity and tradition coexist, since narratives are extrapolated from old books – in this case by 1839 Honoré de Balzac's “*Cesar Birotteau*” – but marketing strategies apply to reveal the storytelling intent as rooted to a non-existent past of the company. Long-established luxury brands, on the other hand, always employ narratives as derived from their archives, since their solid heritage and savoir-faire is key to their marketing strategies. Respondent D adds on this statement by arguing that embellished narratives might even damage their brand identities and image perceptions. Especially for time-honoured luxury companies, it is extremely important that consumers recognize the authenticity of narratives: in fact, as far as they are concerned, every story written by copyrighters externally to the brand is always verified by the marketing offices in collaboration with the brands' archives.

On the argument, Respondent E confirms that the interaction between archives and creative agencies is continuous during the campaign creation, since it is important to generate a direct dialogue with designers in order to build consistency within the brand.

3.7.3. Discussion and Results

The analysis of the interviews reveals the presence of five main themes that are identified as the principal issues that luxury brands should cope with when formulating a branding strategy with storytelling as its main component.

In the first place, the research demonstrated the relevance of storytelling as a focal component that has been historically important for luxury companies, as being part of the strategies to market brands to their consumers. Although being a concept academically described as novel and artificial, storytelling has always constituted an inextricable component of the radical yet versatile nature of luxury businesses. What has changed, with the passing of time and the development of digital tools, is the way stories approach their public. Nonetheless, as argued by Von Wachenfeldt (2019), the branding strategies of the luxury industry have always followed the commercial logic of their times, with a marketing purpose being a reflection of the social practices and contemporary imageries of its consumers.

Secondly, in the pre-digitalized era as well as with the advent of digitalization, external narratives, more than the ones conceived internally by brands, have been more influential to affluent consumers – and to a general audience at large, too – compared to a mere product placement intention achieved through corporate stories. For luxury companies, myths and archetypes represent cultural outcomes that, due to their business adaptation, have turned into economic ones (Von Wachenfeldt, 2019). While many luxury businesses are progressively taking the form of new media houses in order to sustain the importance of fashion films and digital content, external narratives, whether commissioned or not by the brand, are endowed with an additional authenticity that leads consumers to the maturation of an implicit trust, generated by veiling the product placement intention (Escalas, 2006). Due to their symbolic and inventive essence, the development of stories in digital media forms has led to an intensified presence in the imagery of consumers,

challenging the ontology of luxury. However, luxury cannot be interpreted outside its temporal and cultural context, and the digital dimension may contribute to the risk of distorting its time-honoured meanings, especially for traditional companies. Anyway, by means of digital campaigns and fashion films, luxury companies realize an investment that is as profitable for them as it is persistent in the mind of their consumers.

Thirdly, while for long-established luxury brands digital storytelling must adhere faithfully to the narratives as they are found in the archives, their relationships with creative agencies during the production of digital content is continuous and provides for the modernization of archival stories, which are rendered more appealing for a digitally native audience. Anyway, luxury brands adopt different extents of control over the construction of storytelling content, showing a certain resistance to the opening of their narratives to external actors. Beyond the risk of loss of content control, there is the urgency, especially among luxury businesses, to maintain a hierarchical relationship with the market, which serves as a means to strengthen the exclusivity of the brand (Batat, 2019).

Fourthly, if a luxury brand is new, hence lacking of a relevant heritage, it should capture the imagery of its target consumers and find or generate a narrative universe in line with that imagery. These brands should aim at storytelling as their focal tool, even more than brands with an authentic background of archival stories. As such, luxury companies should aim at transforming their brand positioning into an engaging story, starting from the DNA, core values and history of the company – however brief it may be – and generate an emotional narrative with elements that underline the reasons why the target clientele should approach the business (Batat, 2019). By applying this customer-centric strategy, storytelling becomes a tool to consolidate the brand identity of luxury businesses through narratives adapted to a specific targeted imagery.

Finally, affluent consumers are relatively interested in the authenticity of brands' narratives. Luxury companies should aim at building credibility in their brand identity and image, a straightforward activity that became even easier to manage through the implementation of digital and social media tools. Anyway, this does not apply to long-established luxury businesses, which instead build credibility through the employment of archival heritage stories. As argued by Ahrendts (2013), lifelong relationships with luxury brands have to be built on an implicit trust that reverberates through their corporate

stories, consequently underpinning every other form of communication. Moreover, the marketing practices entailed at a business-wide level should incorporate the in-store and online experiences, providing a consistent and immersive luxury journey in a continuum stimulation of the consumer's imagination (Bilefield, 2016). "*Gucci Stories*", for example, embody the type of storytelling that blends perfectly the online and offline dimensions in a unique experience, being Gucci stores provided with interactive displays which show the brand's transmedia content as it is displayed online, using digital tools as creative instruments to instruct and immerse customers in the heritage and long-established history of the brand (Pini & Pelleschi, 2017). Authenticity and credibility stand as pillars for luxury companies, and while some of them tend more to the former dimension and others to the latter, the ideal equilibrium could be reached only by their complementation.

3.8. Storytelling Innovation: a Contemporary Evaluation of Luxury Brands

With the switch from the word-of-mouth to the e-word-of-mouth (eWOM), the branding strategies adopted by luxury businesses underwent a deep transformation, which contributed to the evolution of new techniques to generate novel synergies between brands and consumers. Brand storytelling is a concept that is not innovative per se, yet it stems from the idea that telling stories about traditions, heritage and craftsmanship increases the value of a product more than a mere discourse based on facts (Donzé & Wubs, 2017). Nonetheless, the fast-changing evolution of the industry and the heterogeneity of performance have led luxury companies to realize that applying a traditional storytelling strategy, whether digital or not in its nature, was not enough to remain relevant among competitors. On the other hand, storytelling tools and techniques need to evolve in line with the other elements of the marketing strategy, especially in an era governed by digital opportunities.

From a narrative perspective, among the luxury brands that performed better along the years, keeping the pace with storytelling innovation, Burberry stands out. Especially since when Angela Ahrendts took the lead of the brand as CEO in the mid-2000s, Burberry has led as the forerunner of the digitalization and transmediation of stories, turning a

company that relied solely on its heritage, into a global luxury brand with a unique identity and attitude (Medvedev, 2016). As such, Ahrendts turned the heritage of the company into modernized stories to be shared across consumers through an omnichannel approach, generating, through its transmedia storytelling projects, a storyworld whose single components were scattered across the manifold media platforms, in an experiential journey which encompasses both online and offline touch points. A singular example of Burberry's innovation can be found in the brand's launch of the collection "Burberry X The New Craftsmen" in 2016, along with the development of Makers House, a temporary open atelier through which craftsmen could highlight, with daily programs and shows, the attention to detail and high artistry put in the work of the brand's iconic trenches (Batat, 2019). The narrative that embellishes the collection and design of the temporary space is the one of Virginia Woolf's novel "*Orlando*" that tells the story of a poet that lived at the court of Queen Elizabeth I, and transitioned from a man to a woman. Besides the reverberation of the theme in the designs and prints on the iconic Burberry's creation, the workshop also served as an experiential journey in the storyworld of the English writer, to highlight even more the British attitude behind the brand's project. Following to the exhibition, the brand's fashion show took place in the same workshop, being broadcasted live, for the first time ever in the industry, on social networks (Karmali, 2016). The online-offline experience of its visitors and clients – since the creations of the workshop could be purchased – came together to nurture a storytelling imagery that stands solid in the identities of Woolf, from the narrative perspective, and Burberry, from the branding one.

Standing on the opposite line of this argument, many luxury businesses in the industry have performed very poorly from a storytelling perspective, relying instead on conveying a brand identity surrounded by mystery and anachronism. This is the case of the Spanish luxury brand Balenciaga, founded in 1919 by Cristóbal Balenciaga, whose haute couture tradition inspired the works of Hubert de Givenchy and Oscar de la Renta, who both worked for him in their early careers. Defined by Christian Dior himself as "the master of us all" (Dior, 1957), Balenciaga's work extends over a century-old tradition of luxury fashion, defining the rules of couture and artistry to the creative designers who would have come after him. Anyway, the house of Balenciaga today is much different from the one of a century ago, with Demna Gvasalia appointed at the creative direction of the maison in 2015, defined by the press as "the antistoryteller" (Cronberg, 2017). While the heritage of the maison has always been secondary to the marketing strategy of the brand,

Balenciaga's sales rely solely on the unconventional aura with which the designer endows its creations, completely ignoring the heritage and historical background of the maison. In an interview with *Business of Fashion*, Gvasalia declared that the only thing he feels to share with the founder is his controversial attitude towards the fashion system – since Cristóbal Balenciaga barely followed the rules of the *Chambre Syndicale de la Haute Couture* when presenting his collections – and his approach to the body (Cronberg, 2017). Even online, the brand's website is merely an e-commerce platform, with neither a section dedicated to the heritage of the fashion house or storytelling through its product pages. While such change of brand image has played to the detriment of corporate stories, the designer has turned the brand into a manifesto of authenticity, singularity and avant-gardism, being able to differentiate the company from the heterogeneous landscape of long-established luxury brands in the industry. Indeed, there is a balance between the codes of the house and modernity, which the designer displays in his collection, but the storytelling intent is completely absent, or at least, barely reachable through the transmission of narratives more or less tied to the current inspirations of the designer. When present, these stories move away from either the heritage or the founder of the company, positioning Balenciaga, although being a long-established European luxury brand, out of the framework proposed by Kapferer and Bastien (2012). As such, Balenciaga's company overview is that of a luxury business whose managers have failed at properly linking the history of the maison with its present and its expectations for the future, resulting in an imbalance between the three temporary dimensions, which eventually led to one overcoming the other (Mosca, 2017). As such, digital storytelling brings challenges and limitations to the marketing purposes of luxury brands: if the emphasis rests on the past, the risk is within the creation of a nostalgic aura; if instead, like in the case of Balenciaga, the brand identity is heavily focused on the present and the future, the risk is to devalue the heritage of the company, resulting in a luxury company whose stories and brand perception are not so different from the ones of a new comer.

While these former chapters have dealt with storytelling from a general perspective, the following section will discuss the case of Christian Dior Couture, a luxury brand that strongly relies on its narrative attitude, through the use of both online and offline channels, as a potential strategic lever of differentiation from its competitors in the luxury industry.

IV. CHAPTER FOUR: The Case of Christian Dior Couture

4.1. Brand Overview

Christian Dior, namely Christian Dior Couture SE, represents one of the most valuable brands in the luxury industry. According to the global brand consultancy firm Interbrand, Dior ranks the sixth position among the ten luxury fashion brands (including Louis Vuitton, Chanel, Hermès, Gucci, Prada and more) present in the list of the top 100 most valued brands in 2019 (Interbrand, 2019). In addition, Statista confirms Dior as the second most relevant luxury company in the industry, performing a growth of 16% in the last three years, and a total valuation of approximately 6.1 billion U.S. dollars (O'Connell, 2019). Christian Dior Couture SE, which controls all the brand's products made exception for the branches of perfumes and cosmetics (managed instead by Parfums Christian Dior, a subsidiary of LVMH) grew rapidly from the 1990s onwards, performing an accelerated increase in gross sales from 102 million euros in 1992, to 296 million euros in 2000 and finally 1.9 billion euros during the fiscal year of 2015-2016, as displayed in Figure 22 (Donzé & Wubs, 2019). In fact, as the numbers show, in the early 1990s Christian Dior SA used to be a small company with a consistent profitability, with annual sales ranging 132.2 million euros and an operating income of almost 15.1% of sales. Anyway, Bernard Arnault's takeover in 1985 transformed the company in a very large business with high profitability, nowadays valued almost twenty times more than its gross sales twenty years ago, making Dior an outstanding financial success (Donzé & Wubs, 2019). Anyway, these major achievements did not come without sacrifices, having the brand's history of success also had its exceptions, especially during the 1997-2001 period, characterised by internal transformation and low desirability, and during the 2008-2010 financial crisis. Anyway, Dior's renovation relied on three main pillars: full control on product diversification, intensive investment in retail and exceptional brand management. In the first place, the company's sales highly depended on licensing arrangements as a way to expand the brand to foreign markets since almost the 1950s (Dior, 1957). From a management perspective, this meant an extensive loss of control in the brand image, with retaliation on the marketing and communication strategy. As such, after regaining control on its partners' strategic licenses, Dior benefited from the parenting advantages that LVMH could bring,

with its large manufacturing subsidiaries, and embarked on a series of investments, acquiring stakes in Safilo and John Galliano SA, company of the famous designer later appointed as creative director, which was largely employed in the manufacturing of accessories. Finally, this “accessorization venture” reached its peak with the launch of the Lady Dior handbag in 1995, a case with a history that stands at the heart of Dior’s storytelling strategy.

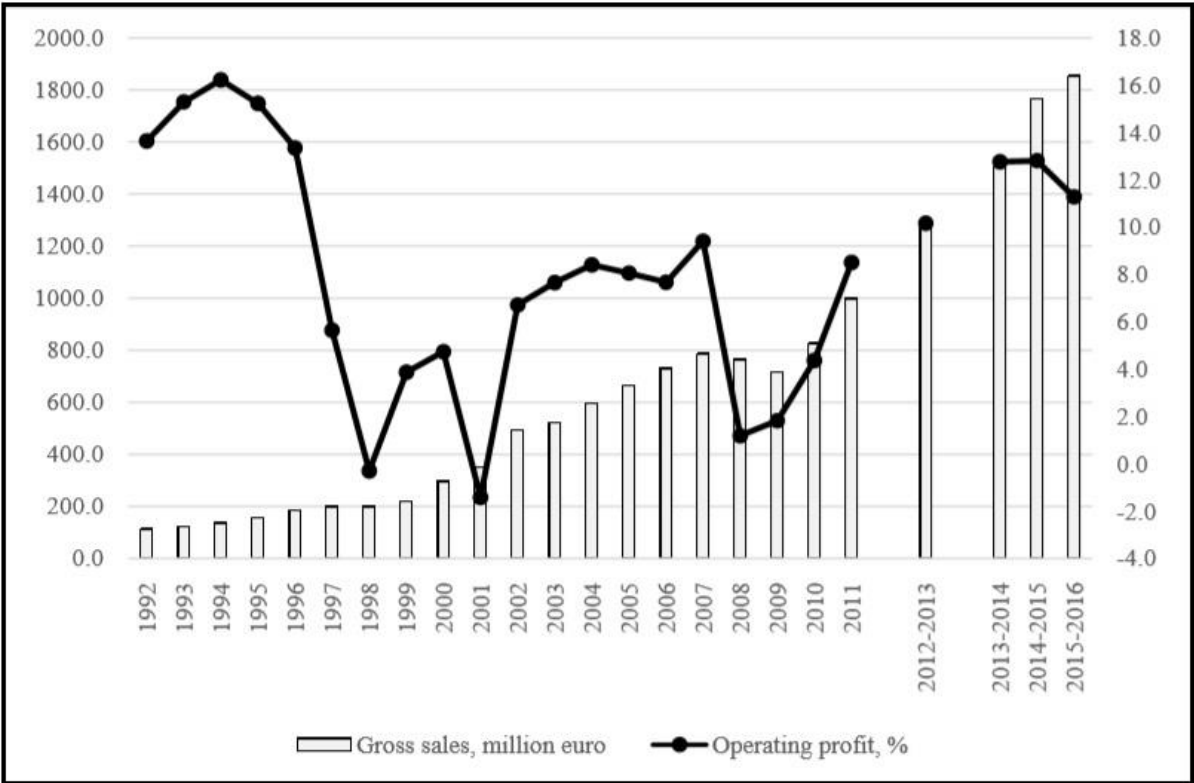


Figure 22: Christian Dior Couture SA, Gross Sales (million euros, left axis) and Operating Profit (% , right axis), 1992–2016

Source: Donzé, P. Y., & Wubs, B. (2019) – (Fiscal years correspond to January–December through 2011, May–April in 2012–13 and July–June since 2013–14. January–April 2011 and May–June 2013 are not included in this figure).

Secondly, until Arnault assumed the leadership as the business chairman, the company’s sales depended on a high extent on autonomous retailers, while the main Dior stores were located only in Paris and New York City, as established by the founder in 1948 (Dior, 1957). With Arnault’s decision to “create a network of boutiques” – as stated in the 1993 annual report of the company (Donzé & Wubs, 2019) – contracts with independent

retailers were terminated, and Dior boutiques were opened as sales subsidiaries throughout the world, consolidating the direct retail of the maison's products with a strict and controlled coordination. Finally, Christian Dior has been the first brand to give complete direction over the brand's image and communication to its creative director (Donzé & Wubs, 2019). In fact, Arnault felt that, while Gianfranco Ferrè, at the helm of the company's creative direction from 1989 onwards, indeed adhered to the tradition of the founder, he was too classic in his style, making Dior lose its narrative component and the ability to make its clients dream and get excited about new launches. For this reason, in 1996 his role was assigned to the British designer John Galliano, who also became head of the brand communication and image, turning Dior into a captivating and modern global luxury brand, able to compete with the giants of the industry. Accordingly, with such internal transformation, Bernard Arnault profoundly changed the nature of the company, still maintaining a full alignment to Dior's longstanding heritage. Furthermore, more attention will be dedicated to the evolution of the narrative component, which made storytelling one of the main components of Dior's marketing and branding strategy.

4.2. The Historical Roots of Christian Dior: The Origin of the Myth

Founded in 1946, the House of Christian Dior was established as a "Maison de Haute Couture" at 30 Avenue Montaigne in Paris, nowadays still headquarters of the company. Financially supported by the cotton-fabric magnate Marcel Boussac (Donzé & Wubs, 2017), the luxury business considers its very conception in 1947, when Christian Dior presented his debut collection in the salons of the company's headquarters, showing almost 90 models comprising the "Corolle" and "Huit" lines, whose designs were conceived as innovative and revolutionary for the fashion of the time (Jones & Pouillard, 2009). Amid great enthusiasm and applause, Carmen Snow, at the time chief editor of Harper's Bazaar, baptized a new era in fashion design uttering her famous words "It's quite a revolution, dear Christian, your dresses have such a new look" (Mitchell & al., 1994). Little rounded shoulders and structured nipped-in waist defined the silhouette, in contrast with a flowing skirt that dropped to below-calf length, emphasizing bust and hips and christening the "Bar" suit, which constitutes an icon for the heritage of the brand, and a strong storytelling subject for its narrative. As the "New Look" was born, the fame of

Dior soon spread through Europe and the United States, finally reviving the fashion industry after the tough years of the Second World War, eventually leading the business to expand overseas. By establishing a boutique in New York City on Fifth Avenue, Dior's innovation resided also in the fact that this subsidiary did not sell haute-couture dresses, as it did in Avenue Montaigne, but was specialized in luxury ready-to-wear designs, specially tailored to the American clientele, representing, back then, the first store of its kind and first company to implement such market adaptation (Jones & Pouillard, 2009). Another reason that made Dior's designs so resonant in the fashion world was given by the awareness of his founder in the power of media, which made him develop close connections with the press, and that later led him to create the largest public relations department in the fashion industry (Donzé & Wubs, 2019). Suddenly deceased after barely 10 years since the foundation of his namesake business, in 1957 Dior left his legacy to his only head assistant, the 21-year-old Yves Saint Laurent, appointed for the creative direction of the brand. Differently from his founder, Saint Laurent drove Dior on a different path, bringing a less traditional and conservative twist to the maison with his "Trapèze" collection, that, while innovative and radical in its designs, seemed not to be a good fit to the taste of Dior's customers (Jones & Pouillard, 2009). Called to join the army for the Algerian War of Independence in 1960, Boussac removed him from the creative direction of the maison, entrusting it to Marc Bohan who, renowned for his sophisticated and refined aesthetic sense, seemed to embody the spirit of the founder with his conservative approach. Anyway, during the Bohan years, the company suffered a strong devaluation of the brand's image and identity, due to the system of licensing agreement governing the brand's production since the early years of its foundation. Bernard Arnault addressed such weakness when acquiring the Boussac Group in 1984, which went bankrupt in the meantime, and taking control of the brand (Donzé & Wubs, 2017).

This represented one of the most critical phases for the business, and Arnault managed to revive the brand, especially at the time when Karl Lagerfeld was named artistic director of Chanel in 1984, boosting significant growth in Dior's longstanding worst competitor. When the Italian Gianfranco Ferrè took the helm of Dior's creative direction in 1989, he abandoned the traditional Dior associations to love and romance, introducing new concepts and styles that moved away from those of the founder, something that also his successor John Galliano did, appointed in 1996. Celebrated for his distinctive fashion shows full of originality and extravaganza, his unique style was in discontinuity with the

original work of the founder, but the maison owes him the resumption of storytelling as the main component to its brand management. Despite his renowned talent, Galliano was dismissed from his role after being filmed making anti-Semitic statements whilst intoxicated in a Paris bar (Sowray, 2012). In 2012, Raf Simons took the lead with his minimalistic style, in clear contrast with Galliano, and after him, Maria Grazia Chiuri, formerly at Valentino, who became the first female creative director of the maison in 2016 (Donzé & Wubs, 2017). Under her direction, Dior's brand image, identity and heritage have never been stronger, reflecting such consistency in the remarkable growth that the brand performed in the last three years (O'Connell, 2019).

4.3. Dior Brand Identity through Storytelling

Since its conception in 1947, the Maison of Christian Dior has proven to be one of the leading exponents of women's fashion, with an elegant, sophisticated and unique style that caught the imagination of its customers from the very first presentation of the "New Look". As previously stated, the founder promptly defined the business as a "Maison de Couture", something that, from a storytelling perspective, is explicitly stated in his autobiography "Dior by Dior" (1957), a firm point of reference for the research on the case. In it, the founder describes the "maison of his dreams" within which "work would be done according to the highest traditions of haute couture" (Dior, 1957). This elitist origin has led the brand identity of Dior to be very close to that of his founder, whose biography has represented a strong benchmark to his successors for their creations, and accordingly, for the stories incorporated in each of them.

4.3.1. Luxury Brand Identity Prism

In order to frame the case from a theoretical perspective, Kapferer and Bastien (2012) propose the luxury brand identity prism, as illustrated in Figure 23, as a tool to analyse the meanings and values of the brand, while reflecting the implied brand associations created in its consumer base, accordingly generated by the narratives communicated through its heritage.

The six main features in the prism include: (1) the brand physique, as to say its distinguishable tangible aspects, (2) the brand personality, (3) the relationship mode, (4) the culture, intended as the brand’s DNA and values, (5) the customer reflected image and (6) the customer self-concept. The prism allocates these aspects along two dimensions: the constructed source, which represents the image of the brand created though its heritage and long-standing history, and the constructed receiver, which instead denotes how the brand expects its consumers to be reflected in the stories it communicates. As such, on the left-hand section stands the explicit expression of the brand identity, while on the right-hand one is the personality internalized by consumers.

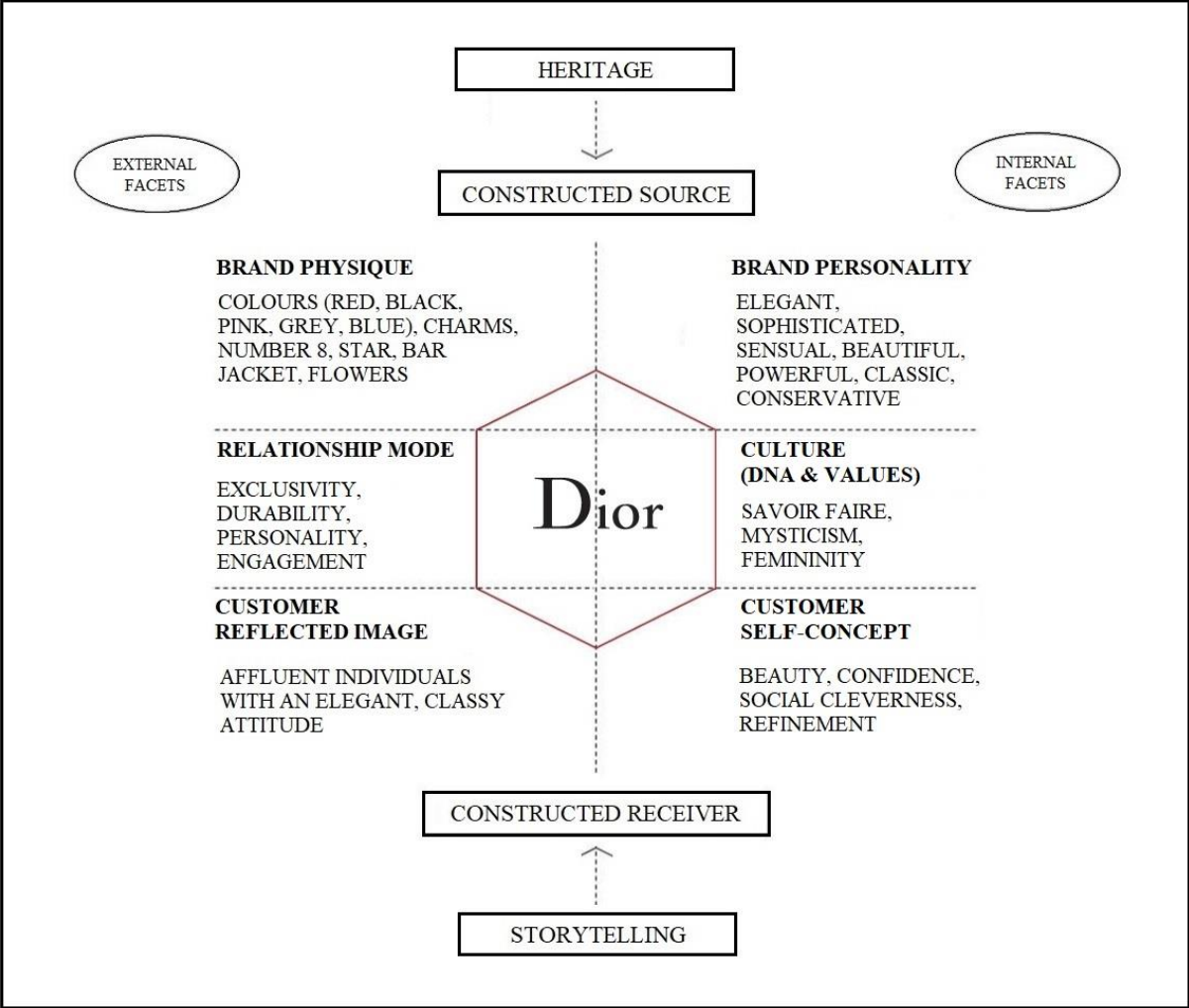


Figure 23: Dior’s Luxury Identity Prism
 Personal Adaptation for the Dior case. Source: Kapferer & Bastien, (2012).

Starting from the perspective of the constructed source, the first aspects reflects the brand's unique tangible aesthetics, reflected in the first place by the logo, which has a clear spot in the mind of the consumers, and secondly yet not least importantly, in colours and patterns, which represent the essence of Dior. Christian Dior himself reflected his love for art in colours – considering that he began being interested in the matter since his early childhood and later started his career as a gallerist – which he considered the “symbol of life” (Dior, 1956). From a historical point of view, it is also important to note that when Dior started his business, the general atmosphere that characterized Paris, France, and Europe at large, was one of a post-conflict situation, being World War II just ended a few years earlier. Among the recognizable colours of the maison, there is red, considered by the founder the “colour of success”, since, according to his biography, “my own cheeks are covered with lipstick, a sure sign of the success of my collection, apart from the fact that red is my lucky colour” (Dior, 1956). In addition, there are pink and grey, colours of his childhood home in his birthplace Granville, and blue, which he considered “the light of black” (Dior, 1956). The Dior silhouette also represents a cardinal point in his aesthetics, with the “New Look” and its “Bar jacket” that became the symbol of the house, and reflected the number 8, Dior's lucky number, that has been replicated in many of the maison's creation, such as in the shape of the “J'Adore” perfume bottle. He was also a great estimator of gardens and flowers – as he states in his autobiography “a passion for flowers inherited from my mother meant that I was at my happiest among plants and flower-beds” (Dior, 1957) – and took Paris as the dreamy place where he could shape his vision.

The brand personality discloses the anthropomorphic vision of the brand (Galli et al., 2019), which is particularly relevant when applied to the luxury context, which thrives on emotion and experience. In Dior's case, as in many luxury brands, it revives the founder's spirit, indeed defined as elegant and sophisticated, but sensual, beautiful and powerful as well, yet maintaining a classic and conservative look, reflected in the longstanding tradition of haute couture. As such, the creator's personality is reflected in the brand and gives life to it. Dior's relationship with its customer is probably the most important element of the prism, within which the transactional and relational human process takes place in an experience that remains personal and exclusive. Agreeing with Üçok et al. (2016), Dior has been capable of building a durable relationship with its consumers, where the creation of such link is not a mere point of exchange, but results from the continuous engagement through the brand's touch points, shared values and experiential

contents that create an enthusiast community that stays loyal to the brand. The culture of a luxury brand embodies its values and DNA and, particularly in this case, lies the foundation for its distinctiveness. In fact, Dior's culture stems from its founder, who has merged his personal values in his work philosophy, finally incorporating them in the DNA of the brand. As its main pillars, Dior's DNA nourishes from the excellence, savoir-faire and classicism with whom the founder initially established his business, where French couture and sartorial attention represent the backbone of his work. Not surprisingly, the culture of the brand is also a reflection of its "made in" perception, reflecting an attitude for authenticity and significance in the brand's French spirit (Galli et al., 2019). Along with them, the brand thrives on the power of mysticism, – being Monsieur Dior superstitious, and relying on the visits at Madame Delahaye, his trusted fortune-teller, for almost every decision he took (Dior, 1957) – femininity and individuality.

Dior's customer-reflected image echoes the ideal consumer of the brand, embodied by high-income individuals with an elegant and classy attitude, who want to keep up with the most modern trends always maintaining an impeccable attitude. As Dior states in his autobiography (Dior, 1957), "women have instinctively understood that I dream of making them not only more beautiful, but also happier". This dreamy perception enhances the personal image of the typical Dior customer, who aspires to represent the individual that the founder has been describing to dress in his writings. In addition, especially due to the subsequent digitalization of the brand, Dior's customer-reflected image has acquired a transgenerational perspective, according to which its target consumer's age span is larger compared to older times, but still reflects the values, standards and norms of the social group it aims to represent. The final element of the brand identity prism is the customer self-concept, which is, to different extents, influenced by the brand.

In fact, this element is exposed to the influence of two aspects (Malär et al., 2011): its internal perception, according to which to purchase a Dior product makes the consumers feel differently about themselves – that is, sophisticated, beautiful and confident – and its external perception, that corresponds to how Dior makes its consumers think about the way other people see them, which is as socially elevated individuals with an expensive and refined taste. With this purpose, this consumer self-concept aspires at meeting group norms and personal self-concepts simultaneously.

4.3.2. Luxury Brand Expansion through Pyramid Analysis

An element in favour of Dior's storytelling strategy resides in the fact that it constitutes the only brand in the luxury marketplace to offer completeness in its lines, incorporating stories for each of its product and during every of its customers' purchase journeys. Started from haute couture in the years of the business' foundation, Dior progressively supplemented its offer with the integration of Dior Femme (Dior's ready-to-wear line), Parfums Christian Dior, Dior Make-up, Dior Homme, Baby Dior, Dior Skin Care, and Dior Joiiellerie.

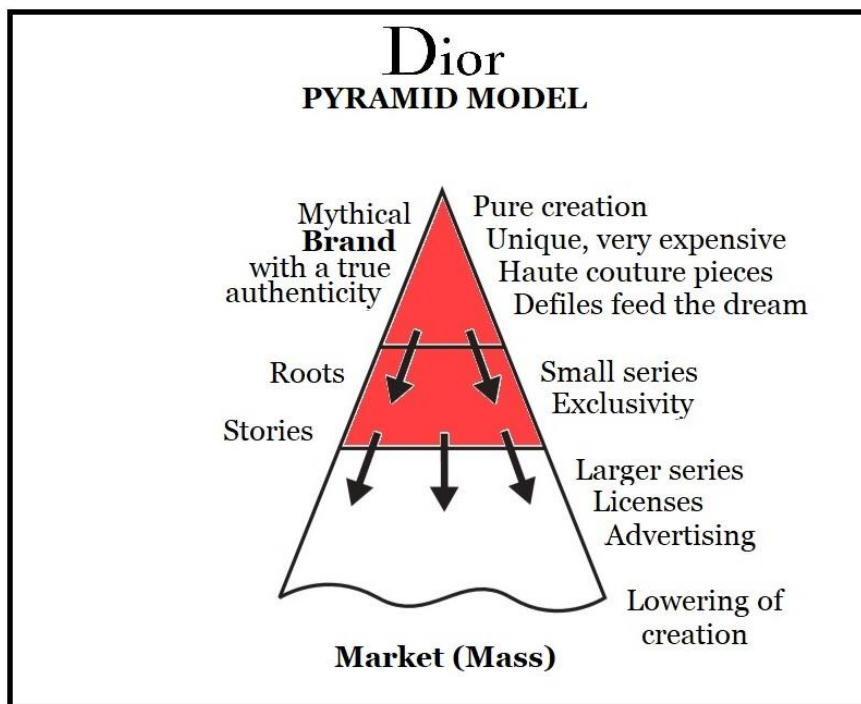


Figure 24: Dior's Pyramid Model
Source: Kapferer & Bastien, (2009).

In the view of Kapferer and Bastien (2009), luxury brands emerging from haute couture reside at the top of the pyramid, subsequently occupying the lower levels in line with their strategies and financial results. In Dior's strategy, even accessories are located to the upper levels, constituting the main strength of the brand selling proposition, and making Dior the luxury brand with the highest worldwide sale of accessories in 2018 (O'Connell, 2019).

Remaining in the highest range of the pyramid helps luxury brands to preserve their halo of prestige. In the case of Dior, its unique selling proposition (USP) stems from the fact that the brand has always kept heritage at the core of its essence. In fact, in the view of Donzé and Wubs (2019), Dior does not allocate the quality of its products at the heart of its brand identity – even though they are realized with premium materials and the most traditional savoir-faire – but it is the story linked to the brand that endows its creations with a unique allure.

As the brand keeps its creations for an affluent clientele, its stories are spread to a larger consumer base, contributing to the democratization of its narratives, which constitutes a trend that every luxury brand has attempted to realize since the digitalization of storytelling. While luxury is a dream, yet is meant to create distance (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009), the democratization of narratives achieved through the digitalization of storytelling aims to fill this space. As such, both the affluent consumer and the “luxury excursionist”, as defined by Dubois and Laurent (1996), can fulfil the Dior dream and employ the logic of the customer self-concept induced by the brand through its stories.

4.4. The Evolution of Dior Storytelling Strategy

Taking the framework proposed by Kapferer and Bastien (2012) as a reference, Christian Dior Couture perfectly epitomizes the case of a long-established company that, with a central focus on its heritage, employs the European approach to luxury, according to which the storytelling strategy is based on the history of its founder. Embodying the drama of his conservative society, Dior himself took the period of Marie Antoinette and Louis XIV as a reference for his work (Dior, 1957), integrating his narrative in that of the Versailles times, where the myth and nostalgia for luxury could live together with his forward-looking marketing vision.

Relating to the French Neoclassicism that characterized the ending years of the XVII century, Dior’s mythical origins are rooted in the values of rarity, luxury and tradition, reflecting the logic of the Belle Époque that Dior himself praised in his autobiography as a period “full of happiness, exuberance and peace, in which everything was directed towards the art of living” (Dior, 1957).

4.4.1. Archetype Persona and Visual Narrative Art

Dior's persona reflects the Lover archetype, having built its narrative, since the early years of its foundation, on the concepts of luxury, sensuality and superior aesthetics (Woodside, 2010), with beauty, happiness and desirability as its pillars.

As visual narrative art (VNA) has always constituted a powerful tool for the proliferation of stories (Woodside & Megehee, 2010), the early storytelling strategy employed by the founder, working by commission with a product placement intention but also by means of close relationships with celebrities, consisted in having his creations featured in the most relevant movies of his time. One example is "*Stage Fright*", directed by Alfred Hitchcock in 1950, in which Marlene Dietrich, the main character, insisted on Dior for the costumes, being the couturier one of his long-time friends. As recounted by Donald Spoto, Alfred Hitchcock's biographer, Dietrich delivered her ultimatum to the production saying the famous words "No Dior, no Dietrich" (Cosgrave, 2007), baptizing the actress as a "twentieth-century Venus", an expression that perfectly embodies the consumer self-construct that Dior crafted in the mind of his prestigious clientele. The personality of Dietrich's character embodies the archetype persona proposed by Dior, playing the aspiring actress Eve Gill, who conveys since the first scenes of the movie, an allure of love, sensuality and indulgence. In addition, her famous performance of Edith Piaf's "La Vie En Rose" constitutes a clear reference that leads the viewer to a typically French imagery, which empowers Dior's creations with elegance and sensuality (Cosgrave, 2007).

By transposing this concept to contemporary times, the television advertising for the "J'Adore" perfume classifies as visual narrative art adhering to the same archetype-brand association on which the brand has relied for years. First launched in 1999, the iconic perfume's commercials have adhered to the same narrative scheme, showing women immersed in gold and conveying an idea of passion and desirability. As the archetype-brand-consumer (ABC) triangle echoes the explicit and implicit references with the brand, the advertising slogan "J'Adore Dior" entices consumers with the power of attraction and femininity that associates the brand to the Lover archetype, exalting the role of companion and goddess also linked to the figure of Aphrodite (Woodside, 2010). In addition, by looking at the evolution of the "J'Adore" advertisement over the years, the brand has supported the promotion of the fragrance with the same story, changing slight

elements in accordance to the period and designer-in-charge, such that, through story repetition, it could remain stuck to the mind of consumers. To cite some elements of its evolution in time, for Maria Grazia Chiuri, latest artistic director, the perfume advertisement has slightly changed in 2018 in favour of a narrative centered on female empowerment, with Charlize Theron, face of the perfume since 2004, surrounded by women dressed with haute couture creations with the appearance of Greek goddesses, immersed in a gold swimming pool. Differently, in 2011, under the creative direction of Galliano, the brand was involved in the valorisation of its heritage while leveraging fashion shows as pure entertainment moments. Dior conceived the advertisement narrative of the perfume with Theron entering late the backstage of a runway in a Versailles salon, to find Grace Kelly, Marlene Dietrich and Marilyn Monroe preparing for the show while dressing in Dior and wearing the advertised fragrance. In each of its versions, the explicit narrative associated to the perfume sticks to the same archetypal construct, through which the consumer perceives sensuality, love and passion.

Once Dior passed away, Yves Saint Laurent and Marc Bohan attempted to keep alive the spirit of the founder, by adhering to the codes and values of the maison. Anyway, from a brand storytelling perspective, even the business archive lacks a history of anecdotes and stories, relying instead on the visual narrative component released through magazines (such as Time and Harper's Bazaar) and cinematography. Storytelling, and brand management in general, started to have a resonance from the marketing perspective only starting from the 1980s, when luxury companies started to realize that heritage and a long-nurtured history could have played in favour of the brand identity and image to the public, as well as providing an added value to luxury goods (Donzé & Wubs, 2019).

4.4.2. Corporate Storytelling through Organizational Change: an Analysis of Narratives

When Bernard Arnault took the reins of the business in 1985, he led to its transformation from a small haute couture enterprise to a global luxury company, insisting particularly on the importance of heritage as a factor of continuity for the brand. From that moment, the brand started to shape its storytelling strategy, starting from the institution of a

department of historical archives named “Dior Heritage”, that later would have supported every artistic director who followed Bohan, in the exploration of aesthetical references to the work of the founder (Young, 2010). Even in the following years, the brand’s narratives, although influenced by different factors, have remained anchored to the mythical and symbolic history of Paris, birthplace of the maison and of its inspiration. Another element in favour of the heritage revaluation has been the organization of large public events in occasion of the anniversaries of the foundation of the maison that, hosted in renowned museums, contributed to the legitimation of Dior corporate storytelling (Donzé & Wubs, 2019). In particular, Musée Christian Dior, opened in 1988 and held in the founder’s childhood home in Granville, represents an exceptional example of narrative servicescape (Mossberg, 2008), where the company managed to shape an holistic experience for its consumers through the restoration of a themed environment built on the story of his founder, in the same place where he lived most of his years.

When Arnault selected the Italian fashion designer Gianfranco Ferrè to follow Bohan’s legacy as artistic director of the maison in 1989, the luxury company started to gear towards a new branding strategy characterized by the establishment of new codes – that were still derived from the values and history of the maison – accordingly to the institution of the “Dior Heritage” archives (Donzé & Wubs, 2019). Among them, Ferrè laid down the logo’s typeface, the “cannage” pattern and the shade of Dior grey (Fury & Sabatini, 2017), reviving the architectural sensitivity that Dior himself, and later Saint Laurent, had applied to their works, yet adding a narrative component to the use of such codes in his designs. It was also during his tenure that some iconic products were launched, such as the Lady Dior handbag, with an engaging narrative behind its name, and in which every detail has a story of its own. Named after Princess Diana of Wales to whom it was gifted in occasion of her visit to Paris (Salessy, 2019), the bag speaks the heritage and inspirations behind Dior’s work, introducing Ferrè’s graphic codes in its narrative. Starting from the cannage pattern, the motif was inspired by the Napoléon III chairs that Monsieur Dior used to have in his Avenue Montaigne headquarters, on which the couturier used to sit his guests during his fashion shows (Dior, 1956). The handbag’s handles had the same oval shape of the Louis Seize chairs at Avenue Montaigne, that characterized the early period of Marie Antoinette at the court of Versailles (Dior, 1957), and the charms attached to them reminded of the couturier’s inclination to mysticism (Fury & Sabatini, 2017).

As Ferrè managed to create a precise equilibrium between haute couture, ready-to-wear and accessories, he had generated a clear brand identity characterized by a vertical relationship among these three elements (Donzé & Wubs, 2019).

Anyway, when John Galliano took the lead as the creative director, he broke the identity continuity that until that moment characterized the brand, managing instead to create awareness in his collections through a narrative that would have outpaced his designs. The removal of this verticality meant, for Galliano, the integration between all the lines of Christian Dior Couture, which translated not only in terms of added coherence from the brand identity perspective, but also the implementation of a clear storytelling strategy as a strategic marketing lever. According to Donzé and Wubs (2019), the fact that before Galliano, Christian Dior did not have a clear positioning in the mind of its customers, meant that, once the designer introduced storytelling in his strategy – considering that, as mentioned previously, he was appointed also as Dior’s head of communication and image – the consumers’ reception to his narratives was heightened. Galliano’s unconventional and charismatic personality managed to endow the iconic Dior’s creations, such as the “Bar Jacket” or the “Corolla” skirt, with an engaging narrative that he transposed in his fashion shows, that, as eccentric as they were, always adhered to the heritage codes and values that the maison cherished since its foundation in 1947. Most interestingly, while Galliano’s focus was not in the generation of profitable lines per se, his storytelling strategy, completed by a unified marketing effort in the construction of a clear brand identity, led Dior to boost its ready-to-wear sales, which, as stated by Arnault (Donzé & Wubs, B, 2017), grew fourfold after Galliano’s appointment as artistic director. On this basis, Dior mono-brand stores accentuated the revaluation of the company’s codes, in line with the heritage and storytelling strategy of the designer, making Dior a global luxury brand that used his heritage and story as the most powerful competitive lever.

4.4.3. The Digitalization of Storytelling: from the Fashion Film to Transmedia Narratives

Considered his postmodern and theatrical approach to fashion design, Galliano’s designation represented a daring choice for Arnault, but a major turning point for the

luxury company. Nevertheless, he proved to share the same creative audacity of Christian Dior himself, and, in the view of Fury and Sabatini (2017), his composite narratives emphasised his immersive artistry in a comprehensive aesthetics.

As Galliano's emphasis on narrative relied on signature codes and the maison's DNA, he also deserves credit for having transposed these stories into digital content. However, it is not coincidental that businesses started to focus on their storytelling strategy in this period. In the 1990s, the digitalization of media had re-established the tradition of storytelling, allowing brands to engage with their consumers through a transmedia strategy that could create a multiplicity of touch points and connect a larger audience with their narratives (Buckner & Rutledge, 2011). In 2005, Nick Knight's SHOWstudio launched the fashion film as a new trend in luxury fashion storytelling, prompting designers to adopt it as a tool to spread the narratives of their brands.

Galliano was among the first to engage in the fashion film tool as a way to connect the universe of luxury to the digital landscape, when in 2008 he launched a series of short films focused on the iconic Lady Dior handbag. In *"The Lady Noire Affair"*, he conveys a "femme fatale" narrative, adhering to the Lover archetype proposed by the brand since its conception, and endowing it with an intriguing and mysterious allure. Taking inspiration from the noir atmosphere that characterized the cinema of the Forties, the story takes place in Paris, which constitutes the background of many of the brand's films and narratives at large, and representing the environment where Dior's stories are held in accordance to its heritage and tradition. Anyway, while such statements might allude to the observation that Dior's legacy stays within France, Galliano promptly challenged this assumption pushing its narrative to the Asian market too. In fact, the designer's storytelling strategy would have been adopted right about the time when, in 2010, Christian Dior SE was expanding its sales outside its traditional market (Donzé & Wubs, 2019), managing to reach the Asian audience with the short film *"Lady Blue Shanghai"*, made by the star director David Lynch (Rees-Roberts, 2018).

The short film is about a woman, Marion Cotillard – appointed as the face of the Lady Dior handbag by Galliano – who enters a Shanghai hotel room hearing a 1920s tango played by a vintage record player, and recalling the time when, years before, she had met this man with whom she had had an impossible love (Berra, 2012). The blue Lady Dior handbag is the protagonist of the short film, magically appearing to motivate the surreal and dreamy

narrative around Cotillard's love story. Lynch's film begins with a blue rose, which immediately points at Dior's referenced love for flowers – "I drew women-flowers, soft shoulders, fine waists like liana and wide skirts like corolla" (Dior, 1956) – and the blue colour, as a metaphor of his narrative universe. As the identity of Dior prevails through its codes, as well as the product placement intention, Lynch's work lacks a commercial imperative, aiming instead at conveying a story that adheres to the brand's archetype and values, yet at once self-referencing his works too, familiarizing with the story of Twin Peaks' blue rose. (Berra, 2012). The result is a majestic co-creation work where the symbolism of the brand and the narrative art of the director come to life in a story riddled with multiple interpretations.

As such, with its four fashion films, "*Lady Noire Paris*", "*Lady Rouge New York*", "*Lady Blue Shanghai*" and "*Lady Grey London*", Dior aimed at promoting stories characterized by oneiric narratives in a cinematic campaign, branded by the hitchcockian atmospheres that reminded of the company's first endorsements in the Hollywood imagery. Published on Dior's website, they represented an opportunity for the brand to approach new audiences and make them familiarize with the atmospheres and brand identity of the company, attracting the attention of media also thanks to the reputation of their directors (Berra, 2012).

After Galliano's dismissal in 2011, Raf Simons had been entrusted with the creative direction of the maison, enduring his focus on the fashion film as the main digital storytelling medium. With his Secret Garden campaign, which began in 2012 and lasted the whole duration of his tenure at Dior's direction, the film is composed of four chapters, published both on social media and on the official website. The series explores the brand's codes through a thematic narrative that moves across a 21st century Versailles through Dior's haute couture creations, reflecting the primary inspirations and underlying narrative of the brand as well as its roots. At a communication level, the campaign's presence across different multimedia channels has also allowed for greater interactivity by means of user-generated content (UGC) on social media, mainly based on the fact that digital visual culture has provided more content to mobilize both for brands and for their audiences.

At large, Dior branding strategy, although made more essential after Galliano's departure, showed a comprehensive consistency with the values and codes of the brand, yet

emphasizing aspects of its heritage that had been overlooked before, in particular that of the savoir-faire. The documentary film *“Dior and I”* aims at conveying this particular element, showing the creative and productive process behind the first haute couture collection of Raf Simons. Providing a powerful and entertaining narrative, the audience is also introduced with the craftsmanship of the “petites mains” (Dior, 1957), as Dior used to call the seamstresses of the maison, adding a behind-the-scenes component which aims at revealing to the audience the practice of traditional couture in the form of branded entertainment. Besides the focus on the designer and his collaborators, the presence of the founder pervades the film, with brief moments where Dior’s biography passages are read by an external voice, with the intention of emphasizing the continuity of the designer’s legacy in his narrative. Moreover, scenes in which Simons, reading the founder’s memoirs, finds himself sharing the same emotions that Dior himself felt during the preparation of his debut show in 1947, also contribute to endure such storytelling intent. Hence, the fashion film represents an ideal example of storytelling, serving as a tool to instruct new audiences about the brand’s founder, as well as a way to familiarize with the history of the brand and its long-established tradition.

The latest designer in-charge is Maria Grazia Chiuri, appointed in 2016, has managed to convey a brand image that would be consistent with the one of the founder and of his legacy, presenting her debut collection as a tribute to the creative directors that preceded her at the helm of Dior. In fact, during her tenure, the luxury business has started to work towards a proper omnichannel strategy that would convey the narrative potential of the brand through powerful storytelling online, especially by means of social networks.

4.5. Online Storytelling and Social Networks Analysis

While many luxury businesses encountered some struggles in their uptake of the digital world, Dior, along with Gucci and Chanel, was among the first to embrace the online transformation (Baltes, 2015).

Extending its digital strategy through an omnichannel approach, the company managed to diffuse its stories across different platforms, such that it could generate an experiential journey that, on one hand, would have engaged its consumers during their online

experience, and on the other, would have moved prospect clients towards the offline perspective of the store. In order to spread its narratives, Dior has employed the use of social media as a branded space to create meaningful relations between the brand itself, which constitutes the main storytelling source, and its audience, proving the effectiveness of these spaces as the most interactive and influential arena for communication and interpretation of brand stories (Sonnenburg & Baker, 2013).

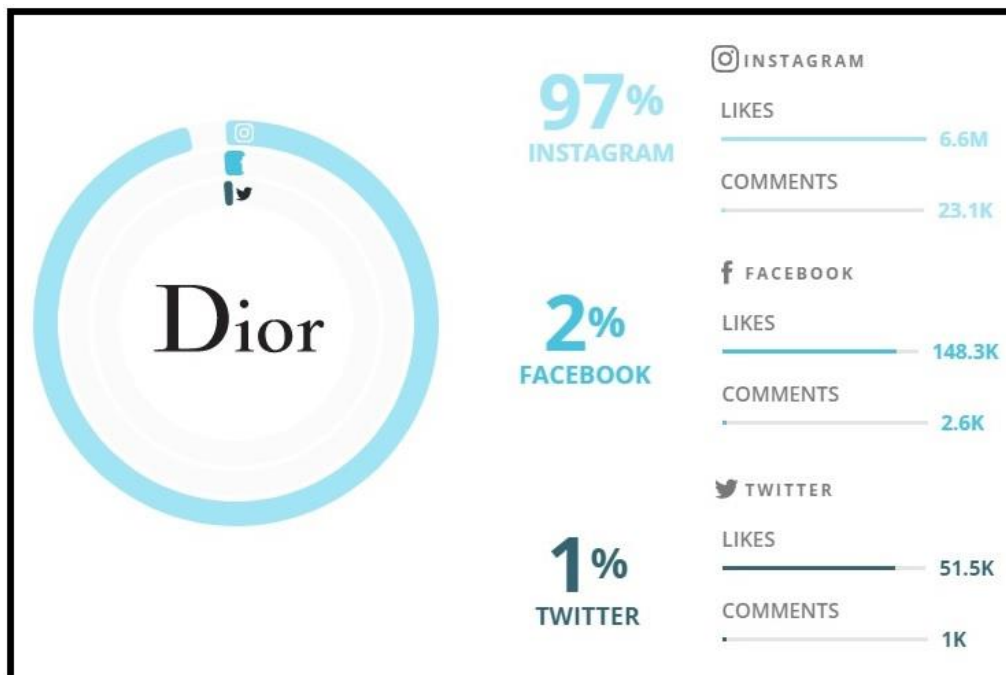


Figure 25: Dior's Average Engagement per Channel, 2018-2019
Source: Sprinklr, (2020).

As Figure 25 shows, Dior employs Instagram as the main social media channel through which conveying its narratives, something that has earned the company the reputation of being the luxury brand with the best results on Instagram in 2017 (Doyle, 2017). Today, the brand's engagement rates show consistency with the luxury industry benchmark, implying that its competitors have reached the company, to employ the same platform with an average of 94%, with an engagement rate on Twitter and Facebook that reaches respectively 1% and 4% (Sprinklr, 2020). Visual imagery and video content seem, in fact, the best instruments to dialogue with consumers, and in its social media strategy, Dior

stresses visual narratives as the central element on which to pivot its digital marketing strategy.

The brand's social media strategy is focused on three components, which have always been part of Dior's brand identity: savoir-faire and artistry, history and its inspirations and celebrity endorsements. Savoir-faire is central to the brand's social media content and, through videos and IG stories, the 'petites mains' behind Dior's creations explain how their work comes to life, the archival work of the designer and the materials employed in the process.

For example, in their short Instagram video "*The Dior 'Bar' Jacket Gets a New Camouflage Look*", Chiuri, the head designer, begins with explaining the importance of the 'Bar' jacket and why it represents an icon for the maison, addressing its reference to architecture, certainly an inspiration for the founder. Secondly, she starts explaining its sculptural design through sketches and colours, finally going in-depth through the process of creation, where tailors explain in detail their couture work. History and inspirations constitute another significant part of Dior's content on social media. Taking as an example a post of their Dior Addict campaign, complementing archival footages with texts and graphics, the short video tells the story of when, in April 1946, Christian Dior chanced upon a lucky charm in the shape of a star at a Parisian crossing, which he took as a sign of fate, knowing that "destiny came to him" (Dior, 1957). The final element of their social media strategy consists in celebrity endorsement, which constitutes the oldest of the marketing strategies for luxury brands, which, mixed with the savoir-faire component, manages to display in short videos how the dresses worn by celebrities in occasions of galas and ceremonies are made by tailors.

A detail not to be overlooked resides in the fact that in each of the posts on Dior Instagram account, there is a clear reference to the founder's legacy, whether in a short sentence ("these are the founding principles of the New Look designed by Christian Dior in 1947, marking a post-war renaissance") or in a simple words ("toile") belonging to the lexicon of couture (Dior, 2020), that leads the consumer to a larger narrative to be deepened through the company's other online channels. In addition, such narrative intention is fuelled by the presence of multiple social media accounts, including Dior Homme, Dior Parfums, Dior Make Up, and Dior Skincare, each of them catering different demographics, and complementing their products with the long-established stories of the maison.

Managing a portfolio of social media profiles involves the creation of content that reflects the nature of its viewers, and such targeting process in storytelling is what gives value to the online brand experience (Pini & Pelleschi, 2017).

Beyond social media, another important component of Dior's digital storytelling strategy consists in its official website. Just as for Chanel's website, the luxury company does not operate through e-commerce channels, relying entirely on their stores for the purchase experience. The website features a section "News & Savoir-Faire", divided into "Latest News", which corresponds to a digital version of the company's magazine DiorMag, "The Books", "The Story of Dior", "Exhibitions" and "The Crafts". Anyway, while in "*Inside Chanel*" the storytelling purpose is more one of transmedia stories through short videos, which makes storytelling much more engaging for the consumer, in the case of Dior the narratives behind his founder and its successors are more in the form of texts and archive pictures, making the narration indeed entertaining but not as engaging as the company's main competitor. Anyway, during an interview with The New York Times, Soizic Pfaff, Dior's archivist at the brand's headquarters in Paris, stated how "Dior Heritage Web" consists in the digitized version of the long-standing archives dating back to 1985, which makes the corporate stories of Dior the "very essence of the brand, that can help the business to preserve the past in the present and help the past stand the test of time" (Young, 2010).

4.6. The Dior Flagship Store: an Emotional Selling Point for Brand Experience

The increasing importance given to Dior flagship stores is the result of a strongly focused retail strategy that finds in the physical channel the brand's sole source of sales. In fact, except for the Cosmetics and Parfums divisions, which are sold by means of e-commerce and online marketplaces, Dior selling operations happen mainly through its mono-brand stores (Donzé & Wubs, 2019).

As previously discussed, until the early years of 1990s, independent retailers generated most of Dior sales through clothing and accessories, with the sole Dior mono-brand shops being on Avenue Montaigne in Paris and Fifth Avenue in New York City. After Arnault

terminated the entirety of the brand's distribution contracts, the company started its retail strategy based exclusively on official flagship stores, owning 73 in 1999 (year when its numbers were first disclosed) and maintaining a point-of-sales densification strategy which resulted in a peak of 237 stores in 2009 (Donzé & Wubs, 2017). Anyway, Arnault's decision to focus on the most profitable point of sales led the company to shut down a number of them, finally ending up with about 200 stores in 2016 (Donzé & Wubs, 2019). While such decision came from the stakeholders' willingness to keep a higher control on sales with the objective of solid growth, at the same time flagship stores have started to be a relevant focus for the brand since the 1990s (Fionda & Moore, 2009). For Dior in particular, operating only through the physical channel meant that the brand could focus on the offline experience as its strength, considering it as a way to further build a solid brand image through an effective storytelling strategy. In the view of Arnault (2001), the development of such dense network of point of sales reflected the brand's willingness to reinforce its prestige through an offline experience that could symbolize the same that the founder would have delivered to its customers, through care and attention but also surprise and astonishment. Being the store one of the most influential touch points in terms of customer experience, stories are handed down to customers also through sales assistants, for whom storytelling is no longer a mere means of communication, becoming instead an integrated part of the sale process. In addition, as Batat (2019) claims, as far as consumers may be fascinated by the brand narratives, sales assistants are the primary recipients of Dior's stories, and storytelling per se is an activity that serves also as a means to increase their level of responsiveness and sense of belonging to the company.

At an architectural level, the design of Dior flagship stores supports storytelling through each of its components, from the floor material, to curtains and overall interiors, which allows sales assistants to unleash the potential of stories in their relationships with consumers (Pini & Pelleschi, 2017), supporting their experiential journey. In fact, even the interior design of stores, while maintaining a modern attitude in its style, sticks faithfully to the heritage of the brand and the history of its founder, whose presence is evoked through the brand's narratives. In his autobiography (Dior, 1957), the founder describes "white woodwork, white enamelled furniture, grey satin hangings, glass doors with square panes and bronze light brackets with small lampshades" as part of the decoration of his couture house, reflecting the details that still today are part of the stores' interiors. Dior calls this decorations "à la Louis Seize", which echoes through the codes of

the maison in the elegance of the boutique. Within the offline marketing strategy of the brand, an adequate formation of sales assistants, to whom stories pass formally through in-store trainings, is essential to the storytelling scope.

As previously asserted, storytelling resides at the core of Dior's strategy, and sales assistants confirm such narrative intention in the selling process, being aware of the statistics to whom they are instructed in their trainings, confirming the potential of storytelling to increase the value of products by over twenty times (Carter, 2017). In this light, Dior flagship stores stage the offering of the brand in a unique environment endowed with heritage and stories, generating the ideal context for narratives that live within their branded spaces (Sonnenburg & Baker, 2013).

Through the psychological bond created through stories, sales assistants contribute to the generation of a higher level of customer loyalty, which pushes their clients to rely on them for their next purchase in store, hence creating a circular argument backed by narratives that has clients as its core recipients. In addition, the multi-sensory stimuli that consumers perceive through their offline experiential journey is prompted by an engaging visual merchandising, which is carefully coordinated through boutiques worldwide, and by music, smell and a general atmosphere created in-store.

Anyway, while this is true for flagship stores, whose experience is linear throughout boutiques worldwide (always within the cultural contexts in which they are located), the same does not apply to temporary shops, whose experience stands as more ephemeral and strictly visual, providing consumers with narrative references but in much less intensity compared to the flagship.

On the other hand, the storytelling purpose in-store is augmented prominently when applied to the historical headquarters of Dior, located in Avenue Montaigne 30, where the historical heritage of the company finds in this precise space a place to belong to and to anchor its narratives (Mosca, 2017). As only Dior employees and ateliers' workers can access the building, LVMH's initiative "Les Journées Particulières", instituted in 2011, opens the doors of the maison for four days per year, to allow its customers, and a wider audience at large, to explore the founder's historical site through its long-established narrative and solid savoir-faire of the "petites mains" (Menkes, 2018).

Therefore, while many other luxury companies might be heavily investing in the role of e-commerce channels, Dior is converging its branding efforts to the amplification of the offline customer experience in physical stores, something that helps the company to preserve its aura of exclusivity and remain, at the same time, very personal and unique.

4.7. The Importance of the Storytelling Dimension for Dior: The Interview

In order to deepen into the theoretical and practical dimensions of storytelling in Christian Dior Couture, the research on the case has been complemented with an interview with Chiara Battaglia, International Retail Training Manager of the maison, with whom the brand's storytelling strategy has been explored through its diverse modalities of communication.

In the first place, Battaglia claimed how storytelling has been addressed as one of the most important strategic tools of the company, finding itself competing in an industry where brands achieve differentiation not only through a mere product offering, but relying on the aspirational proposition achieved through the diverse availability of touch points employed to intercept the customer's journey. Especially for what concerns the physical channel, storytelling serves to stimulate buying by tackling the most irrational side of the consumer, System 1 processing, as highlighted by Megehee and Spake (2012), which consists in a sensed intelligence developed on an unconscious, evolutionary old, associative and independent thinking. Anyway, as far as storytelling represents an important lever strategically speaking, its usefulness in-store is overstated, claims Battaglia confirming the market researches of D'Arpizio and Levato (2018), especially because the online dimension influences 70% of sales. As such, the brand's stories already intercept the consumer through Instagram and social media at large, where the storytelling intention is present in almost every post of the company's official account.

While the brand exploits the story of its founder through every touch point, it is also true that digital has changed the modalities of communication through which these stories arrive to the consumer. In the first place, the language has become easily comprehensible and modernized; the stories, on the other hand, became shorter and more impactful,

considering that the consumer's span of attention has been lowered by the abundance of digital content available online. Anyway, the narrative behind the founder and its successors has remained coherent and strictly tied to the brand's long-standing heritage.

As such, the current storytelling strategy of Christian Dior Couture consists in a bi-directional process: on one hand, the brand is sensitive to the current cultural dynamics governing society from time to time; on the other, the story faithfully adheres to the narrative proposed by the maison since its foundation.

As such, Battaglia takes the example of the introduction of the theme of feminism in Dior's identity, a subject that has never accomplished much visibility in the past of the company. In fact, the luxury brand has long been encapsulated into the Lover archetype, according to which women are pictured as the emblem of femininity, passion and seduction. Anyway, Chiuri's inspirations came from looking at the current social and cultural events taking place in her time and, translating Dior's codes in contemporary terms as well as claiming her presence as the first woman in-charge at the creative direction of the maison, she capitalized on the subject – from a marketing point of view – as a means of adaptation to consumers' preferences. In fact, her narration focuses on the idea of a woman who, through love and affection, comes out as more empowered, overturning Dior archetype from Lover to Defender.

Moving the scope from femininity to feminism, Battaglia claims, Chiuri marketed the brand with a different image, but still staying coherent with its identity and long-established values. Nonetheless, the brand identity of the luxury company has stayed within the same values and codes, always relying on the concept of a "liberated" woman, as the couturier himself defined in his autobiography (Dior, 1957). Moreover, it is also true that while the argument lies on a choice that might be belonging to the stylistic domain of a luxury company, the narratives tied to a luxury brand – from a mere marketing and commercial point of view – and the ones introduced by creative directors, are blending into a unique conversation with the final goal of conveying a story that stands coherent from every perspective.

In addition, the interview revealed the absence of an argument resting on the relationship between stories and sales, since the perception of a narrative is very personal to every consumer, yet he or she is influenced by it on a different extent. As also stated by Mosca

(2017), the value of the brand-consumer relationship is tied to what customers have seen, read, heard, thought or felt about the brand over time. Moreover, since the customer journey begins through digital channels, the aim of sales assistants in-store is not to fragment the dreamy imagery initiated online with the same information read through Dior's digital channels, but to intrigue the consumer with new details, anecdotes and myths that circulate only once one is inside the company. Finally Battaglia argued that, while no relationship exists between stories and sales (and if so, it is still difficult to measure its correlation by means of research), there may be a connection between narratives and the recruitment of new clients, even if that is due also to reasons tied to the democratization of luxury.

V. Conclusions

The purpose of this master thesis was directed at examining the role of storytelling as a branding tool in the marketing strategies of luxury companies, and its relevance in a long-term perspective to build a strong brand identity that emotionally influence the consumer's experiential journey. Closely tied to an evolutionary perspective, the study aims at investigating how the storytelling practice has developed from a pre-digitalized era until nowadays, uncovering the role of narratives across the diversity of touch points that the consumer encounters in his discovery of the brand. The luxury industry proved a particularly insightful sector due to its enduring employment of narratives as a tool to engage consumers in a comprehensive definition of experience.

After a brief outline of the methodology of research, the first theoretical section included the analysis of the luxury sector, deepening into the anatomy of the brand. Although still relying on a multiplicity of definitions, the luxury industry rests on meanings that belong to fields that go beyond the mere economic area, standing in line with semiotics and culture. The hedonic dimension tied to the different levels of luxury representation enhance the symbolic purpose collectively realized in stories that luxury brands derive from their heritage and tradition. In particular, luxury consumers, whether belonging to a high-class or "excursionist" classification (Dubois & Laurent, 1996), perceive a peaked emotional attachment to luxury brands through stories, which configure as the ideal modalities to engage the imagery of both the former or latter category, yet standing as a collective sharable element. In this perspective, stories allow a long-lasting emotional connection with brands, stemming from a brand-consumer relation dominated by memories and experiences.

As the core of the luxury storytelling strategy is revealed, the study highlights the foundation of corporate narratives, emphasizing their origins from humanities and culture, and their employment as a branding tool that stands as one of the most engaging means of communication. In particular, stemming from consumer storytelling theory, the assumption that individuals tend to think in narrative terms, rather than by means of arguments and facts (McKee, 2003), endows luxury businesses with a powerful insight on which driving their marketing and branding strategies. Through a distinction of terminology, the study led to a clear differentiation of narratives, as the ones conceived

endogenously, as internally guided by the luxury brand, in opposition to the exogenous ones, circulating by means of cultural mediators, such as art and cinematography, in the form of visual narrative art, in which the luxury dimension – especially through fashion – has always played an important role. Anyway, as far as luxury companies' external narratives may influence the perception of the brand, the research highlighted how the stories transmitted by means of VNA postpone the product placement intention to the narrative one.

By means of the framework proposed by Kapferer and Bastien (2012), the European and American approach to luxury have reflected on the different modalities through which brands can build their identities, pointing to a relevant insight that, during the course of the study, has been deepened from a multidisciplinary approach: whether stories are true and derived from archival sources, or a mere product of invention, a company needs to be rooted in a clear branded narrative in order to be perceived as belonging to the luxury classification. Of course, the storytelling source influences consumers' preference to a deep extent, but the perception of authenticity of the brand is relatively affected by the truthfulness of a story. Managerially, some dimensions of storytelling authenticity are more deemed as more valuable compared to others, but generally, many elements should be considered during the development of a corporate narrative, since it should stay coherent and consistent to the identity of the brand throughout all of its facets.

In this light, the concepts of myths and archetypes, as ancestral forms of narrative, act as references from a twofold perspective: on one hand, affluent consumers can psychologically bond brands to their imageries and connect with them on a deep social and cultural level; on the other, luxury companies can provide a clear brand positioning that adheres to their brands' long-established identities. In addition, the archetypal framework also serves to understand the target consumer group, as it constitutes an easier approach to comprehend social behaviour dynamics. It is relevant to note, anyway, that archetypal structures does not have to stay fixed in time, as the final case of Christian Dior Couture has showed, but they can change in accordance to the cultural and social issues of the period of reference. As such, as the framework suggests, this reflects on the argument that consumer enactments of archetypes provide luxury brands directions for consumer-brand relationships (Woodside et al., 2008), and vice versa. When in the 1990s the luxury industry started to realize that the digital wave would have led to important

marketing changes, companies started to develop strategies of narrative transmediation in order to perfectly fit the needs of the shifting market preferences and, in particular, of digitally-connected consumers.

Although many luxury brands are still resistant to open their commerce operations to the online world, online communities eventually increased the relevance given to corporate stories, with websites and social media in particular as fundamental actors in the storytelling strategies of brands. Digitally advanced communication strategies have proved successful for many luxury brands – especially for long-established ones such as Chanel, Dior, Hermès, Ferragamo and Gucci (to cite a few) – through digital campaigns aimed at sharing the history of the company through engaging content. In particular, the research highlighted the variation of relationship types with creative agencies during the production of digital stories, which are supposed to change according to the narrative orientation of companies. Through iconic branding, creative agencies produce engaging content such as to transform the brand into an icon by means of a process of mythopoesis even if, as Mosca (2017) notes, not all the iconic brands are necessarily heritage brands. In the case of Prada, for example, although the luxury brand has a long-established heritage that roots in the tradition of Italian excellence and craftsmanship, the company builds its narrative on an urban retro-futuristic ideal that still accounts for its codes and history. This identity is conveyed through the stories that the company produces by means of short videos, pictures of fashion films, and servicescapes too, accentuating the importance of digital in the opportunity to modernize archival stories, making them more appealing and captivating, especially for a digitally native audience.

In the context of the digitalization of storytelling, online dynamics offered luxury brands a perspective of continuity, starting from the intangible value that stems from the past and drives them into the present, and of longevity, promoting their heritage into the future through the creation of updated archives available on the largest scale. In this perspective, such long-term approach allows for a broader relation between storytelling practices and media culture (Couldry, 2008).

In addition, physical channels and servicescapes demonstrated to serve still as the primary touch points for affluent consumers, enhancing the experiential journey to a heightened level, and allowing for narratives proliferation through the human relational

form that, as far as traditional, still seems the most engaging modality to trigger the subjective and collective imagination of individuals.

The case of Christian Dior Couture supported these insights, demonstrating that heritage is a social construct relying on strong narratives that result from an ongoing process of storytelling strategy delineation that changes in line with the cultural and social needs of consumers. Contrarily from simply being a mere product of history of the brand, storytelling represents for Dior a powerful tool to generate awareness and engagement for consumers, and for a larger than ever digitally advanced audience. The diverse storytelling strategies employed over the course of the last three decades have made possible to lay the emphasis on the timelessness of the brand, ignoring the potential contradictions that may have stemmed from the changes in brand image over time.

In addition, a personal research based on interviews to luxury academics, marketers and creative agencies confirmed the relevance of storytelling as a fundamental component of the luxury industry, refusing its conceptualization as an “artificially modernized” construct, or generally as something invented with the rise of the Internet and eventually digitalized, confirming the first claim of the research question, which has been further supported by the case. Moreover, the interviews also emphasized that, as far as a luxury company may or may not have a relevant heritage on which to base its narratives, it should aim at the construction of a dialogue based on credibility through its brand identity and image. Through the implementation of digital and social media tools, a conversation that rests on credibility allows for an enduring brand-consumer relationship, based on an implicit trust that resonates through corporate stories.

Although certainly not completely comprehensive in its scope, this research arranges for valuable contributions, both theoretical and practical-relational in nature, in enhancing the knowledge of storytelling theory in the luxury industry, offering through theories, examples and, in particular through the case study of Christian Dior Couture, a point of orientation for future research on the topic.

List of Figures

Figure 1: History, Heritage and Storytelling in Brand Management	20
Figure 2: Emotional Branding Strategies.....	24
Figure 3: The Two Modes of Luxury Brand Building	39
Figure 4: The Psychology of Branding: The Twelve Brand Archetypes.....	43
Figure 5: Freytag's Pyramid: The Seven Steps in Successful Storytelling.....	47
Figure 6: Steps in Storytelling Construction	51
Figure 7: Brand and Consumer Interacting in Storytelling Production of Siren Archetype	54
Figure 8: Dolce & Gabbana - Advertising Campaign.....	59
Figure 9: Experiential Functional Zones of Luxury Storytelling.....	64
Figure 10: The Steps of Development and Valorisation of Corporate Storytelling	70
Figure 11: Digital Transformation Framework in Relation to Other Corporate Strategies	76
Figure 12: Luxury Industry Evolution with the Digital Transformation Variable (and CAGR), € billions, 1996 – 2018.....	78
Figure 13: Online Sales Forecast 2025, € billions	79
Figure 14: Sales of Personal Luxury Goods, € billions	80
Figure 15: Number of Touch Points in the Consumer Decision Journey, 2014 – 2016.....	83
Figure 16: Tiffany's & Co. - "Believe in Love" Campaign.....	91
Figure 17: Burberry - The Trench Coat Product Page	95
Figure 18: Changes in B2B Content Marketing Tactic Usage, 2013 – 2015	97
Figure 19: Louis Vuitton – “The Art of Craftsmanship”, Official Instagram Profile.....	98
Figure 20: Transmedia Storytelling Bridges the Online and Offline Experience.....	101
Figure 21: The Platforms of Burberry World for Transmedia Branding	103
Figure 22: Christian Dior Couture SA, Gross Sales (million euros, left axis) and Operating Profit (% , right axis), 1992–2016.....	119
Figure 23: Dior's Luxury Identity Prism	123
Figure 24: Dior's Pyramid Model.....	126
Figure 25: Dior's Average Engagement per Channel, 2018-2019	135

List of Tables

Table 1: The Luxury Customer – Europe, USA, Japan	16
Table 2: Key to Cross-Case Interviews.....	108

List of Abbreviations

ABC – Archetype-Brand-Consumer

B2B – Business to Business

CAGR – Compound Annual Growth Rate

CEO – Chief Executive Officer

DTF – Digital Transformation Framework

eWOM – e-Word-of-Mouth

UGC – User-Generated Content

USP – Unique Selling Proposition

VNA – Visual Narrative Art

References

Bibliography

- Aaker, D. A. (1996), "Measuring Brand Equity across Products and Markets", *California Management Review*, 38(3).
- Aberra, L. (2015), "The Politics of Representation in Breakfast at Tiffany's", University of Helsinki.
- Ahrendts, A. (2013), "Burberry's CEO on Turning an Aging British Icon into a Global Luxury Brand", *Harvard Business Review*, 91(1), 39-42.
- Allérès, D. (2006), "Luxe: Métiers et Management Atypiques", *Economica*.
- Alterio, M., & McDrury, J. (2003), "Learning through storytelling in higher education: Using Reflection and Experience to Improve Learning", Routledge.
- Arnault, B. (2001), "The Perfect Paradox of Star Brands", *Harvard Business Review*, 79(9), 117-123.
- Atwal, G., & Williams, A. (2017), "Luxury Brand Marketing – The Experience Is Everything!" in *Advances in Luxury Brand Management* (pp. 43-57), Palgrave Macmillan, Cham.
- Badot, O. & Filser, M. (2007), "Re-enchantment of Retailing: Toward Utopian Islands", in: A. Caru` & B. Cova (Eds.), *Consuming Experience*, pp. 166–181, London: Routledge.
- Balasyan, I. (2015), "E-commerce in Luxury Clothes Industry: the Ambivalence between Exclusivity and Ubiquity".
- Baltes, L. P. (2015), "Content Marketing – The Fundamental Tool of Digital Marketing", *Bulletin of the Transylvania, University of Brasov. Economic Sciences. Series V*, 8(2), 111.
- Batat, W. (2019), "The New Luxury Experience", Springer International Publishing.
- Beets, L. M., & Handley, A. (2019), "B2C Content Marketing: 2018 Benchmarks, Budgets, and Trends", North America, Content Marketing Institute.
- Beidelman M. (2009), "Grotesque Advertising Stimulates Creativity and Pocketbooks", *Santa Clara Magazine*, Volume 53 Number 2, Fall 2011, pag. 15.
- Berra, J. (2012), "Lady Blue Shanghai: The Strange Case of David Lynch and Dior", *Film, Fashion & Consumption*, 1(3), 233-250.

- Berridge, H. S. (2018), "A Practical Look at the Challenges Luxury Fashion Brands Face in the Wake of Digitalization: Is It Time That Luxury Fashion Brands Learn to Love E-Commerce Platforms?", *Journal of Intellectual Property Law & Practice*, 13(11), 901-908.
- Berthon, P., Holbrook, M.B., Hulbert, J.M., & Pitt, L.F. (2007), "Viewing Brands in Multiple Dimensions", *MIT Sloan Management Review*, 48 (Winter), 37-43.
- Beverland, M. B. (2005), "Crafting Brand Authenticity: The Case of Luxury Wines", *Journal of Management Studies*, 42(5), 1003-1029.
- Bishop, D., (2011), "Au Bonheur des Dames and the Contemporary Literary Tourist: an Inspirational Journey through Zola's Paris to the 21st Built Environment", University of Plymouth, UK Tourism, Hospitality & Modern Languages.
- Bitner, M.J. (1992), "Servicescapes: The Impact of Physical Surroundings on Customers and Employees", *Journal of Marketing*, 56(April), pp. 57-71.
- Björkman, I. (2002), "Aura: Aesthetic Business Creativity", *Consumption, Markets and Culture*, 5 (1), 69-78
- Black, L. C. (1985), "Madame Bovary: The Artist and the Ideal", *College Literature*, 12(2), 176-183.
- Booms, B., & Bitner, M.J. (1981), "Marketing Strategies and Organisation Structures for Service Firms", in Donnelly, J, George, WR (eds.), *Marketing of Services*, Chicago, IL, American Marketing Association.
- Bruce, M., & Kratz, C. (2007), "Competitive Marketing Strategies of Luxury Fashion Companies", in *Fashion Marketing* (pp. 154-174). Routledge.
- Buckner, B., & Rutledge, P. (2011), "Transmedia Storytelling for Marketing and Branding: It is not Entertainment. It is survival", *Internet Marketing Association (IMA)*.
- Burghausen, M., & Balmer, J. M., (2014), "Corporate Heritage Identity Management and the Multi-Modal Implementation of a Corporate Heritage Identity", *Journal of Business Research*, 67(11), 2311-2323.
- Calanca, D. (2002), "Storia Sociale della Moda", Pearson Italia Spa.
- Campbell, J., & Abadie, M. J. (1981). "The Mythic Image", Princeton University Press, Vol. 90.
- Carù, A., Ostillio, M. C., & Leone, G. (2017), "Corporate Museums to Enhance Brand Authenticity in Luxury Goods Companies: The Case of Salvatore Ferragamo", *International Journal of Arts Management*, 19(2).
- Cosgrave, B. (2007), "Made for Each Other: Fashion and the Academy Awards", Bloomsbury Publishing USA.

- Couldry, N. (2008), "Mediatization or Mediation? Alternative Understandings of the Emergent Space of Digital Storytelling", *New Media & Society*, 10(3), 373-391.
- Cristini, H., Kauppinen-Räsänen, H., Barthod-Prothade, M., & Woodside, A. (2017), "Toward a General Theory of Luxury: Advancing From Workbench Definitions and Theoretical Transformations", *Journal of Business Research*, 70, 101-107.
- De Mooji M. (2010), "Global Marketing and Advertising. Understanding Cultural Paradoxes", SAGE Publications, United States of America.
- Demarcsek, R., Fălăuș, A., & Todea, L., (2018), "Mythology Inspired Brand Names and Brand Awareness Amongst End-users", *Buletin Științific. Seria A, VOL. XXVII, Fascicula Filologie*.
- Denning, S. (2006), "The Leader's Guide to Storytelling", John Wiley & Sons.
- Dibb, S., Simkin, L. P., Pride, W. and Ferrel, O. C. (2005), "Marketing: Concepts and Strategies", 5th Edition, New York: Houghton Mifflin.
- Dior, C. (1956), "Christian Dior et Moi: The Autobiography of Christian Dior", in "Christian Dior, L'autre, Lui-Même", Paris, Arts & Culture, Office Culturel de Granville, (Manche).
- Dior, C. (1957), "Dior by Dior: The Autobiography of Christian Dior", Edition 2018, Tran. Antonia Fraser, London: Victoria & Albert Publications.
- Donzé, P. Y., & Wubs, B. (2017), "LVMH: Storytelling and Organizing Creativity in Luxury and Fashion", *European Fashion: The Creation of a Global Industry*, Manchester University Press, Manchester.
- Donzé, P. Y., & Wubs, B. (2019), "Storytelling and the Making of a Global Luxury Fashion Brand: Christian Dior", *International Journal of Fashion Studies*, 6(1), 83-102.
- Dubois, B., & Laurent, G. (1996), "The Functions of Luxury: A Situational Approach to Excursionism", *ACR North American Advances*.
- Dubois, B., Laurent, G., & Czellar, S. (2001), "Consumer Rapport To Luxury: Analysing Complex And Ambivalent Attitudes", *Les Cahiers de Recherche, Groupe HEC*, 736.
- Elliot, R. and Wattanasuwan, K. (1998), "Brands as Symbolic Resources for the Construction of Identity", *International Journal of Advertising*, 17 (2), 131-144.
- Emotional Brand Experience", *Journal of Brand Management*, 14(5), 410-421.
- Escalas, J. E. (2006), "Self-Referencing and Persuasion: Narrative Transportation versus Analytical Elaboration", *Journal of Consumer Research*, 33(4), 421-429.
- Fionda, A. M., & Moore, C. M. (2009), "The Anatomy of the Luxury Fashion Brand", *Journal of Brand Management*, 16(5-6), 347-363

- Fiore, A., Jin, H., & Kim, J. (2005), "For Fun and Profit: Hedonic Value from Image Interactivity and Responses toward an Online Store", *Psychology & Marketing*, 22(8), 669–694.
- Firat, A.F., & Venkatesh, A. (1993), "Postmodernity: The Age of Marketing", *International Journal of Research in Marketing*.
- Fog, K., Budtz, C. and Yakaboylu, B. (2005), "Storytelling: Branding in Practice", Berlin, Springer.
- Font, L. (2004), "L'Allure de Chanel: The Couturière as Literary Character", *Fashion Theory*, 8(3), 301-314.
- Fournier, S. (1998), "Consumers and their Brands: Developing Relationship Theory in Consumer Research", *Journal of Consumer Research*, 24, 343–374.
- Freytag, G. (2008). *Freytag's Technique of the Drama: An Exposition of Dramatic Composition and Art* (EJ McEwan, Trans.), Charleston, SC: BiblioBazaar, Original work published 1863.
- Fury, A. and Sabatini, A. (2017), "Dior: The Collections, 1947–2017", New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Galli, F., Boger, C. A., & Taylor, D. C. (2019), "Rethinking Luxury for Segmentation and Brand Strategy: The Semiotic Square and Identity Prism Model for Fine Wines", *Beverages*, 5(1), 26.
- González Romo, Z. F., García-Medina, I., & Plaza Romero, N. (2017), "Storytelling and Social Networking as Tools for Digital and Mobile Marketing of Luxury Fashion Brands", *International Journal of Interactive Mobile Technologies*, 11(6).
- Greene H., Koh K., Bonnici J., Chase J. (2015), "The Value of Storytelling in the Marketing Curriculum", *Journal of the Academy of Business Education*, pp. 111-128.
- Gutsatz, M. (2001), "Le Sage et le Créateur: Eléments pour une Analyse des Stratégies des Marques De Luxe", *Décisions Marketing*, 23-33.
- Hartwell, M.P., & Chen, J. C. (2012), "Archetypes in Branding: A Toolkit for Creatives and Strategists", Ohio: How Books.
- Hayes, B., & Leprince, A. (2015), "Dream Perception in the Luxury Industry: Internet, Vector of Democratization or Disenchantment? An Exploratory Study", In the Third International Conference on E-Technologies and Business on the Web (EBW2015), (p. 127).
- Hearn, A. (2008), "Meat, Mask, Burden: Probing the Contours of the Branded Self", *Journal of Consumer Culture* 8 (2): 197–217.
- Hiltunen, A. (2002), "Aristotle in Hollywood: The Anatomy of Successful Storytelling", Bristol UK, Intellect Books.

- Hines, T., & Bruce, M. (2003), "Fashion Marketing – Contemporary Issues", *Journal of Marketing*, 9(6).
- Hines, T., & Quinn, L. (2007), "Segmenting Fashion Consumers: Reconstructing the Challenge of Consumer Complexity", in *Fashion Marketing* (pp. 97-112). Routledge.
- Hirschman, E. (2000), "Consumers' Use of Intertextuality and Archetypes", *Advances in Consumer Research*, 27, 57–63.
- Holt, D. B. (2002), "Why Do Brands Cause Trouble? A Dialectical Theory of Consumer Culture and Branding", *Journal of Consumer Research*, 29(1), 70-90.
- Jackson, T. (2004), "A Contemporary Analysis of Global Luxury Brands", in Bruce, M. et al. (Eds.), *International Retail Marketing*, Butterworth-Heinemann: Oxford.
- Jenkins, H., Ford, S., & Green, J. (2018), "Spreadable Media: Creating Value and Meaning in a Networked Culture", Vol. 15, NYU press.
- Jones, G. and Pouillard, V. (2009), "Christian Dior: A New Look for Haute Couture", Cambridge: Harvard Business School.
- Jung, C. G. (1990), "The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious", 1959. Trans. RFC Hull. New York: Princeton UP.
- Kapferer, J. N. (2014), "The Future of Luxury: Challenges and Opportunities", *Journal of Brand Management*, 21(9), 716-726.
- Kapferer, J. N. (2017), "The End of Luxury as We Knew It?", in *Advances in Luxury Brand Management* (pp. 25-41). Palgrave Macmillan, Cham.
- Kapferer, J. N., & Bastien, V. (2009), "The Specificity of Luxury Management: Turning Marketing Upside Down", *Journal of Brand Management*, 16(5-6), 311-322.
- Kapferer, J. N., & Bastien, V. (2013), "More on Luxury Anti-Laws of Marketing", *Luxury Marketing: A Challenge for Theory and Practice*, Wiesbaden: Springer, pp. 19–34.
- Kapferer, J. N., Bastien, V. (2012), "The Luxury Strategy: Break The Rules of Marketing to Build Luxury Brands", Kogan Page Publishers.
- Kapferer, P., & Gaston-Breton, T. (2002), "Lacoste: The Legend", Paris, Cherche Midi.
- Keller, K. L. (2009), "Managing the Growth Trade-off: Challenges and Opportunities in Luxury Branding", *Journal of Brand Management*, 16(5-6), 290-301.
- Kim, A. J., & Ko, E. (2012), "Do Social Media Marketing Activities Enhance Consumer Equity? An Empirical Study of Luxury Fashion Brand", *Journal of Business Research*, 65(10), 1480–1486.
- Kim, J. E., & Johnson, K. K. (2013), "The Impact of Moral Emotions on Cause-Related Marketing Campaigns: A Cross-Cultural Examination", *Journal of Business Ethics*, 112(1), 79-90.

- Kim, J. E., Lloyd, S., & Cervellon, M. C. (2016), "Narrative-Transportation Storylines in Luxury Brand Advertising: Motivating Consumer Engagement", *Journal of Business Research*, 69(1), 304-313.
- Kim, Y. K., & Sullivan, P. (2019), "Emotional Branding Speaks to Consumers' Heart: The Case of Fashion Brands", *Fashion and Textiles*, 6(1), 2.
- Ko, E., Costello, J. P., & Taylor, C. R. (2017), "What is a Luxury Brand? A New Definition and Review of the Literature", *Journal of Business Research*, 99, 405-413.
- Krishna, A. (2012), "An Integrative Review of Sensory Marketing: Engaging The Senses to Affect Perception, Judgment and Behaviour", *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 22(3), 332-351.
- Lindstrom, M. (2010), "Brand Sense: Sensory Secrets behind the Stuff We Buy", 2nd Edition, London: Kogan Page Limited.
- Lipovetsky, G., & Serroy, J. (2010), "The Culture-World: Answer to a Disoriented Society", Barcelona, Anagrama.
- Lucci, P., & Sacchi, S. (2014). *Brand Jamming. Heritage marketing, Co-Branding, Brand Extension: L'Evoluzione del Branding*, FrancoAngeli.
- Malär, L., Krohmer, H., Hoyer, W. D., & Nyffenegger, B. (2011), "Emotional Brand Attachment and Brand Personality: The Relative Importance of the Actual and the Ideal Self", *Journal of marketing*, 75(4), 35-52.
- Maman Larraufie, A. F., & Kourdoughli, A. (2014), "The e-Semiotics of Luxury", *Journal of Global Fashion Marketing*, 5(3), 197-208.
- Mark, M., & Pearson, C. (2001), "The Hero and the Outlaw: Building Extraordinary Brands Through the Power of Archetypes", New York, McGraw-Hill.
- Mason, L. (2005), "Exhibition Review: The Art and Craft of Gianni Versace", *Fashion Theory*, 9(1), 85-88.
- Mastropetrou, M., Bithas, G., & Kutsikos, K. (2019). *Digital Transformation in the Luxury Industry – A Systematic Mapping Study*, in 12th Annual Conference of the EuroMed Academy of Business.
- Matt, C., Hess, T., & Benlian, A. (2015), "Digital Transformation Strategies", *Business & Information Systems Engineering*, 57(5), 339-343.
- McCracken, G. (2005), "Culture and Consumption: Markets, Meaning and Brand Management", Indiana University, Bloomington.
- McKee, R. (2003), "Storytelling That Moves People: A Conversation with Screenwriting Coach Robert McKee", *Harvard Business Review*, 6, 51-55.

- Meadows, M. S. (2002), "Pause & Effect: the Art of Interactive Narrative", Pearson Education.
- Medvedev, S. (2016), "Transmedia Branding in Fashion: The Case of Burberry", *ZoneModa Journal*, 5, 74-81, Pendragon.
- Megehee, C. M., & Spake, D. F. (2012), "Consumer Enactments of Archetypes Using Luxury Brands", *Journal of Business Research*, 65(10), 1434-1442.
- Megehee, C. M., & Woodside, A. G. (2010), "Creating Visual Narrative Art for Decoding Stories that Consumers and Brands Tell", *Psychology & Marketing*, 27(6), 603-622.
- Micheletti, R. (2013), "Redvolution: Vita e Pensiero di Renzo Rosso. L'Uomo che ha Creato l'Impero della Diesel", Marcianum Press.
- Michman, R. D., & Mazze, E. M. (2006), "The Affluent Consumer: Marketing and Selling the Luxury Lifestyle", Greenwood Publishing Group.
- Misiura, S. (2006), "Heritage Marketing", Routledge.
- Mitchell, L., Genty, M., Kamitsis, L., & Ferré, G. (1994), "Christian Dior. The Magic of Fashion", Sidney, Australia: Powerhouse Publishing.
- Moore, C. & Birtwistle, G. (2004), "The Burberry Business Model: Creating an International Luxury Brand", *International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management*, 32 (8), 412-422.
- Morley, J., & McMahon, K. (2011), "Innovation, Interaction, and Inclusion: Heritage Luxury Brands in Collusion with the Consumer", in S. Ebel, & O. Assouly (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 13th Annual Conference for the International foundation of Fashion Technology Institutes (IFFTI), Fashion & Luxury: Between Heritage & Innovation*.
- Morrison, S., & Crane, F. G. (2007), "Building the Service Brand by Creating and Managing an
- Mosca, F. (2017), "Heritage di Prodotto e di Marca. Modelli Teorici e Strumenti Operativi di Marketing per le Imprese nei Mercati Globali del Lusso" (pp. 1-152). Franco Angeli.
- Mossberg, L. (2008), "Extraordinary Experiences through Storytelling", *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, 8(3), 195-210.
- Nelson, A. (1993), "The Moon Watch: a History of the Omega Speedmaster Professional", *Bulletin of the National Association of Watch and Clock Collectors, Inc.*, 35(282), 33-38.
- Newman, A., Dennis, C., & Zaman, S. (2007), "Marketing Images and Consumers' Experience in Selling Environments", *Marketing Management Journal*, 17 (1), 136-150
- Orth, U. R., & Malkewitz, K. (2008), "Holistic Package Design and Consumer Brand Impressions", *Journal of Marketing*, 72(3), 64-81

- Papadatos, C. (2006), "The Art of Storytelling: How Loyalty Marketers Can Build Emotional Connections to Their Brands", *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 23 (7), pp. 382-384
- Phillips, B. J., & McQuarrie, E. F. (2010), "Narrative and Persuasion in Fashion Advertising", *Journal of Consumer Research*, 37(3), 368-392.
- Pine, B. J., & Gilmore, J. H. (1998), "Welcome to the Experience Economy", *Harvard Business Review*, 76, 97-105.
- Pini, F. M. (2017), "A Narrative Approach to Luxury Brands", In *New Luxury Management* (pp. 69-83). Palgrave Macmillan, Cham.
- Pini, F. M., & Pelleschi, V. (2017), "Creating a Seamless Experience for Luxury Consumers Integrating Online and Offline Communication", In *New Luxury Management* (pp. 217-237). Palgrave Macmillan, Cham.
- Pulizzi, J. (2012), "The Rise of Storytelling as the new Marketing", *Publishing Research Quarterly*, 28(2), 116-123.
- Pulizzi, J., & Handley, A. (2014), "B2B Content Marketing: 2015 Benchmarks, Budgets, and Trends", North America. Content Marketing Institute.
- Ravasi, D., & Lojacono, G. (2005), "Managing Design and Designers for Strategic Renewal", *Long Range Planning*, 38(1), 51-77.
- Rees-Roberts, N. (2018), "Fashion Film: Art and Advertising in the Digital Age", Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Ripley, G. (2018), "A New Kind of Menswear for a New Kind of Man: Constructs of Masculinity at JW Anderson and Loewe", 2008-2017. *The Journal of Dress History*, 2(2), 38-51.
- Roux, E. (2002): "Le Luxe: Au-Delà des Chiffres, Quelle Logique d'Analyse", *Revue Française du Marketing*, no. 187, 2002/2.
- Sachs, J. (2012), "Winning the Story Wars: Why Those Who Tell (and Live) the Best Stories Will Rule the Future", Harvard Business Press.
- Salzer-Mörling, M., & Strannegård, L. (2004), "Silence of the Brands", *European Journal of Marketing*.
- Schulz, W. (2004), "Reconsidering Mediatization as an Analytical Concept", *European Journal of Communication* 19(1):87-101.
- Scolari, C. A. (2009), "Transmedia Storytelling: Implicit Consumers", *Narrative Worlds, and Branding in Contemporary Media*, Production 2009.
- Seeling, C., & Teibler, C. (2010), "Fashion: 150 Years: Couturiers, Designers, Labels", H. F. Ullmann Publishing.

- Senardi, F. (1994), "Il Piacere di G. D'Annunzio: Modi del Narrare e Strategie Comunicative", *Studia Romanica Et Anglica Zagrabiensia: Revue Publiée par les Sections Romane, Italienne et Anglaise de la Faculté des Lettres de l'Université de Zagreb*, 39, 115-133.
- Shank, R. C. (1990), "Tell Me a Story: A New Look at Real and Artificial Intelligence", New York: Scribner's Sons.
- Shin, K.-Y. (2013), "The Executor of Integrated Marketing Communications Strategy", Based on Marcom Manager's Working Model, Springer, London.
- Shukla, P., & Purani, K. (2012), "Comparing the Importance of Luxury Value Perceptions in Cross-National Contexts", *Journal of Business Research*, 65(10), 1417-1424.
- Singh, S., & Sonnenburg, S. (2012), "Brand Performances in Social Media", *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 26(4), 189-197.
- Sozzani, F. (1998), "Dolce & Gabbana", Translated by Marguerite Shore, New York: Universe Publishing/Vendome Press.
- Suma, G., & Scaglioni, M. (2017), "Fashion-Branded Entertainment: How Italian Fashion Brands Utilize Audio-Visual Media to Tell Stories and Entertain Audiences", *Comunicazioni Sociali*, 1(1), 13-26.
- Thompson, C. J., Rindfleisch, A., & Arsel, Z. (2006), "Emotional Branding and the Strategic Value of the Doppelgänger Brand Image", *Journal of marketing*, 70(1), 50-64.
- Trigg, A. B. (2001), "Veblen, Bourdieu, and Conspicuous Consumption", *Journal of Economic Issues*, 35(1), 99-115.
- Triossi, A., & Mascetti, D. (2007), "Bulgari", Abbeville Press.
- Üçok Hughes, M., Bandoni, W. K., & Pehlivan, E. (2016), "Storygiving as a Co-Creation Tool for Luxury Brands in the Age of the Internet: a love story by Tiffany and Thousands of Lovers", *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 25(4), 357-364.
- Urde, M., Greyser, S. A. and Balmer, J. M. (2007), 'Corporate Brands with a Heritage', *Journal of Brand Management*, 15:1, pp. 4-19.
- Vickers, J. S., & Renand, F. (2003), "The Marketing of Luxury Goods: An Exploratory Study — Three Conceptual Dimensions", *The Marketing Review*, 3(4), 459-478.
- Von Wachenfeldt, P. (2019), "The Mediation of Luxury Brands in Digital Storytelling", *Fashion Theory*, 1-20.
- Wallentin M., Nielsen A.H., Vuust P., Dohn A., Roepstorff A., Lund T.E. (2011), "Amygdala and Heart Rate Variability Responses from Listening to Emotionally Intense Parts of a Story", *NeuroImage*, No. 58, pp. 963-973.

- Watzlawick, P., Bavelas, J. B., & Jackson, D. D. (1967), "Pragmatics of Human Communication", New York, Norton & Co. Inc.
- Weick, K.E. (1995), "Sense Making in Organizations". Thousand Oaks, CA Sage.
- Wertime, K. (2003), "Building Brands & Believers: How to Connect with Consumers Using Archetypes", Wiley; 1st Edition.
- Wiedmann, K. P., Hennigs, N., Schmidt, S. and Wuestefeld, T. (2011), 'The Importance of Brand Heritage as a Key Performance Driver in Marketing Management', *Journal of Brand Management*, 19:3, pp. 182–94.
- Wiedmann, K. P., Hennigs, N., Schmidt, S., & Wüstefeld, T. (2012), "The Perceived Value of Brand Heritage and Brand Luxury", in *Quantitative Marketing and Marketing Management* (pp. 563-583). Gabler Verlag, Wiesbaden.
- Williams, J. B., Bedi, K., & Goldberg, M. A. (2006), "The Impact of Digital Storytelling on Social Agency: Early Experience at an Online University", In: *Third International Conference on Educational Technology*, Singapore (September 7-8, 2006) 7.
- Woodside, A. G. (2010), "The ABCs of Advertising Effectiveness: The Archetype, Brand and Consumer Triangle", in Working paper: Boston College, November 22, 2010.
- Woodside, A. G., Sood, S., & Miller, K. E. (2008), "When Consumers and Brands Talk: Storytelling Theory and Research in Psychology and Marketing", *Psychology & Marketing*, 25(2), 97-145.
- Yang, Y., Han, H., & Lee, P. (2017), "An Exploratory Study of the Mechanism of Sustainable Value Creation in the Luxury Fashion Industry". *Sustainability*, 9(4), 483.
- Zalewski M., Linck E. (2016), "Prada Journal. Illuminations, Shadows and Mirages", III Edition, Various Authors, Prada, Feltrinelli Editore.
- Zaltman, G. (2003), "How Customers Think", Boston, Harvard Business School Press.
- Zatwarnicka-Madura, B., & Nowacki, R. (2018), "Storytelling and its Impact on Effectiveness of Advertising", In *ICoM 2018, 8th International Conference on Management*.
- Znanewitz J., Gilch K. (2016), "Storytelling – A Guideline and an Application in the Bundeswehr's (Personnel) Marketing", *Transfer: Werbeforschungs & Praxis*, No. 4, pp. 30-35.

Webliography

- Achille, A., Marchessou, S., & Remy, N., (2018), "Luxury in the Age of Digital Darwinism", McKinsey & Company, February 2018, Euromonitor, Forrester, Available at <https://www.mckinsey.com/~media/mckinsey/industries/retail/our%20insights/luxury%20in%20the%20age%20of%20digital%20darwinism/the-age-of-digital-darwinism.ashx> , Retrieved on the 12/12/2019
- Agnew, H. (2018), "LVMH to Buy Hotel Group Belmond in \$3.2bn Takeover", The Financial Times, Available at <https://www.ft.com/content/12a03e2c-ff71-11e8-ac00-57a2a826423e> , Retrieved on the 29/11/2019
- Arnett, G. (2019), "What Happens to Luxury during a Recession?", Vogue Business, Available at <https://www.voguebusiness.com/companies/luxury-recession-saks-bond-yield> , Retrieved on the 14/12/2019
- Banks-Blaney W. (2017), "Lights, Camera, Fashion! Belle de Jour", BBC Arts, Available at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p05f741x> , Retrieved on the 07/12/2019
- Beauloye, F. E. (2016), "Digital Storytelling For Luxury Brands: 5 Trends To Succeed Online", Luxe Digital, <https://luxe.digital/business/digital-luxury-reports/luxury-digital-storytelling-trends/> , Retrieved on the 05/01/2020
- Bilefield, J. (2016), "Digital Transformation: the Three Steps to Success", McKinsey Digital, Available at <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/digital-mckinsey/our-insights/digital-transformation-the-threesteps-to-success>, Retrieved on the 01/12/2019
- Branstrator, B. (2019), "Global Luxury Goods Market Settles into 'New Normal'", National Jeweler, Available at <https://www.nationaljeweler.com/majors/market-developments/7831-global-luxury-goods-market-settles-into-new-normal> , Retrieved on the 14/12/2019
- Burberry (2019), "The Trench Coat – Product Page", Burberry Official Website, Available at <https://it.burberry.com/the-evolution-of-the-trench/> , Retrieved on the 27/12/2019
- Carter, R. (2017), "Once Upon a Time... The Rise of Storytelling in Marketing", Fabrik Brands, Available at <https://fabrikbrands.com/the-rise-of-storytelling-in-marketing/> , Retrieved on the 21/01/20
- Creek, D. (2012), "The Alphabet – Celebrating 60 Years of Chloé", Nirvana Creative Production House, Available at <https://nirvanacph.com/2012/10/the-alphabet-celebrating-60-years-of-chloe/> , Retrieved on the 20/12/2019
- Cronberg, A. A. (2017), "Demna Gvasalia on Authenticity, Irony and Resistance", Business of Fashion, Available at <https://www.businessoffashion.com/articles/people/demna-gvasalia-on-authenticity-irony-and-resistance> , Retrieved on the 26/01/2020

D'Arpizio, C., & Levato, F. (2018). ALTAGAMMA 2018 Worldwide Luxury Market Monitor, Available at <https://altagamma.it/media/source/WORLDWIDE%20LUXURY%20MARKET%20MONITOR%20BAIN.pdf> , Retrieved on 14/12/2019

Danziger, P. N. (2018), "9 Demographic Trends Shaping Retail's Future", Forbes, Available at <https://www.forbes.com/sites/pamdanziger/2018/09/06/9-demographic-trends-shaping-retails-future/#6701a6887b00> , Retrieved on the 30/08/2019

Dior (2020), Dior Official Instagram Account, Available at <https://www.instagram.com/dior/?hl=it> , Retrieved on the 20/01/2020

Dolce & Gabbana (2019), Dolce & Gabbana Official Website, <https://www.dolcegabbana.it/> , Retrieved on the 06/12/2019

Doyle, M. (2017), "Dior and Louis Vuitton Are the Fashion Brands with Best Instagram Stories Engagement", The Business of Fashion, Available at <https://www.businessoffashion.com/articles/news-bites/dior-and-louis-vuitton-are-most-engaged-fashion-brands-on-instagram-stories> , Retrieved on the 20/01/2020

Fondazione Prada (2019), "Bar Luce", Prada Group Official Website, Available at <http://www.fondazioneprada.org/barluce/> , Retrieved on the 29/11/2019

Foulkes, N. (2015), "Berluti: A Gentleman's Emporium Befitting Andy Warhol", Newsweek Magazine, Available at <https://www.newsweek.com/warhols-immortal-sole-401809> , Retrieved on the 09/12/2019

Godin, S. (2009), "Define: Brand", Seth's Blog, <https://seths.blog/2009/12/define-brand/> , Retrieved on the 26/08/2019

Greene, L. (2013), "Luxury Brands and the Great Gatsby Movie", The Financial Times, Available at <https://www.ft.com/content/c8098b7e-ace8-11e2-b27f-00144feabdc0> , Retrieved on 1/11/2019

Gristwood, S., (2010), "Breakfast at Tiffany's: 50 Years On", in The Telegraph, Available at <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/film/classic-movies/8032801/Breakfast-at-Tiffanys-50-years-on.html> , Retrieved on the 06/12/2019

Hodgson, A. (2018), "New Briefing: Affluent Consumers – Who Are They and How Best to Capture Them", Market Research Blog, Euromonitor International, Available at <https://blog.euromonitor.com/affluent-consumers/> , Retrieved on the 26/08/2019

Interbrand (2019), 'Best Global Brands 2019 Rankings', Available at <https://www.interbrand.com/best-brands/best-global-brands/2019/ranking/> , Retrieved on the 14/01/2020

Karmali, S. (2016), "Burberry to Celebrate Craftsmanship with New London Show Venue and Exhibition", Harper's Bazaar, Available at

<https://www.harpersbazaar.com/uk/fashion/fashion-news/news/a37834/burberry-to-celebrate-craftsmanship-with-new-london-venue/> , Retrieved on the 26/01/2020

Lewittes, E. (2018), "7 Luxury Brands That Let You Shop For A Cause", Forbes, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbes-finds/2018/08/19/7-luxury-brands-that-let-you-shop-for-a-cause/#4a42da6e73b7> , Retrieved on 10/10/2019

Louis Vuitton (2019), "The Art of Craftsmanship", Louis Vuitton Official Instagram Account, Available at <https://www.instagram.com/louisvuitton/?hl=it> , Retrieved on the 29/12/2019

Melcher Media (2013), "Authentic Branding for a Global Audience: Angela Ahrendts", Future of Storytelling 2013, YouTube, Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=krQG2Hceov4> , Retrieved on the 10/01/2020

Menkes, S. (2018), "LVMH: Putting Humanity Into 'Special Days'", British Vogue, Available at <https://www.vogue.co.uk/article/lvmh-putting-humanity-into-special-days> , Retrieved on the 21/01/2020

Montagnoli, L. (2017), "Colazione da Tiffany, Ora è Realtà: Il Blue Box Cafè nella Mitica Gioielleria sulla Fifth Avenue", Gambero Rosso, Available at <https://www.gamberorosso.it/notizie/colazione-da-tiffany-ora-e-realta-il-blue-box-cafe-nella-mitica-gioielleria-sulla-fifth-avenue/> , Retrieved on the 29/11/2019

O'Connell, L. (2019), "Global Brand Value of Dior from 2016 to 2019", Statista, Available at <https://www.statista.com/statistics/985305/dior-brand-value-worldwide/> , Retrieved on the 14/01/2020

Otley P. (2016), "Can You Feel It? Why Brands Must Focus on Emotional Connection", Digital Pulse, PwC, Available at <https://www.digitalpulse.pwc.com.au/branded-content-emotional-connection/> , Retrieved on the 12/09/2019

Philips A. (2018), "Digital Luxury: Past, Present & Future", The Age of Ideas, Medium, Available at https://medium.com/@alan_46156/digital-luxury-past-present-future-d94c1a0c6918 , Retrieved on the 07/01/2020

Reichert, T., & Hutchinson R. (2019), "Digital Transformation", Boston Consulting Group. Available at: <https://www.bcg.com/digital-bcg/digital-transformation/overview.aspx> , Retrieved on the 01/12/2019

Salessy H., (2019), "From Princess Diana to Today: The History of the Iconic Lady Dior Bag", Vogue France, Available at <https://www.vogue.fr/fashion/article/from-princess-diana-to-today-the-history-of-the-iconic-lady-dior-bag> , Retrieved on the 17/01/2020

Shepard, A. (2009), "Telling a Story, Stories to Tell", Available at <http://aaronshep.com/storytelling>, Retrieved on the 3/11/2019

Sonnenburg, S., & Baker, L. (2013), "Branded Spaces: Experience Enactments and Entanglements", Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden.

Sowray B. (2012), "Christian Dior", Vogue UK, Available at <https://www.vogue.co.uk/article/christian-dior> , Retrieved on the 14/01/2020

Sprinklr, (2020), "Dior Content Insights", Sprinklr Business Index & Customer Experience Management, Available at <https://businessindex.sprinklr.com/>, Retrieved on the 20/01/2020

Stackla (2017), "2017 Consumer Content Report: Influence in The Digital Age", http://stackla.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Stackla-Data-Report-FINAL.compressed.pdf?utm_source=luxe.digital&utm_campaign=luxe-digital-the-leading-publication-for-professionals-of-the-luxury-industry , Retrieved on the 05/01/2020

Stevenson, D. (2014), "The Power to Persuade – The Magic of Story", Talks at Google, YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sKUiE9DBkKc> , Retrieved on the 11/10/2019

Tiffany's & Co., (2019), "Believe in Love – Campaign", Tiffany's & Co. Official Website, Available at <https://www.tiffany.com/engagement/love-stories/> , Retrieved on the 22/12/2019

Vercelloni, M. (2015), "Paris, Fondation Louis Vuitton", Interni Magazine, Mondadori, Available at <https://www.internimagazine.it/progetti/paris-fondation-louis-vuitton-1/> , Retrieved on the 29/11/2019

Young, H. (2019), "Millennials vs. Gen Z: How Are They Different?", Salesforce, Available at <https://www.salesforce.com/blog/2017/10/how-millennials-and-gen-z-are-different.html> , Retrieved on the 18/12/2019

Young, R. (2010), "Guardians of History: At Christian Dior", The New York Times, Available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/09/fashion/09iht-rdior.html> , Retrieved on the 17/01/2020